

# Women's Movements Through Photographs

Celebrating Women's History Month with  
Visual Primary Source Lessons for K-12



# To celebrate Women's History Month, we're taking an in-depth look at primary source photographs within Britannica ImageQuest.

We've gathered images from women's movements throughout U.S. history and paired them with supportive content, activities, and questions to help students analyze, evaluate, and draw their own conclusions about significant moments on the path toward women's rights.

In any learning environment, primary sources invite students to become actively involved in the process. Teaching with primary sources

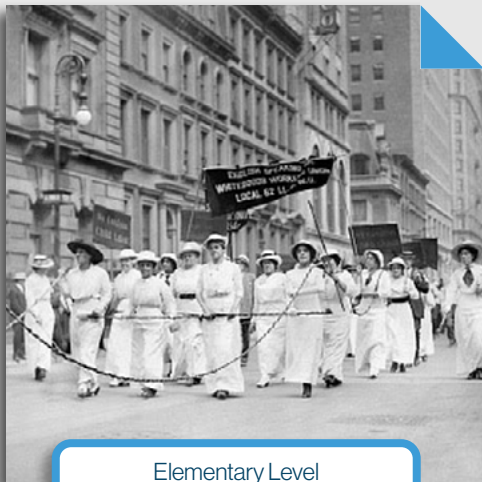
promotes authentic student inquiry and builds students' critical thinking skills. By providing a direct lens through which to view the past, a primary source gives students the opportunity to get curious about and connect to the person behind the firsthand account. The investigation of a primary source leads to an examination of the historical context in which it was created and a greater understanding of the topic of study. Ultimately, these in-depth interpretations of historical events and the people who played a role in them will help students form a richer understanding of themselves and their roles in present-day events.

As we take a deeper look at history, through photographs of women demonstrating and standing up for their rights, we can even use the legacy of the development of a National Women's History Month observance to gain insight into what was happening in the world for women. The significance of the month of March dates to the mid-19th century when, on March 8, 1857, a

group of female garment workers in New York City staged a protest to demand better working conditions and pay. Police aggressively halted the demonstration, but several years later the determined women formed their own union. In 1911, March 19 was observed as International Women's Day (IWD) to acknowledge women's continuing struggle for recognition and rights. The date of IWD was changed to March 8 in 1921, a year after women in the United States won the right to vote.

In 1978 the schools of Sonoma county, California, named March Women's History Month as a means of examining women's history, issues, and contributions. The idea gained momentum, and in 1981 a congressional resolution proclaimed the week surrounding March 8 as National Women's History Week. In 1986 the National Women's History Project played a significant role in the expansion of the observance to the entire month of March.

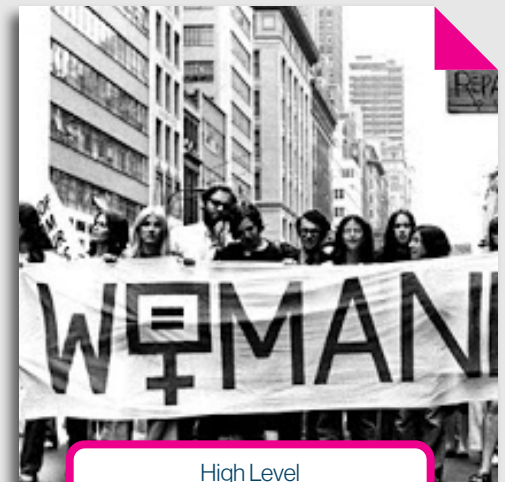
Visit these activities for primary source ImageQuest photographs, supportive content, and sample questions to inspire inquiry in your classrooms:



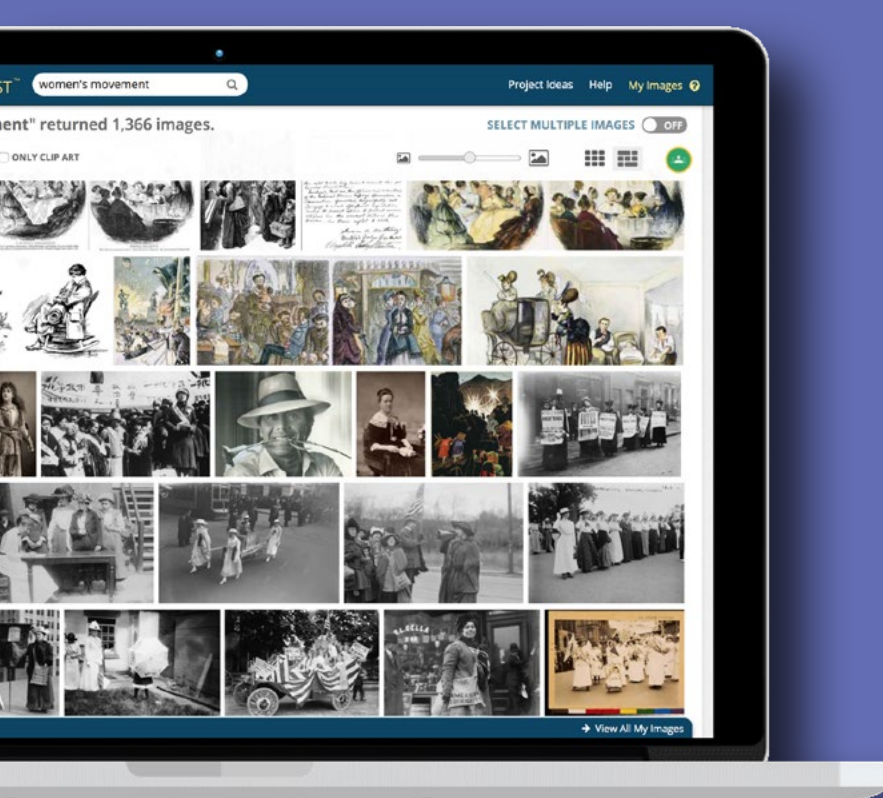
Elementary Level  
**Modern Feminism and Women's Suffrage**



