

Care Deeply
Citizenship

Dare Greatly

Nature
Think Boldly
Live
Passionately

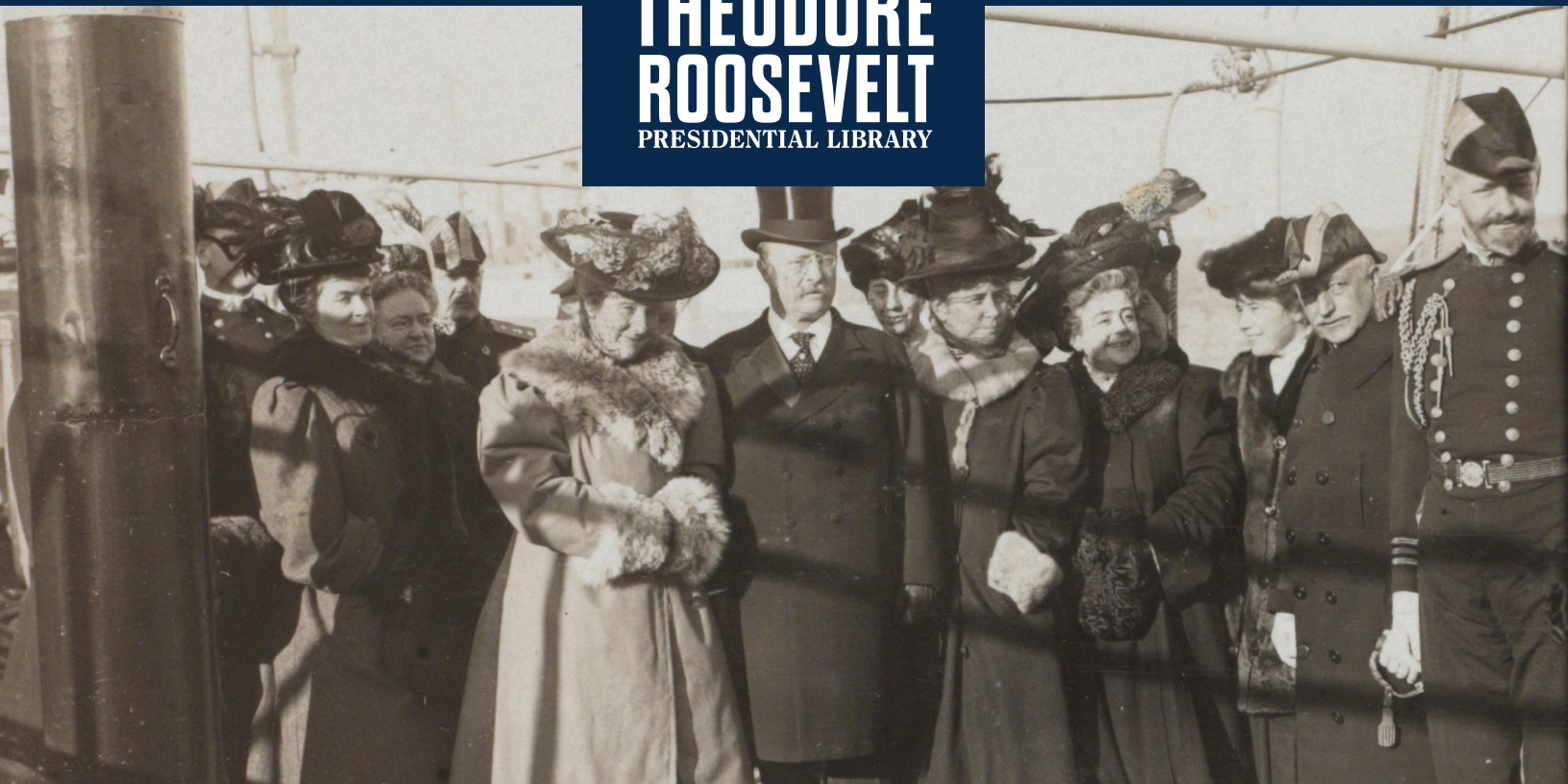


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ROOSEVELT**
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

Resource Packet

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Leadership
In the
Arena
Conservation



WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

The women's suffragist movement began growing in America in the 1840s. It was supported by many participants in existing temperance and abolitionist movements. Opponents of women's suffrage believed women were too delicate for such a responsibility and that allowing them to vote would disrupt the social order. While states such as Wyoming and Utah had extended voting rights to women in the late 19th century, there was also a push for a federal amendment allowing all women to vote.

