



# MacArthur Memorial Education Programs

## Women's Suffrage Primary Resources

**Education Resources**

**STABILIZING DEMOCRACY**

**The World Wars and Women's Suffrage in the U.S. and Japan**

### Background

By the late nineteenth century, women around the world had organized into groups to advocate for women's suffrage. While there was international cooperation between many of these groups, their national strategies were aligned to the unique political and cultural challenges they faced in their nation.

By the turn of the 20th century, there was a growing sense that the "woman's hour" had arrived. For two countries in particular: the United States and Japan, the world wars of the 20th century would create social, economic and political changes that would accelerate the path to women's suffrage.

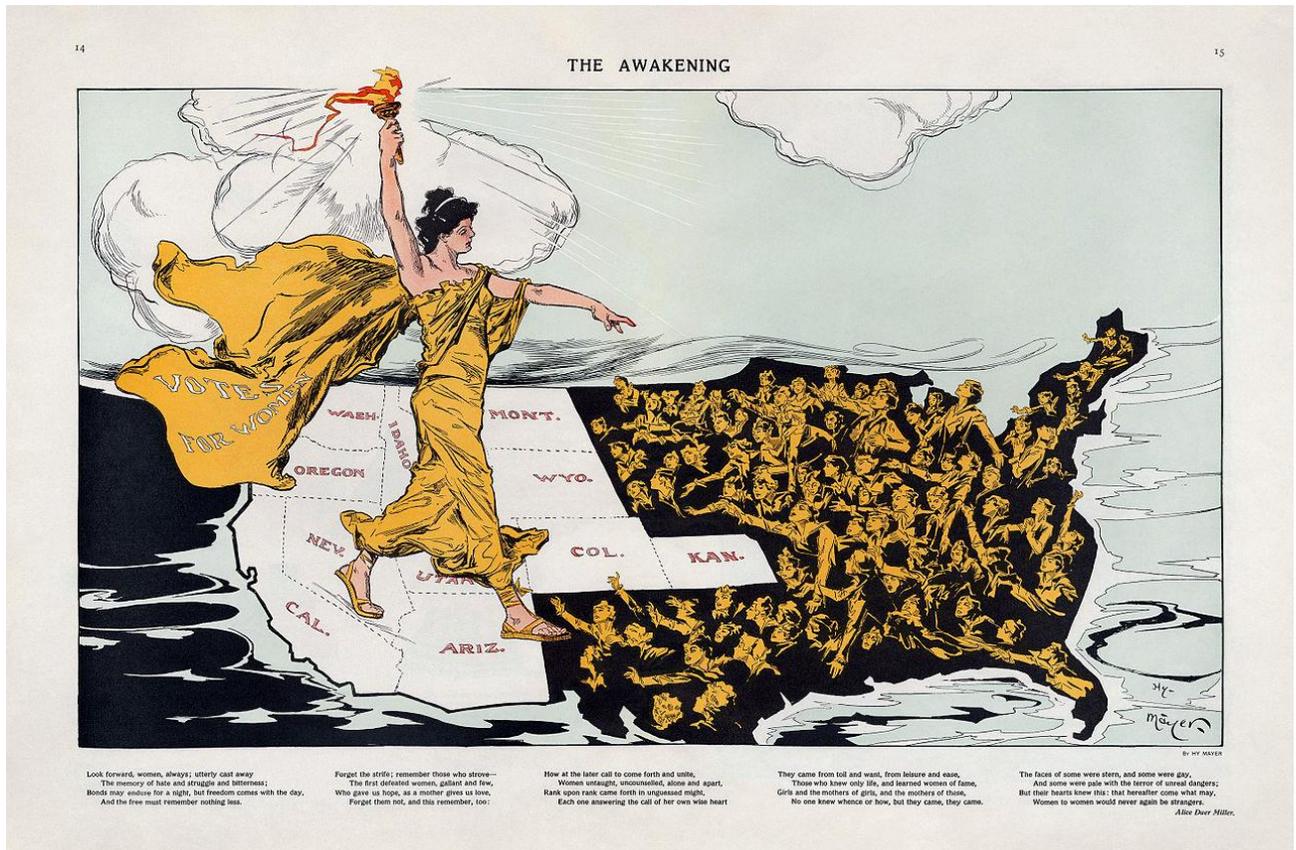
Wars unleash forces that are difficult to predict or control. World War I and World War II were both periods of crisis and change, and in the case of the United States and Japan, this environment would create irrefutable arguments in favor of women's suffrage.

