

Read the selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

Women's Suffrage

by Maryann Kozikowski

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Last week our school was used as a polling place for an election. Many people visited our school so that they could vote. Men and women, people who were young and people who were old, and people of different backgrounds cast their ballots. About one hundred years ago, however, polling places looked different. Back then, we would not have seen women lining up to cast their votes. Is it because women didn't care? No, they cared a great deal. Instead, they were not there because they were not allowed to vote. Thankfully, the women's suffrage movement changed that!

What is suffrage?


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Suffrage means "the right to vote." The founders of our country thought that the people should get to elect government representatives. That is why they created a democracy. They also thought it was important for people to vote on important decisions in the country. That is why elections began. However, each state had its own rules about elections, and these rules included who could or could not vote. In most cases, the right to vote was given only to white men who owned property.

In the 1870s, an amendment to the U.S. Constitution changed the rules about who could vote. This amendment said that all men could vote, no matter what race or color they were. Although this was a great step in the right direction, women still did not have the right to vote in national elections.

How did women get the right to vote?

As the country grew and elections became even more important, women began to talk with each other about voting. Some women published articles explaining why women should have the right to vote. In 1848, a group of women including Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized a meeting in New York to discuss women's rights. Stanton studied the Declaration of Independence and then created a list of changes that were necessary to make women recognized as being equal to men as citizens of the United States. One of those changes was the right to vote.

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The meeting went well, but women still did not get the right to vote. However, many people agreed it was a step in the right direction. After the meeting, some people who did not believe in women's suffrage began to mock the efforts of the people at the meeting; they made fun of them in speeches and in newspapers. Yet, the organizers of the meeting were not angry. They believed any attention was good attention.


In the years that followed, more people became interested in women's suffrage. One of these women was Susan B. Anthony. She spoke often about how important it was for all people to be treated equally. People, both men and women, listened to her and to others; many joined in fighting for her cause. Finally, in 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified and went into effect. This amendment gave women the right to vote.

Why is the right to vote so important?

When a person gets to vote, he or she has a voice in a big decision. By voting, the person participates in making important choices, and, consequently, he or she is seen as a valuable person in society. But the right to vote means even more than that. The Nineteenth Amendment shows that men and women are equal under the law; it gives them equal benefits and privileges.

The Nineteenth Amendment wasn't the end of the fight for rights. Rather, it opened the door to new opportunities and inspired people to continue fighting. Women began to be more active in politics, and they began to work at jobs that had once been solely reserved for men. New laws were passed, such as Title IX, which gave women more opportunities in education and sports. The Civil Rights movement continued to remove barriers that still kept some people from voting. Life continued to improve for both men and women because freedom and justice are good for a country.

The next time you see a polling place or a commercial on television for an election, you might think about the people and the efforts that made voting legal for everyone, not just a small group.


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23 Read this sentence from paragraph 2 of the selection.

"The founders of our country thought that the people should get to elect government representatives."

What is the meaning of *founders* in this sentence?

- A people who live in a nation
 - B laws of a government
 - C voters in an election
 - D people who start something
- 24 Which detail supports the idea that early leaders in the United States believed the people of a country should get to choose their government representatives?
- A The founders set up a democracy with elections.
 - B The founders limited suffrage to white men.
 - C Women published articles about gaining the right to vote.
 - D The Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote.
- 25 The 1848 meeting in New York was important in raising public awareness about women's right to vote. Which sentence from the selection supports this idea?
- A "Back then, we would not have seen women lining up to cast their votes."
 - B "In most cases, the right to vote was given only to white men who owned property."
 - C "This amendment said that all men could vote, no matter what race or color they were."
 - D "They believed any attention was good attention."

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- 26 Which detail from the selection shows that some people were uncomfortable with the idea of equal treatment for women?
- A People wrote articles about giving women the right to vote.
 - B Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized a meeting to discuss women's rights.
 - C People mocked and made fun of the women at the 1848 meeting.
 - D Susan B. Anthony became interested in women's suffrage.
- 27 How are the amendment to the U.S. Constitution in the 1870s and the Nineteenth Amendment alike?
- A Both amendments declared that women had the same rights as men.
 - B Both amendments increased the number of citizens who were allowed to vote.
 - C Both amendments increased the number of citizens who could own property.
 - D Both amendments declared that people of all races had the same rights.
- 28 Read this sentence from paragraph 1.
- "Last week our school was used as a polling place for an election."
- What is a "polling place"?
- A where citizens vote
 - B where protests are held
 - C where suffrage is taught
 - D where people debate

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