For most of his life, Theodore Roosevelt supported state-by-state enfranchisement of women, but he would eventually become a proponent of a federal amendment. Roosevelt spoke in favor of women voting as early as 1880 but refused to give an official opinion on the issue during his presidency from 1901 to 1909.

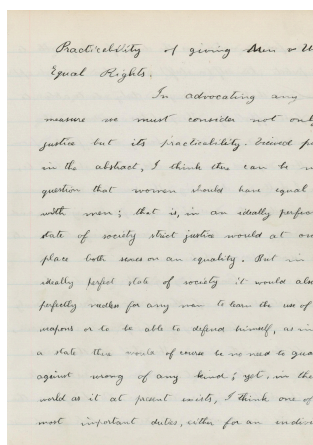
When running as a Progressive Party candidate in the election of 1912, Roosevelt openly supported a federal amendment allowing women to vote. Throughout his life, he held the opinion that men and women had different spheres of responsibility—for women, taking care of the home, and for men, providing for the family—and that allowing equal legal rights would allow both sexes to better perform their duties.

Primary sources pertaining to women's suffrage are available in collections across the country. Students and teachers can find over 20 pages of primary sources in the [Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library](#) related exclusively to women's suffrage. **This resource packet includes 16 primary sources related to Theodore Roosevelt and women's suffrage.**

1 Practicality of Giving Men and Women Equal Rights



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Source 1 is a handwritten excerpt from “Practicality of Giving Men and Women Equal Rights,” which Theodore Roosevelt read at Harvard’s commencement ceremony on June 26, 1880. Roosevelt said that while women were more vulnerable than men and their labor less valuable, they should still be equal to men in the eyes of the law. Encourage students to compare Roosevelt’s speech to the views of other politicians at the time. Were his views unusual?

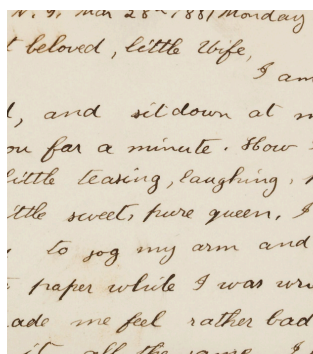
DATE: 06/26/1880 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Harvard University Archives, HUC 6879

2 Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Alice Lee Roosevelt



[Download](#)



Source 2 is a letter from Theodore Roosevelt to his first wife, Alice Lee Roosevelt, expressing how much he misses her and dislikes going to bed without her. Roosevelt describes Alice as his “little sweet, pure queen.” Encourage students to compare this letter to Source 1. Does his sentimental, idealized view of his wife contradict the ideas he expresses in his speech?

DATE: 03/28/1881 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Harvard College Library, Theodore Roosevelt Collection, MS Am 1541.9 (88), Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

3 A Squelcher for Woman Suffrage



[Download](#)



Source 3 is a cartoon of a woman being denied the opportunity to vote because her dress and hat are too wide to fit inside the narrow voting booths. The caption reads, “How can she vote, when the fashions are so wide, and the voting booths are so narrow?” Encourage students to consider what the cartoon is trying to say. What do the dress and hat symbolize about how people viewed women’s roles at the time?

DATE: 06/06/1894 **CREATED BY:** Charles Jay Taylor

Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

Resource Packet: Women's Suffrage

4 A Bouquet for President Roosevelt from a Wee Daughter of California at Mojave



[Download](#)



Source 4 is a photograph of a woman and a girl with a bouquet of flowers waiting to speak with Theodore Roosevelt at a railroad station. The woman is dressed in white, symbolic of the suffragist movement. Roosevelt said little regarding his views on women's suffrage during his presidency but still gained support from some women such as this one. Encourage students to think about the lives of this woman and girl. What are they hoping to speak with Roosevelt about?

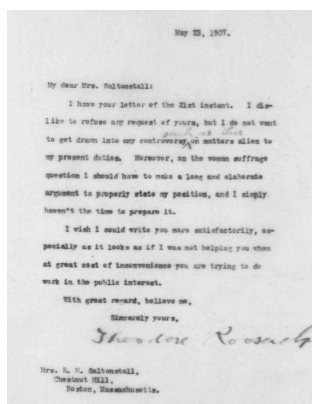
DATE: c. 07/18/1903 **CREATED BY:** Underwood & Underwood

Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

5 Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Eleanor Brooks Saltonstall



[Download](#)



Source 5 is a letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Eleanor Brooks Saltonstall, who was Roosevelt's first wife Alice's cousin, telling her he does not have time to fully state his opinion on the suffrage question. Encourage students to consider other issues affecting Roosevelt's presidency at the time. Do they agree that the issue of women's suffrage was not as high a priority as Roosevelt's other duties?