It was impossible to make the world safe for democracy if you disenfranchised half your population – and you could not have a stable modern democracy if half your citizens were not represented.

## Primary Document #1

### “The Awakening,” *Puck*, February 20, 1915

Illustrations in newspapers and magazine were a common way to explain the goals of the women’s suffrage movement, as well as the current status of the movement. “The Awakening” features Liberty striding from West to East. From the West – where women had suffrage by 1915 – Liberty brings a torch that represents enlightenment and freedom to the darker parts of the map where American women did not have the right to vote.

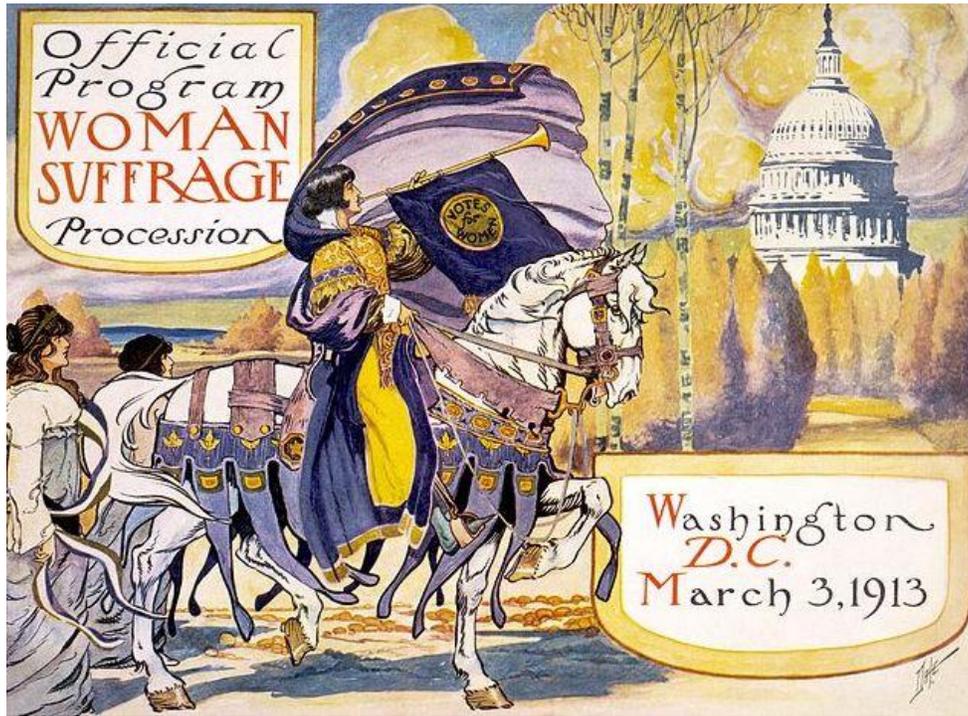


1. What does this image say about the status of the suffrage movement in 1915?
2. This image is sometimes referred to as “reverse Manifest Destiny.” Do you agree with that? Why or why not?
3. Independent Research: illustrations were also used to criticize the fight for women’s suffrage. Can you find an example of this and explain its message?

## Primary Document #2

### Official program of the 1913 Suffrage Parade in Washington, DC.

On March 3, 1913, one day before Woodrow Wilson's presidential inauguration, thousands of women marched along Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. in a procession organized by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The parade was the largest, most public suffrage demonstration in the United States at that time. The parade was designed to draw attention to the need for a federal amendment to the Constitution that would ensure women in all the states could vote.



1. The parade organizers were experts at public relations. They deliberately chose all the elements of this image. What message were they trying to send?
2. African-American women marched in this parade. Some of the other suffrage groups did not want them marching in the parade. African-American women were not featured on this program cover either. Why do you think some of the organizers did not want to include them?
3. Independent Research: how did the parade end?

