

Enquiry 5: Teachers' notes

To what extent did women have different views, aims and aspirations throughout the nineteenth century?

Enquiry overview

About the lessons

This series of lessons has been designed to help you mark the one hundredth anniversary of women's suffrage. It encourages students to think about the different views, aims and aspirations within the suffrage movement, and whether these divisions impacted on the effectiveness of the movement.

Key learning points

- Differences between Victorian women.
- The idea of 'separate spheres' and what Victorian women could and couldn't do.
- Interrogating the 1851 census.
- The kinds of jobs that different women did.
- Changes in the status of women in the period.
- Women who fought against female suffrage.
- Lily Maxwell and the vote, 1867.
- The tactics of women's suffrage and the move to more desperate, militant actions.

Outline

Mostly, when we study the fight for female suffrage, we focus on the ideas and actions of the suffragettes and the WSPU, sometimes forgetting the half-century before of suffragist activity. We also tend to think of the population at the time being split in two – male and female. Of course, there were males who were pro-suffrage, just like there were female anti-suffragists. But, as everyone knows, history is much more complicated than that – things are never black and white; there are usually an infinite number of shades of grey!

This enquiry focuses on the female population – a majority, not a minority – and their attitudes and actions over the battle for women and the vote.

Lessons

The content is appropriate for addressing the relevant requirements of the National Curriculum for teaching about suffrage in history.

The lessons are designed for use with Key Stage 3 students and may be adapted for use with Key Stage 4. At the start of each lesson there is a recap to help teachers check that students have grasped the knowledge from previous sections.

Rationale for the enquiry:

i) Scholarly rationale

Much recent research has focused on the suffragists, rather than the suffragettes, and the continuities of their tactics with other, earlier, more successful Victorian pressure groups, like the Anti-Corn Law League. This enquiry tries to explore the variety of wishes, aims and ideas behind the

changing status of women throughout the nineteenth century.

ii) Curricular rationale

History is complicated. There is a tendency to simplify things for our students. This enquiry deliberately seeks to engage students with the differing aims, ideas and aspirations of women throughout the nineteenth century. Women were not one voice, but many. Using the database and sources, the enquiry explores the utility of primary evidence and asks students to reach their own conclusions – then the final activity asks them to rethink their initial conclusions in the light of their continuing work.

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Breakdown of the scheme of work

The enquiry comprises five lessons. It is envisioned that it would be taught in Year 9, allowing teachers to draw on and reinforce students' knowledge of the different periods, political developments and events studied earlier in the key stage. An overview of the scheme of work is shown below:

Lesson	Students will know
L1: Were all Victorian women the same?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of class and gender differences in the nineteenth century. • The idea of 'separate spheres' for men and women. • Introduction to enquiry question and an opportunity to speculate about the question.
L2: What if you <i>had</i> to work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 1851 census – what can we learn about women and work? • Using the suffrage database to explore work for single, married and widowed women – how similar and how different were they? • Can students spot changes over the nineteenth century by using the database?
L3: Step by step	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing legal rights and employment opportunities – for some – over the course of the nineteenth century. <p>Case studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ladies of Langham Place; Jessie Boucherett and the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women. • Female Middle Class Emigration Society. • Emily Davies and education. • Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and medicine. • Annie Besant and the Match Girls Strike. • Josephine Butler and the Contagious Diseases Act.
L4: Did all women want the vote?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all women wanted the vote. Organised opposition developed – and increased as women and groups like the WSPU became more militant. <p>Case studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Humphry Ward and the Appeal Against Female Suffrage. • Gertrude Bell. • Women's National Anti-Suffrage League. • Queen Victoria.

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<p>L5: How did women get the vote?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peaceful protest – why didn't it succeed? • Why did protests become more violent? • Make a judgement: How effective were these protests? <p>Case studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lily Maxwell. • NSWs and NUWSS. • WSPU.
<p>Outcome activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just how divided were women? • Did these divisions – if there were any – help or hinder the fight for the vote? A chance to rethink conclusions, and to explore the question of 'how far...' and 'how effective...' <p>As previously stated, there are no definitive conclusions!</p>

Lesson 1:

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Were all Victorian women the same?