Middle Level  
**War, Depression, and Women's Role in the Workforce**



High Level  
**The Intersection of Civil Rights and Women's Liberation**



The photographs provided in these activities are part of Britannica ImageQuest, the world's most respected and trusted K-12 image libraries curated in one safe database!

Britannica ImageQuest brings lessons, assignments, and projects to life with the best and broadest offering of curriculum-relevant imagery and digital art materials (symbols, educational illustrations, infographics, flags, and conceptual illustrations), all rights-cleared for educational, non-commercial use.

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## Elementary Level Activity

Explore these photos with your students as an introduction to a unit or lesson. As a class, try answering the Suggested Questions below the photographs.

The first part of our activity series, exploring women's movements through primary source ImageQuest photographs, is for elementary level students. It focuses on women's suffrage at the turn of the 20th century.



By 1910 the term feminism had arrived in the United States. Feminists wanted to change women's roles at home. They also wanted to be able to go to college and work. Feminism brought new energy to the women's suffrage movement, and by the 20th century the fight for women's voting rights had reached massive proportions.

## Explore ImageQuest Primary Source Photographs



Women suffragettes in front of the White House, 1917

Women union workers marching in an American Labor Day parade, 1913



### Suggested Questions:

- What do you notice first when you look at either photo?
- What do you want to know more about when you look at it?
- When were these photos taken?
- Why are the women in the second photo wearing white?
- Who is missing in these photos?

The photos in this activity have been sourced from Britannica ImageQuest. Below is citation information from each photograph.

WHITE HOUSE: SUFFRAGETTES. – Women suffragettes holding a banner addressing President Woodrow Wilson, in front of the White House, Washington, D.C., 1917. Fine Art. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.

LABOR DAY PARADE, 1913. – Women union workers and child labor protesters marching in an American Labor Day parade, 1913. Fine Art. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.

## Middle Level Activity

Use the photograph of picketers and the letter to President Roosevelt to examine differing views about women's changing role in the workforce during both the Great Depression and World War II.

**The second part of our activity series, exploring women's movements through primary source ImageQuest photographs, is for middle level students. It focuses on women in the workforce and feminism after enfranchisement.**

With the economic depression of the 1930s, women's right to work and earn money was challenged. Women workers, especially the growing number of married women workers, were often blamed when men couldn't find work. In the 1930s many cities and states throughout the United States formally barred married women from public employment, including as teachers.

Despite this suspicion of the woman worker, the female labor force continued to grow. When World War II broke out, women took on jobs so that the men could leave to fight. The

United States government even encouraged women to work, calling it their "patriotic duty" to be a part of war production.

In industries such as steel, aircraft, and automobile production, women performed jobs that they had never done before. However, it was understood that women held these jobs only "for the duration" of the war. When peace came and men returned from overseas, the women were expected to graciously return these jobs to the men who "deserved" them. Contrary to what many people think, the era of World War II was not the beginning of the woman worker. However, it certainly led to a new level of public awareness about how many women worked outside the home and the wide range of work they could and did do.

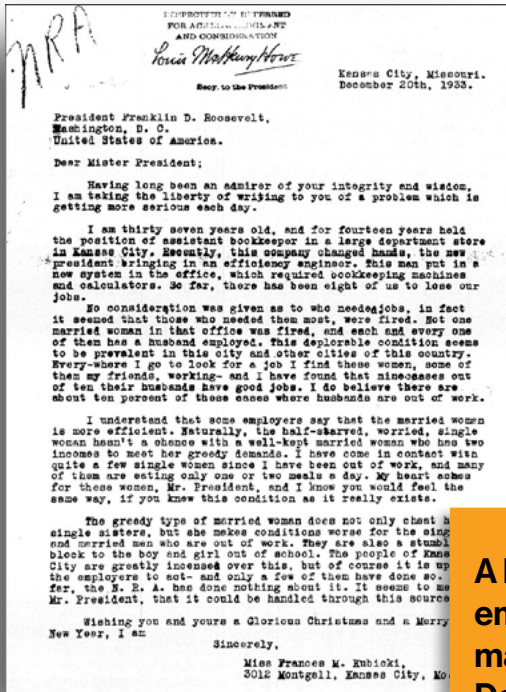
In the two decades after World War II ended, there were conflicting opinions about women's roles. On the one hand, psychologists and

educators, television shows and magazine pages, declared the return of women to home and family, proclaiming a new era of revived domesticity and femininity. But at the same time, the female labor force in the United States continued to grow, so much so that by 1950 the average woman worker was no longer a young girl marking time before marriage. Now she was a married woman, working before—and after—she raised her children.