### Primary Document #3

#### “Honor Roll of Women” Poster, 1917/1918

During World War I, for the first time in significant numbers, American women entered the workforce. They were also encouraged to support the war effort by helping to ration items like fuel and food. It was impossible to mobilize the nation for war without the support of women on the home front.

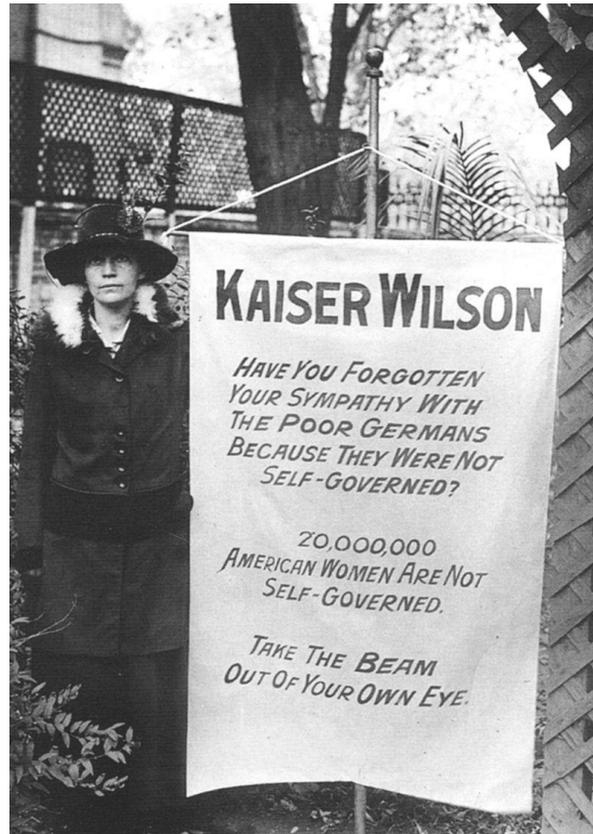


1. What is the message of this poster? Who is the intended audience?
2. How do you think “war work” shaped the public perception of women? Do you think this helped or hurt the suffrage movement? Why?
3. Independent Research: compare and contrast the war work of American women in World War I and World War II. What are the similarities? Differences?

## Primary Document #4

### Kaiser Wilson Suffrage Banner, 1918

While some women's suffrage groups temporarily paused their activism to support the war effort, other groups did not. A group of women known as the Silent Sentinels even controversially protested in front of the White House. Many of the banners carried by these women criticized President Wilson's rhetoric about making the world safe for democracy while American women lacked suffrage.