Key ideas

It would be easy to assume that all Victorian women were very similar to each other, and that they all wanted the vote for the same reason. But nothing could be further from the truth. Victorian Britain was a class-based society, so upper-class ladies had a very different lifestyle to middle-class ladies, who again were very different to working-class women. Some working-class women, whose husbands were skilled or had secure employment, lived very different lives to many poorer/unskilled working-class families. To some extent, women and their position in society depended on class, although, as we will see, class lines were very blurred.

Victorian Britain was also a gender-based society, where women very definitely had their place. The 'Angel in the Home' idea epitomised the 'separate spheres' philosophy that dominated Victorian society. Students will, if we are not careful, assume therefore that women were inferior to men. Most Victorians would not think so. Separate but equal was the ideal, but was that what happened in reality?

This lesson focuses on exploring the differences between male and female, as well as between female and female, as a basis for exploring attitudes towards Victorian women.

Starter: (Slide 5)

Whole-class discussion: What have these women got in common? What differences are there?

Use the PowerPoint images to begin to explore the differences between rich and poor. This might include clothes, lifestyle and security. Get the students to suggest differences from what they already know about Victorian Britain or research in textbooks. Browse the database to find examples of as many different kinds of lifestyle that you

can. Some will be easier to find than others! Mrs Minnie Baldock, for example, works in a factory making shirts, whereas Miss Rachel Barrett is an Assistant Editor.

Conclusions here will be tentative – that's fine, as students will get an opportunity to refine their thinking in later lessons. Students should begin to develop a wider view of women – they were not just one amorphous mass!

Activity 1: (Slide 6)

Whole-class discussion: What impact would the idea of 'separate spheres' have had on the lives of women?

The idea of separate spheres dominated the thinking of many Victorians – male and female. Ask students to consider how this might benefit women, and how it might inhibit the options available to women in Victorian Britain. How is the theory similar to what we believe today, and how is it different?

Activity 2: (Slide 7)

Activity: What women could and couldn't do.

Students research the answers for themselves, using textbooks and the internet, to develop a clearer picture of the place of women in Victorian Britain. The simple answer is that women were legally 'owned' by either their father or their husband. They could not own property in their own right, educational opportunities were limited, and so on. Widows had more freedom to own property and control wealth, but they were seen as alone and vulnerable!

Lesson 1:

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Were all Victorian women the same?

Activity 3: (Slide 8)

Whole-class discussion: Why does Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence want the vote? What does that tell us about the status of women in Victorian Britain?

Pethick-Lawrence's quote is used to link the work on women to suffrage, and we will return to this later in the sequence of activities. Suffice to say that the vote was about much more than being able to vote in a general election!

Plenary: (Slide 9)

This is a simple review activity, encouraging students to reflect on what they have learned during the lesson, and to make them reconsider the diversity of experiences for Victorian women.

Final question: Were all Victorian women the same?

Resources needed:

- Enquiry 5 PowerPoint Lesson 1
- Suffrage database
www.suffrageresources.org.uk/database

Lesson 2:

Enquiry 5: Teachers' notes

What if you *had* to work?

Key ideas

Many Victorian women had to work, whatever the theory. Poorer working-class families depended on the wages of women and children to make ends meet. Unmarried middle-class women (not all women could marry, as there were more women than men alive) needed to support themselves, but often had little or no education. Few jobs, such as governesses, lady's companion or needlework, were available and all were low paid and insecure. It was important for middle-class women to do 'respectable' jobs and that

limited their options too. Nevertheless, according to the 1851 census, nearly three million women worked in paid employment. Many more were involved in 'family' work, or, as you can see from the database, defined themselves as 'wife of....'

This lesson uses the database, and three sources, to explore the world of paid work for women, and what that meant for the idea of 'separate spheres'.

Recap: (Slide 5) Recap learning from the previous lesson.

Starter: (Slide 6)

Whole-class discussion: What can we discover about women's work from the 1851 census?

Explore the figures with students. 1851 is chosen because it is the first year that more people worked in industry than in agriculture and lived in towns rather than rural areas. Help students to discover what jobs women did. Most women worked in either domestic service or the textile

industry. There is a clear divide between 'men's work' (heavy industry) and women's work. Even within the textile industry, mill work and making clothes, there is a divide (not shown here) between male skilled work and female low-paid work.