DATE: 05/23/1907 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

6 Lukewarm



[Download](#)



Source 6 is a cartoon of Theodore Roosevelt leaving his big stick and "my policies" book and running from a crowd of female suffragists. The cartoonist is criticizing Roosevelt for not supporting women's suffrage during his presidency. Encourage students to discuss Roosevelt's motivations. Why did he support women's suffrage both before and after his presidency, but not during?

DATE: 12/12/1908 **CREATED BY:** Charles Raymond Macauley

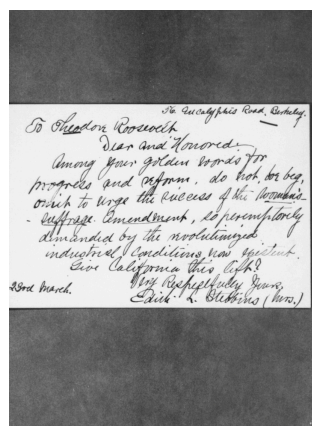
Courtesy of Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

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7 Letter from Edith Stebbins to Theodore Roosevelt



[Download](#)



Source 7 is a letter from Edith Stebbins to Theodore Roosevelt encouraging him to speak on behalf of a women's suffrage amendment during his trip to California. "Among your golden words for progress and reform, do not, we beg, omit to urge the success of the Woman's Suffrage Amendment," wrote Stebbins. Encourage students to research the other reforms Roosevelt pushed for in 1911. How did the women's suffrage movement fit into his overall policy?

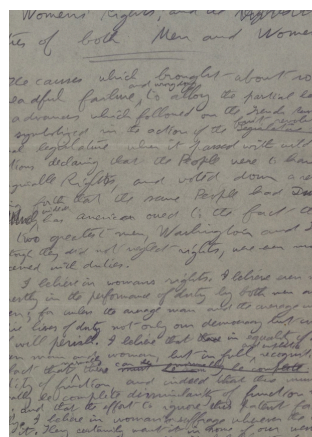
DATE: 03/23/1911 **CREATED BY:** Edith Stebbins

Courtesy of Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

8 Women's Rights; and the Duties of Both Men and Women



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Source 8 is an 11-page editorial by Theodore Roosevelt published in the February 3, 1912 issue of *The Outlook*. Roosevelt supports the idea of women voting and having equal legal rights to men but does not support "unladylike" behavior. Encourage students to research more liberal leaders of the women's suffrage movement and compare their views to Roosevelt's. Do these leaders want women's roles to change or stay the same?

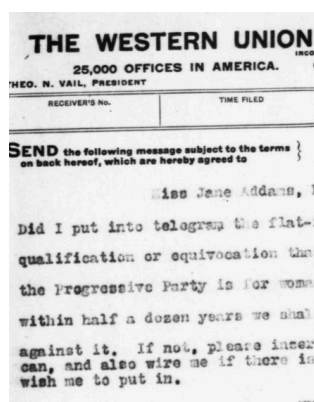
DATE: 02/03/1912 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Harvard College Library, Theodore Roosevelt Collection, MS Am 1451.50 (161), Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

9 Telegram from Theodore Roosevelt to Jane Addams



[Download](#)



Source 9 is a telegram from Theodore Roosevelt to Jane Addams, wanting to ensure the statement she was preparing for him emphasizes his support—and the Progressive Party's support—for women's suffrage. Encourage students to compare this telegram to letters and speeches from Roosevelt during his presidency. Why is he taking a much clearer stance now than he did while he was president?