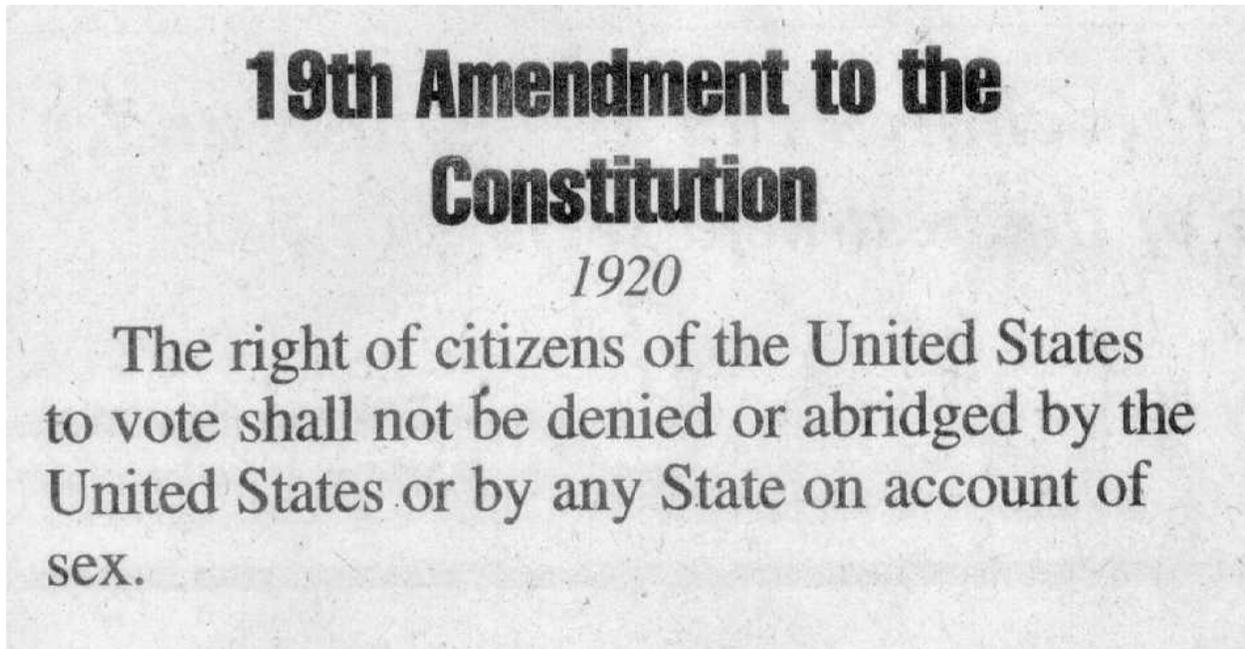


1. Why do you think the suffragists used the title "Kaiser." Who was the Kaiser in World War I? Do you think this was an effective strategy? Why or why not?
2. What does "TAKE THE BEAM OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE" mean?
3. Independent Research: find examples of Woodrow Wilson's wartime speeches and highlight the parts of the speeches that you think suffragists would have criticized.

## Primary Document #5

### 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution

By the end of World War I in 1918 it was clear that women were essential to the American war effort. It was impossible to claim that women lacked the physical or mental fortitude to vote when they were clearly a competent workforce – or that you could make the world “safe for democracy” while disenfranchising a large part of the population. After generations of activism, the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920. It removed obstacles that prevented women from voting.



1. TRUE or FALSE: the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment did not give women the right to vote. It removed obstacles to their exercise of that right as citizens.
2. During World War I, women were regarded as “war assets.” What does that mean? Do you think that helped them make the argument that they were equal citizens and should have access to all the rights held by citizens? Why or why not?
3. Independent Research: when was the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment ratified by each state?

## Primary Document #6

### General Douglas MacArthur Arrives at Atsugi, Japan, August 30, 1945

Several days before the actual surrender of Japan, General Douglas MacArthur made a dramatic arrival in Japan at Atsugi Airbase. His arrival was potentially dangerous because the war was technically not yet over, and Atsugi Airbase was home to Japanese kamikaze pilots. He was aware of the danger, but also wanted to make a strong statement. He was to lead the Occupation of Japan after the war ended, and he wanted the Japanese people to understand that a big shift in power had occurred.