Activity 1: (Slide 7, Resources p.1)

Explain to the group that, in addition to jobs showing a divide between 'women's' and 'men's' work, the kinds of jobs people did were also divided to an extent by an individual's place in society.

In Victorian Britain, women who could afford not to work were encouraged not to and instead occupied the leading role in managing and organising the household. There were those who worked because they needed an outlet to occupy themselves, but did not have to work; there were those who did not work outside of the household; and there were those who had to work in order to contribute enough to the family economy. Single women without family support would also have worked to support themselves.

The notion of 'class' first came into being during the Victorian period, and the idea of working-, middle- and upper-class definitions came into wider usage in the first half of the nineteenth century. As with many things in history, the idea of class was also something that politicians, historians and sociologists have disagreed about, both at the time and since. There were those who believed in and wanted to uphold a class system, as it was the duty of those in the higher orders to support the lower; there were those who felt that class was defined by economic position alone; and those who felt that a number of things, such as economic position, education, power and social status, e.g. respect/popularity, all contributed to their class.

Lesson 2:

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What if you *had* to work?

Activity 1: cont'd

However, these categorisations for people and their positions in society were very complicated and deeply stratified in themselves, with each being further sub-divided into several categories. In reality, of course, class lines were very blurred and it was unclear whether this is really how the Victorians described themselves at all.

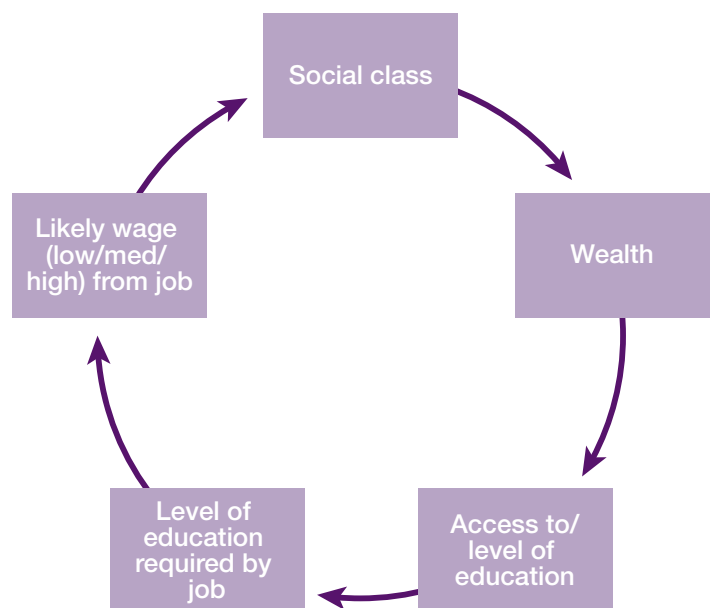
Ask students to which class they might assign the people who did the following:

1. Coach-maker (maker of wheeled coaches drawn by horses).
2. A clerk who is responsible for reading and filing important records for a business or organisation and keeping accounts.

Survey student opinion. The reality was that the coach-maker would earn a higher wage than the clerk, yet assumptions might have placed the clerk in a higher social class than the coach-maker. What problems might this cause for trying to categorise social class by jobs alone?

Ask students to look at Booth's Poverty Map of 1897 (see slide 7). Booth originally set out to produce this map to counter arguments made that 25% of people lived in poverty, which he felt was vastly overestimated. What he actually found was that closer to a third of people were living in poverty. How does Booth attempt to define those living in poverty and those who aren't? What does this suggest about his attitude to class? Ask students to come up with a definition of how they might define a job in Victorian Britain by class, given their knowledge of Victorian society and access to education and other rights. The example below is simply for illustration. Students should come up with their own, although you may wish to provide some scaffold for students that need it.

For the purpose of the rest of this lesson, students will see the class definitions of working class, middle class and upper class applied to jobs. When they are using the database to find the different kinds of jobs that the women included did, they will be asked to divide these into working-class and middle-class jobs. When they do this,



they must also be prepared to give a reason why they have classified these jobs in this way, which may in places require additional internet research about those jobs. There is also a **resource sheet** to support students getting to grips with some occupations that students may not have come across before.