DATE: 08/28/1912 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

Resource Packet: Women's Suffrage

10 Mr. Roosevelt's Speech on Suffrage



[Download](#)

Mr. Roosevelt's Speech on Suffrage, delivered at St. Johnsbury, Vt., August 30, 1912

Of all the planks of the Progressive platform, and they are all of them good, the two which most go to my own heart are the one which deals with social and industrial justice and the one on country life. Not only the present Republican and Democratic platforms fall in any way to deal with these matters as our platform deals with them, but no platform previous to ours has ever even shown an intellectual understanding of what social and industrial justice was. Our proposals are definite and concrete, and they are absolutely practical. We treat our whole platform as a covenant with the people, binding upon ourselves and upon our candidates in State and in Nation. We pledge ourselves to legislation looking to the prevention of industrial accidents and occupational diseases. We intend to deal with the problem of involuntary unemployment and of overwork. We intend to secure compensation for men or women who are killed or crippled in industry; to prohibit sweated labor; to secure a minimum wage standard for working women, and a living wage in all industrial occupations. We pledge ourselves to secure one day's rest in seven for all wage-workers, and an eight-hour day in continuous twenty-four hour industries, the prohibition of night work and the establishment of an eight-hour day for women. We pledge ourselves to the abolition of the convict contract labor system, and the application of prisoners' earnings to the support of their dependent families. We recognize that in all matters such as these women are as vitally concerned as men. We recognize that there cannot be identity of function, but that there should be equality of rights between men and women, and we are therefore for equal suffrage for men and women.

The New York Times of August 20th, in an interview to a prominent citizen who has repudiated it, criticized and denounced Jane Addams for nominating me, and also criticized the Progressive Party for permitting women to be in the Progressive Convention. It attacked Miss Addams' conduct as "spectacular and in very bad taste," and also criticized me as being "spectacular because I had the bad taste to publicly compliment her on her action and thank her."

My only reference to Miss Addams was contained in the following sentence: "I wish to tell those who proposed and seconded my nomination that I appreciate to the full the significance of having such men and such a woman put me in nomination." It will be noticed that in this sentence I did not even mention Miss Addams' name, and if President Eliot really considers

Source 10 is the text of Theodore Roosevelt's speech on suffrage delivered at Saint Johnsbury, Vermont, on August 30, 1912. Roosevelt spoke in favor of equal rights for men and women and defended Jane Addams. Encourage students to read paragraphs 5 and 6 ("Of course it is entirely right . . . the happy married life"). Roosevelt is defending equal rights for men and women but also admitting that he views them as having different roles in society. Do the students agree with Roosevelt? Do they think he is contradicting his argument or making it stronger?

DATE: 08/30/1912 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

11 Campaign Songs Prepared for the Use of the Jane Addams Chorus



[Download](#)

Campaign Songs

Prepared for the Use of the
JANE ADDAMS CHORUS
Visa expedient and current in Los Angeles, June 20th, 1912
Organize a Rally Committee Organize a Music Committee

Battle Hymn of the Republic

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fatal lightning of his terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.

Glory! Glory Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory Hallelujah!
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-tower of a hundred circling ramp,
They have built Him an altar in the evening, down and damp;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and faring lamp,
His day is marching on.

(Repeat chorus)
I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnt'd rows of steel,
"As ye deal with my enemies, so with you my grace shall deal;"
Let the Hero born of woman crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on.

Source 11 is a song sheet featuring patriotic songs and campaign songs for Theodore Roosevelt during the Progressive Party campaign of 1912. Encourage students to research women who supported Roosevelt's campaign in 1912. In what other ways did they show their support?

DATE: 1912 **CREATED BY:** Unknown

Courtesy of Dr. Danny O. Crew Theodore Roosevelt Sheet Music Collection, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

12 Jane Addams



[Download](#)



Source 12 is a photograph of Jane Addams seated at a desk, holding a pen. Addams was a leader of the women's suffrage movement and often corresponded with Theodore Roosevelt. Encourage students to discuss what the subject of the letter may have been. To whom do they think she was writing?

DATE: c. 1914 **CREATED BY:** Gerhard Sisters

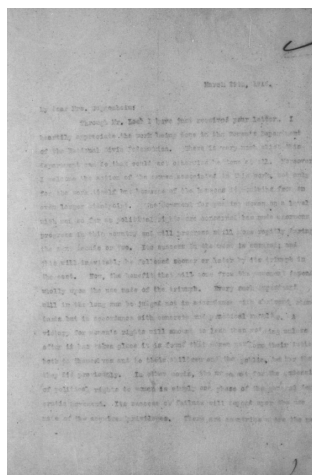
Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Resource Packet: Women's Suffrage

13 Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Florence Schloss Guggenheim



[Download](#)



Source 13 is a letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Florence Schloss Guggenheim discussing women's rights. He believed that both men and women should be given the right to vote if it enabled them to better perform their duty within their spheres. For women, this meant taking care of the home, and for men, providing for their families. Encourage students to consider how this view connects to the present day. Do they think a citizen's right to vote should be based on their contribution to the community?