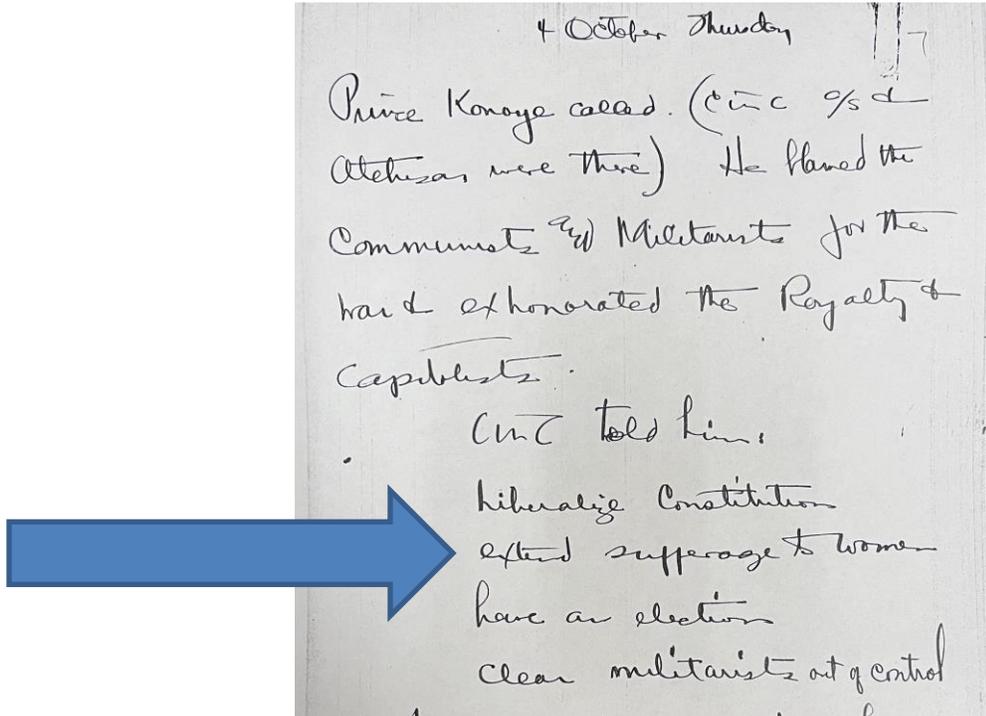


1. Japan was devastated by World War II. Two cities had been destroyed by atomic bombs and an additional 60 cities had been destroyed by conventional bombing. The Japanese also faced famine and disease. At this point, do you think the Japanese planned to resist or cooperate with the Allied occupation of their country?
2. Winston Churchill admired MacArthur's dramatic arrival in Japan. Do you think this arrival helped set the stage for the major changes coming to Japan? Do you think it scared, reassured, or just merely captured the attention of the Japanese people?
3. Independent Research: how did the Japanese people view MacArthur's arrival?

## Primary Document #7

### Transcribed Conversation: General MacArthur's and Prince Konoe, Oct. 4, 1945

General MacArthur made it clear that women's suffrage in Japan would be one of his top priorities. It was not an order from the U.S. Government. MacArthur's orders were simple – to take charge in Japan and demilitarize the country. In his mind though, the best way to ensure the demise of militarism in Japan was to drastically improve the status of women in the country.



1. List General MacArthur's four priorities for the Occupation of Japan. Where does "extend suffrage to women" fall on that list?
2. Before the Occupation of Japan, Japanese women had already been fighting to achieve suffrage. Do you think this was what they expected after Japan's defeat? Why or why not?
3. The U.S. 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was a mere 25 years old when the Occupation of Japan started, and yet General MacArthur did not treat it like a revolutionary or experimental idea. He saw it as practical, necessary, and mainstream. What do you think this says about how Americans felt about the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment decades later?

## Primary Document #8

### Japanese Women Waiting in Line to Vote, April 10, 1946

At MacArthur's request, within the first year of the Occupation the Japanese legislature revised election laws to include women for the first time. On April 10, 1946, 13 million Japanese women voted. 38 women were elected.