NB: The resource sheet is fixed correctly for your information. The definition column needs jumbling before handing out to students.

Lesson 2:

Enquiry 5: Teachers' notes

What if you *had* to work?

Activity 2: (Slide 8, Resources p.2)

Database activity: Single women and work.

Using the field 'marital status', students search the database and build up a list of jobs done by single women. They should split the list into working-class and middle-class jobs. Most are fairly clear, although some are more difficult to decide and are open to debate. 'Servant', 'Mill worker', 'Cotton winder' and 'Weaver' are more likely to be working class; 'Student', 'Proprietor', 'Typing business', 'Bookkeeper', 'Music teacher', 'Governess' and 'Annuitant' (pensioner) are more likely to be middle class.

You could extend this by searching the database using the 'date' field. Do the types of jobs change as the nineteenth

century progresses? You should be able to see a pattern of new jobs, such as clerk, typist and editor, towards the end of the century. Does this mean that opportunities for women to work increased as the nineteenth century progressed?

Whole-class discussion: How useful is the source on the **resource sheet**, from *The Dictionary of Daily Wants*, in helping us to understand the working life of many single women? Over 1.1 million women, nearly all single, worked in domestic service. It is a primary source, but from a guide to running a successful household aimed at married women. How might working as a maid be regarded as good training for married life?

Activity 3: (Slides 9–10)

Database activity: Married women and work.

This is deliberately a similar activity to the previous, exploring the database to discover what kinds of work married women did. Again, in most cases, it is fairly straightforward to separate the list of jobs into working-class and middle-class variants. The major difference is the large number of women who define themselves as 'wife of...'. What does that tell us about married women? Don't forget to compare answers with those for single women to see whether there are any similarities and differences.

The primary source on slide 10, from a Lancashire cotton worker in 1892, should raise all kinds of issues – with the idea of 'separate spheres' and 'the Angel in the Home' – and is perfect for comparing and contrasting with what married women have to do today.

Activity 4: (Slide 11)

Database activity: Widowed women and work.

Again, this is a similar activity to the previous – exploring the database using the field 'marital status' and 'widow'). The major difference here is the status of many jobs – Harriet Green is a farmer of 42 acres, employing eight men and four boys, for example. She has almost certainly taken over from her deceased husband. Similarly, Hannah Boswell runs a coach and fly or omnibus business.

Make sure to compare jobs with both married and single women to look for similarities and differences. Your students should be able to spot trends from the data.

Plenary: (Slide 12)

This is a simple review activity, encouraging students to reflect on what they have learned during the lesson, and to make them reconsider the diversity of activities carried out by Victorian women who had to work. You can extend this using the 'date' field in the database, to explore to what extent the types of jobs changed over the nineteenth century. You might also explore the 'Birth region' to explore regional differences in employment patterns. For example, most 'mill workers' and 'weavers' come from Lancashire and Yorkshire. I'm sure your students will be able to find many more regional differences.

Final question: What kinds of jobs did Victorian women do?

Resources needed:

- Enquiry 5 PowerPoint Lesson 2
- Enquiry 5 Lesson 2 Resource Sheets pp. 1–2
- Suffrage database
www.suffrageresources.org.uk/database

Lesson 3:

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Step by step

Key ideas

Not everyone agreed that votes for women was the way forward. Florence Nightingale, for example, was more interested in reforms to nursing and hospitals than in female suffrage, although she eventually supported the suffragists. From around 1850 onwards, there was a series of 'single-issue' campaigns designed to tackle many of the serious issues affecting women. Often, many of the same women – and a few men – were involved in each of these

campaigns. Many were led by middle-class ladies with time on their hands and a burning ambition to be able to do something useful with their lives.

This lesson explores some of these campaigns and asks students to assess how much progress they made. The key question to consider is to what extent the life of women was better towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Recap: (Slide 5) Recap learning from the previous lesson.

Starter: (Slide 6)

What does the cover of Votes for Women tell us about the suffrage movement by 1913?