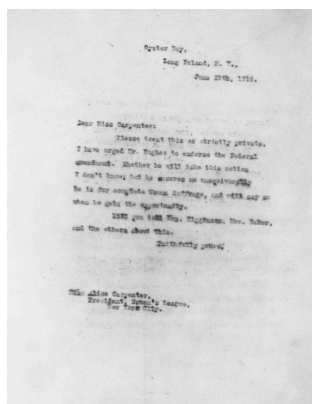
DATE: 03/29/1916 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

14 Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Alice Caroline Carpenter



[Download](#)



Source 14 is a letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Alice Caroline Carpenter regarding the proposed amendment for women's suffrage. Roosevelt says that he urged Republican presidential candidate Charles Evans Hughes to endorse the amendment. Encourage students to research Charles Evans Hughes. Did he push for women's suffrage? What was the result?

DATE: 06/29/1916 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

15 Theodore Roosevelt Speaks on Women's Suffrage



[Download](#)



Source 15 is a silent, 34-second film of Theodore Roosevelt speaking to a group of suffragists from the front porch of his home, Sagamore Hill. Encourage students to look at the audience members. Are they men, women, or a mix of both? How are they reacting to what Roosevelt is saying?

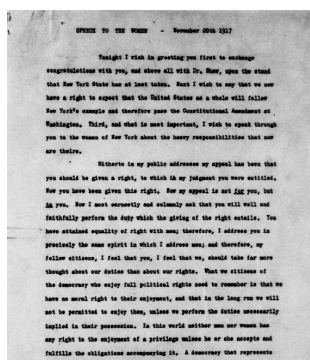
DATE: 1917 **CREATED BY:** Unknown

Courtesy of Sherman Grinberg Film Collection, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

16 Speech to the Women



[Download](#)



Source 16 is a transcript of a speech Theodore Roosevelt gave congratulating women in New York State on obtaining the right to vote. He voices his belief that women will help further social and industrial justice. Encourage students to research issues that many women suffragists advocated for at the time, such as child labor.

DATE: 11/20/1917 **CREATED BY:** Theodore Roosevelt

Courtesy of Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University

IMPORTANT DATES

- **June 26, 1880:** Theodore Roosevelt delivers his speech entitled "Practicality of Giving Men and Women Equal Rights" at Harvard's commencement ceremony.
- **January 4, 1899:** During Theodore Roosevelt's inauguration as governor of New York, he proposes allowing women to vote on school matters.
- **1901-1909:** Theodore Roosevelt declines to make official statements regarding women's suffrage during his presidency, despite appeals from women suffragists.
- **August 30, 1912:** Theodore Roosevelt gives a speech supporting equal suffrage for men and women at Saint Johnsbury, Vermont, during his campaign for the Progressive, or Bull Moose, Party.
- **November 20, 1917:** Theodore Roosevelt speaks to women in New York State, congratulating them on obtaining the right to vote. He asks that they fulfill the duties that accompany the privilege of voting. Roosevelt voices his belief that women will help further social and industrial justice.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

- Calvi, Mary. *If a Poem Could Live and Breathe*. New York: St. Martin's Publishing Group, 2023.
- O'Keefe, Edward F. *The Loves of Theodore Roosevelt*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2024.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. *Forward to Mobilizing Woman Power*, by Harriot Stanton Blatch. New York: The Womans Press, 1918.

Articles

- Hest, John. "Jane Addams." Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University. Accessed June 27, 2024. <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Learn-About-TR/TR-Encyclopedia/Family%20and%20Friends/Jane%20Addams>.
- Hornung, Erica. "Theodore Roosevelt's Evolving Views on Women's Suffrage." Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University. Last modified August 13, 2021. <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Blog/Item/Theodore%20Roosevelt's%20Evolving%20Views%20on%20Women's%20Suffrage>.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Write a speech about suffrage: Pretend to be president of the United States during Roosevelt's time and write a speech about women's suffrage. Do you support it? Do you think men and women are equal, or do they have different duties? Is there a situation where a person (man or woman) should not be allowed to vote?

Create a timeline of women's suffrage: Research important dates in the women's suffrage movement, from the first National Women's Rights Convention in 1850 to the passing of the 19th amendment in 1919, and create a timeline of how women's rights evolved.