The position of women workers still left much to be desired. Women who worked full-time jobs usually earned half what men did. Many women only worked part-time. Discrimination was a constant in the workforce. Nonetheless, women had come to stay in the labor force, and earning a living had become an important part of women's lives and expectations.



# Explore ImageQuest Primary Source Photographs



**A letter on the employment of married women, December 1933**



**Congress of Industrial Workers picketers in 1941 in Greensboro, Ga.**

## Suggested Questions:

- What do you notice first when you look at the photo?
- What do you want to know more about when you look at it?
- When was the photo taken?
- Why are the women protesting?
- When was the letter written?
- After reading the letter, why do you think that some women did not support other women in the workforce? Which women were judged more harshly for working?
- Do you think that people today would agree with the women picketing or with the woman who wrote the letter? Would different people have different opinions?
- Does the photo or letter change how you feel about a certain issue or cause of today?

## Research Opportunities:

- What was going on in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s that affected how both men and women felt about women working?
- What role did The Great Depression have on perceptions about women working?
- How did World War II change perceptions about women working?

The photos in this activity have been sourced from Britannica ImageQuest. Below is citation information from each photograph.

C.I.O. PICKETERS, 1941. – Congress of Industrial Workers (CIO) picketers jeering at workers entering a mill in Greensboro, Greene County, Georgia. Photograph by Jack Delano, May 1941. Fine Art. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.

"A Letter on Employment of Married Women." *Teaching With Documents, Volume 1*, in *Teaching With Documents: Using Primary Sources from the National Archives*, edited by United States National Archives and Records Administration and National Council for the Social Studies, Vol. 1, Washington, D.C., National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1989, pp. 130–133. *Britannica Original Sources*. 16 Mar. 2017.

## High Level Activity

Examine how the civil rights movement intersected with and inspired the second wave of feminism.

**The third part of our activity series, exploring women's movements through primary source ImageQuest photographs, is for high level students. It focuses on the influence of the civil rights movement on the women's liberation movement and how they intersected.**

Of all the forces for change happening in the United States in the mid-1960s, none impacted the revival of the feminist movement more than the civil rights movement. A decade earlier the U.S. Supreme Court had mandated the racial desegregation of public schools in its famous *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision of 1954. This encouraged challenges to other forms of racial segregation.

Civil rights demonstrators stood up for their rights, were arrested and beaten by authorities, and began to receive the sympathy of national media and public opinion. In this context, feminism came back into the American public eye. Women were inspired by the model of African Americans who had banded together to question long-standing discrimination and widespread racist beliefs, and they mounted organized protests against their own subordination as women. They invented a new word, sexism, to signify the similarities between discrimination against people of color (racism) and discrimination against women. They began to use the term gender to separate out and concentrate on the legal and social discrimination between men and women that they insisted must be undone.

Historians have named this feminist

revival "the second wave." It attracted women of different generations who approached the problems of sexism with various political styles and protest methods. Many professional and working women had long—if quietly—worked against gender discrimination from within existing women's organizations. These and other women concentrated on challenging discriminatory laws and pressing the major political parties to respond to their demands.



# Explore ImageQuest Primary Source Photographs



1. Civil rights march on Washington, 1963



2. Women marching for equality in New York, 1970s



3. New York protest for women's liberation, 1971



4. Women's liberation demonstration in New York, 1970s

## Suggested Questions:

- What do you notice first when you look at any of these photos?
- When were the photos taken? Do you know anything about the political climate during those times?
- Who agreed with the protesters, who disagreed? Why?
- What information has not been included that you wonder about?
- How do you think the civil rights movement (photo 1) inspired the women's liberation movement (photo 2, 3, and 4) of the 1960s and 1970s?

## Activity Extension:

- Create a visual timeline of the 1960s into the 1970s using additional images from Britannica ImageQuest.

The photos in this activity have been sourced from Britannica ImageQuest. Below is citation information from each photograph.

*Civil rights march on Washington, DC, USA. Procession of African Americans carrying placards demanding equal rights, integrated schools, decent housing, and an end to bias. 28 August 1963. Photographer: Warren K Leffler. Photography. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.*

*Women For Equality. Photographer. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.*

*Protest in New York. March for women's liberation, 1971, United States. Photograph. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.*

*New York Demo. Photographer. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.*

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