Activity 1: (Slide 7)

Langham Place became the unofficial headquarters of many of the campaigns to improve choices for women. An informal group of ladies met there, and established a journal and meeting place. Ask students to use textbooks and the internet to research these ladies – who were they; what

were their aims; what did they do; how did people (men as well as women) react – and were they successful?

Whole-class discussion: Conclude by debating whether there should be a statue to these ladies outside 19 Langham Place.

Activity 2: (Slide 8)

Students need to understand legitimate opposition to votes for women, as well as spurious opposition. There was a genuine concern that giving the vote to women would undermine men – there were fewer men than women – as well as uncertainty over how women would vote. The serious debate was over adult suffrage – giving women the vote on the same terms as men (in 1867 that would have meant only single women who owned property) – versus female suffrage (giving all women the vote).

Ask students to use textbooks and the internet to research the arguments about adult suffrage versus female suffrage.

Whole-class discussion: Discuss who should have been given the vote in (a) 1867, (b) 1884 and (c) 1900. Are the answers the same? Did women like the Ladies of Langham Place have a clear, agreed idea of who should have the vote? And did this confusion help or hinder the case for votes for women? There is no clear answer to these questions, just as there was no clear answer at the time.

Lesson 3:

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Step by step

Activity 3: (Slides 9-15)

Look at all these campaigns from 1850 to 1890. Split students into groups to research each one and then feed back to the whole class. Which of the campaigns were effective, and which were less effective? Who led each campaign? How did these leaders relate to other women leading other campaigns? Did each campaign actually improve the status and standing of women in the community? Or were they a distraction from the business of getting the vote?

Let students use the database, as suggested on the slides, to explore any impact these campaigns had.

(NB: On slide 11, the dates are the dates these women's colleges were founded.)

Plenary: (Slide 16, Resources p. 3)

Use the card sort on the **resource sheet** to reach a conclusion about the effectiveness of each campaign. Place the cards on a horizontal axis, from 'least effective' to 'very effective', like the one on the sheet. Ask students to justify their decision to others in the group. Is it possible to reach a consensus on how effective these campaigns were?

Finally, ask students to decide if the 'step by step' approach to reform was any better than the approach of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, whom they came across in Lesson 1, who argued that the only way to improve the lot of women was by getting the vote: 'Not the vote only, but what the vote means – the moral, the mental, economic, the spiritual enfranchisement of Womanhood; the release of women, the repairing... of womanhood...'

Final question: To what extent had legal changes altered the status of women?

Resources needed:

- Enquiry 5 PowerPoint Lesson 3
- Enquiry 5 Lesson 3 Resource Sheets p. 3
- Suffrage database
www.suffrageresources.org.uk/database

Lesson 4:

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Did all women want the vote?

Key ideas

Many women opposed votes for women, especially the violent tactics adopted by the suffragettes. These proved very divisive. It is no surprise that anti-suffrage sentiment rose rapidly after 1906.

This lesson explores the views of those women who opposed getting the vote, trying to understand their ideas, and thinking about how opinions have (or haven't) changed since the 1850s.

Recap and answers: (Slide 5)

Recap learning from previous lesson with students.

Starter: (Slide 6)

Whole-class discussion: Look carefully at the postcard – it is a primary source. How can you tell it is anti-suffrage? How are the women MPs portrayed? How does the

cartoonist show his ideas about 'separate spheres'? How useful is this source for telling us about attitudes to women's suffrage in the Edwardian period?

Activity 1: (Slides 7-10)

Summarise the arguments of these women who opposed suffrage. How influential do you think famous women like this were? Does opposition like this make the 'step by step' approach from Lesson 3 seem more effective?

Whole-class discussion: What progress had been made by women by 1908?

Activity 2: (Slides 10-11)

Activity: A letter to Queen Victoria. Students read Queen Victoria's comments about this 'mad, wicked folly' on the PowerPoint (Slide 10). Why is she so opposed to women having the vote? Students write a letter of reply pointing out why they think she is right or wrong in her views.

Plenary: (Slide 12)

Ask students whether they think women were their own worst enemy in making it harder to get the vote. If many women opposed suffrage, why should men listen to those demanding the vote? Try to pull together all they have learned in all four lessons and go back to the original question: How divided were Victorian women? Did they

have one voice? Did they have a clear view of what they wanted, and why? Again, there is no one clear answer to this question; opinions will vary. Can the group come to one conclusion? History is problematic!

