Deeds, not Words
Tragedies Suffered and Triumphs Secured by the British Suffragettes

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Group Documentary
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We spent a long time trying to decide what our project theme would be for this year. We travel to London often and are familiar with the how the British women got the right to vote. We chose this as our topic because, for us, National History Day is not only a competition, but a way to share stories we feel need to be told. My sister and I have always strongly believed that there should be complete equality between the genders, and we knew that the first step in this long road was when women were finally able to help choose government officials, so we decided to make female suffrage this year’s project theme.

We have competed in National History Day for the past two years. Our first project was a website, the second a documentary. We had much better results with the documentary and we enjoyed it more, so we wanted to do one again this year.

For years, a group of British women known as the Suffragists silently struggled for equal voting rights, with no result. Some women began to feel that they had to do something else: something big, in order to gain the attention of men and get their message across. On October 10th, 1903 a woman by the name of Emmeline Pankhurst formed a new group called the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). The members of WSPU became known as the Suffragettes. They had the same goals as the Suffragists but were willing to do more to be heard. They campaigned against the politicians who were against women’s suffrage. They broke windows, cut telephone wires, held riots, and even planted bombs when they were sure that no one was around to get hurt. They made people listen. Still, most people thought that women didn’t need to vote. They used force to stop them. They threw them in jail. They force-fed them when, in protest, they wouldn’t eat. And yet the members of the WSPU did not give up the fight for gender equality. They went on hunger strikes, forcing the government to pass the Prisoners (Temporarily Discharged for Ill Health) Act. They also had to face the death of a fellow activist. All the tragedies they endured finally paid off. They triumphed in 1928 when the Equal Franchise Act was passed.

We began our research by looking at secondary sources online and getting a basic idea of what had happened. Once we had settled on the topic, we read the autobiographies of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, Annie Kenney, and Constance Lytton. With the information that we gained from the books, we began to look at newspapers from the time of the movement, for which we subscribed to the British Newspaper Archive. For pictures from that era, we contacted the London School of Economics that has a collection of Suffragette materials. For footage, we got in touch with British Pathe, a company that filmed some of the Suffragette gatherings in the early 1900s.
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"The Argument of the Broken Pane." *Votes for Women* (London), February 23, 1912. The argument of the stone: speech delivered by Mrs Pankhurst on Feb 16, 1912 honoring released prisoners who had served two or three months for window-breaking demonstration in November 1911.

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"By the Vanload." *Lancashire Daily Post* (Preston), February 15, 1907. "Twenty shillings or fourteen days." The women's raid on Parliament on Feb 13, 1907: Christabel Pankhurst gets fourteen days and Sylvia Pankhurst gets 3 weeks in prison.


The day after the October 23rd Parliament session during which Premier Henry Campbell-Bannerman cold-shouldered WSPU, leading to protest led by Mrs Pankhurst that led to eleven arrests, including that of Mrs Pethick-Lawrence and gave impetus to the movement.


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"The Martyr Roll." *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (Sheffield), March 22, 1907. Arrests after the second Women's Parliament at Craxton Hall.

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Many suffragettes imprisoned at Holloway prison, including Mrs. Pankhurst who was arrested after the concluding session of the Women's Parliament on Feb 13,1908.

Miss Grace Roe's sentencing and defiance.

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Suffragettes battle police in 1913.

"Miss Wallace Dunlop Released." Votes for Women (London).
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"Mrs. Pankhurst and the "Powers."" Daily Herald (London), April 4, 1913.
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Rokeby "Venus" by Mary Richardson in March 1914.

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Suffragette "right to petition" case goes to high court after arrests of June 29, 1909.

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Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst at Manchester Free Trade Hall in October 1905.

"Scene in Downing Street." *Morning Post* (London), July 1, 1908.
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Rokeby "Venus" attack.

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Suffragette demonstration against Asquith after his visit to Birmingham to announce abolishment of Lords' veto, "leaving the people's will paramount in England."

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**Photographs, Images, Footage**

The cover of the Equal Franchise Act of 1928.

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Flora Drummond with Scottish Suffragettes.


Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst in mock prison garb.


"Prison to Citizenship" pageant in 1911.


Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence.


WSPU badge.


Suffragettes pulling Edith New and Mary Leigh's carriage from Holloway to Queen's Hall in 1908.


Prisoners' breakfast in Queen's Hall in 1908.


Herbert Gladstone in the witness box in 1908.


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Emmeline & Christabel Pankhurst and Flora Drummond in court in 1908.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Christabel Pankhurst.

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Mr. Asquith’s cartoon.

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Clement's Inn banner making.


WSPU offices at Lincoln's Inn House.


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WSPU in Kensington.

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Secondary Sources

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