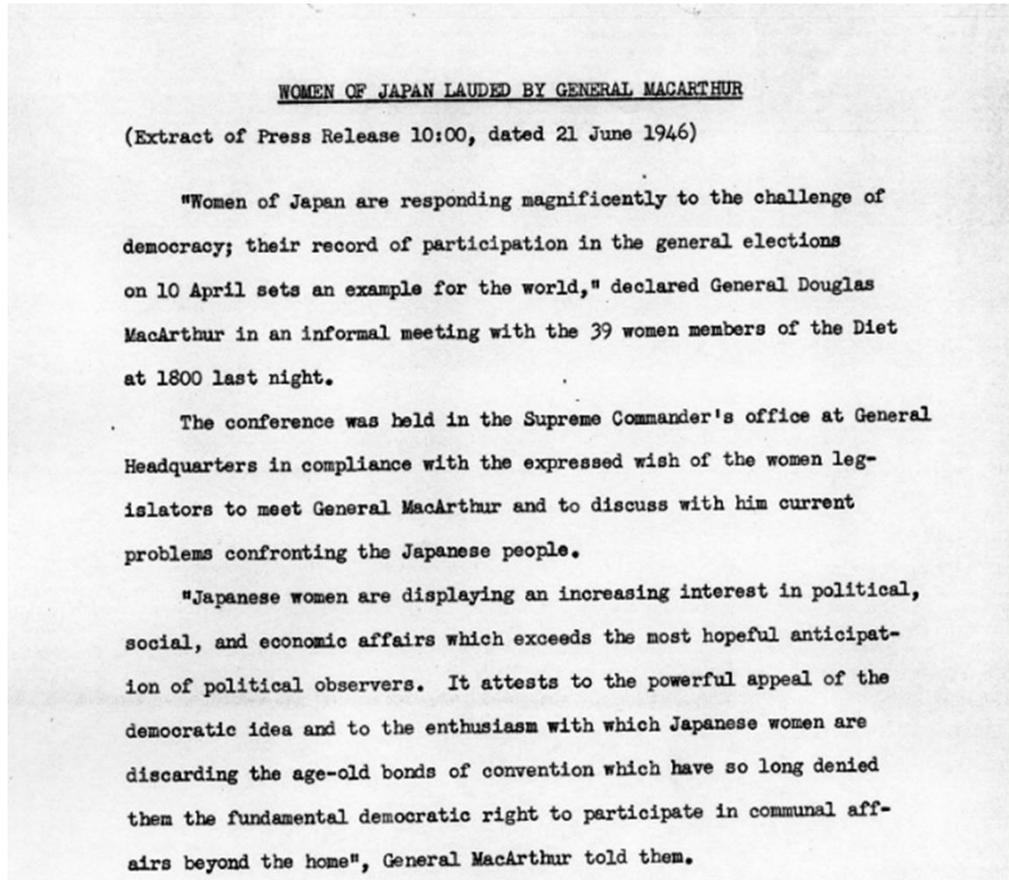


1. Who do you see in this photo? Do you think this group of women represents a good cross section of Japanese women?
2. The number of women who voted on April 10, 1946 exceeded the expectations of the Japanese government and MacArthur's staff. Why do you think so many women were motivated to vote?
3. Independent Research: during the 1946 election, 13,000,000 women voted out of an approximate total of 20,000,000 eligible women voters. Did the number of women voters increase in future years? How did the number of women voters compare each year to male voters?

## Primary Document #9

### Press Release: MacArthur Meets Elected Japanese Women, June 21, 1946

Prior to World War II, women in Japan did not have the right to do things like vote, own property, decide who they would marry, or run for election. In addition to allowing women to vote in the 1946 election, the Japanese legislature also removed restriction on women running for office. 38 Japanese women were elected on April 10, 1946. General MacArthur met with them months later to signal his support for them.



1. Why do you think it was helpful for General MacArthur to publicly show his support for the women who had been elected?
2. This document lists 39 women who were elected to office. Other reports and newspapers from 1946 list 38 women. What do historians do when information like this doesn't match?
3. Independent Research: the women who met with MacArthur raised a number of issues they thought were vital to Japan's current state. What were these issues?

## Primary Document #10

### Excerpts: Japanese Constitution, 1947

In 1947, women's suffrage was then permanently enshrined in the Japanese Constitution. Japanese women also gained access to a number of other rights – including the right to own property, and the right to mutually consent to marriage, and the right to have an education. These were major changes to the status of Japanese women.

legislation and in other governmental affairs.

**Article 14.** All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin.

Peers and peerage shall not be recognized.

**Article 24.** Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis.

With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.

**Article 25.** All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living.

In all spheres of life, the State shall use its endeavors for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health.

**Article 26.** All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided by law.

All people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free.

**Article 15.** The people have the inalienable right to choose their public officials and to dismiss them.

All public officials are servants of the whole community and not of any group thereof.

Universal adult suffrage is guaranteed with regard to the election of public officials.

1. List the rights in the excerpts above that are guaranteed to Japanese women.
2. Do you think Japanese women would have gained these rights as quickly if Japan had won the war? Why or why not?
3. Independent Research: how do the US and the Japanese constitution differ in terms of their approach to women?