Final question: To what extent had the ideas you came across in Lesson 1 changed by 1908?

Resources needed:

- Enquiry 5 PowerPoint Lesson 4

Lesson 5:

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How did women get the vote?

Key ideas

Women were divided not just over what they wanted – male suffrage, adult suffrage or female suffrage – but also over how to get the vote. For most of the nineteenth century, the suffragists, such as Millicent Fawcett and the NUWSS, adopted the tried-and-tested methods used by successful Victorian pressure groups, such as the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade or the Anti-Corn Law League. When these failed to work, some women, such as Emmeline Pankhurst and the WSPU, decided that it was time to be much more militant in their methods. This in turn led to increasing anti-suffrage activity, with, for example, the setting up of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League, as we have seen in Lesson 4. It is tempting to see the gaining of the vote as a victory for the suffragettes, and many students do, but is that really the case? Perhaps the different approaches actually harmed the case for the vote and strengthened opposition.

Recap and answers: (Slide 5)

Recap learning from previous lesson with students.

Starter: (Slide 6)

Whole-class discussion: Lily Maxwell voted in the 1867 by-election in Manchester. Why was she able to vote? Did

she advance, or hold back, the fight for female suffrage?

Activity 1: (Slides 7–9, Resources p.4)

Whole-class discussion: Discuss all the tactics used from 1832 onwards. How would you describe them? Can you 'sort' them into categories? Can you arrange them into a continuum from 'most effective' at the time to 'least effective'? You might like also to discuss which tactics might be most effective today!

Why did the National Society for Women's Suffrage and the NUWSS adopt these specific tactics? Why do you think these tactics failed to win the vote, when they had worked for other pressure groups like the Anti-Corn Law League?

Students can use the timeline provided on the **resource sheet** to plot these events, to help them see any developing patterns in the tactics used by women.

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How did women get the vote?

Activity 2: (Slide 10)

Whole-class discussion: How are these tactics: (a) similar to and (b) different from those used by the suffragists? Were these tactics any more effective than those used by the suffragists?

Activity 3: (Slide 11, Resources p.5)

Now it is time to try to pull all this together, using the work carried out in the previous five lessons. The key question we asked at the beginning of this unit was about divisions: how united and how divided were women in their demand for the vote? And, of course, what exactly did women mean by 'the vote'? Did they mean 'adult suffrage' or did they mean 'women's suffrage'? And if they meant 'women's suffrage', which women in particular did they mean? After all, it was not until 1918 that all men over 21 could vote.

It is therefore a complicated story, over a long period of time. That is why we asked the students to produce a timeline, to try to explore patterns over nearly 100 years.

Outcome activity: The final **resource sheet** asks students to use their conclusions from each activity to build up a 'Big Picture' of the female population during Victorian and Edwardian times – their ideas, aims and aspirations – and to reach two conclusions: (a) just how divided women were (b) try to decide whether these divisions – if there were any – helped or hindered the fight for the vote.

As ever, there are no definitive answers to these questions. It is obvious that women were divided, but 'how far' is open to debate. Similarly, increasingly historians argue that the activities of the suffragettes increased opposition to votes for women rather than hastened its arrival, but again, this conclusion is open to debate.

Plenary: (Slide 12)

This focuses clearly on the tactics used by women – and some men who were allowed to join the NUWSS (but not the WSPU) – to try to get the vote. As with all these activities, the focus is on how united women were in the way they fought for the vote. This gives us two key questions for our students to discuss:

- Are all women fighting for the vote in the same way?
- Which are the most effective tactics? Why?

There is no clear answer to these questions, other than the obvious fact that women were divided. It is important for students to explore these divisions, rather than assume that, because they made the most noise, most women were suffragettes and that the suffragettes were more successful.

Final question: Ask for quick responses to the Enquiry Question.

Resources needed:

- Enquiry 5 PowerPoint Lesson 5
- Enquiry 5 Lesson 5 Resource Sheet pp. 4–5
- Suffrage database
www.suffrageresources.org.uk/database