

How Long Must We Wait for Liberty? The Equal Rights Amendment

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Reform, Reformers, and Reformatories

Abstract:

This lesson will examine the recent history of the Equal Rights Amendment. Students will look at primary documents relating to the long struggle to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment throughout the 20th Century – specifically during the 1970s and 1980s.

Essential Questions:

- What are the main goals of the Equal Rights Amendment?
- Do women receive equal protection under constitutional law?
- In today's society, are men and women equal?

Assessment:

Students will be evaluated through class discussion and participation along with completion of an Inquiry Chart and a persuasive speech.

Setting the Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is for students to understand that there is no clear acknowledgement of women under the constitutional doctrine of “all men are created equal,” and “liberty and justice for all”. Even today, how is it possible that women only have one distinguished constitutional right – that of suffrage? The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was written in 1923 by the suffragist leader, Alice Paul, and according to The Equal Rights Amendment website at www.equalrightsamendment.org, “The ERA was introduced into every session of Congress between 1923 and 1972, when it was passed and sent to the states for ratification. The seven-year time limit in the ERA's proposing clause was extended by Congress to June 30, 1982, but at the deadline, the ERA had been ratified by 35 states, leaving it three states short of the 38 required for ratification. It has been reintroduced into every Congress since that time.” One of the states short of the 38 required was Illinois – students will examine major protests that took place in Illinois' capitol preceding the ratification deadline and determine whether or not women have achieved equality in today's society without the ratification of the equal rights amendment.

Analysis of Local Primary Sources:

Students will read various newspaper articles and examine photographs from the Chicago Tribune titled, “Concrete reasons for ERA,” “Refusal to Pass the ERA,” “Fasting for the ERA,” ERA & Police photo, ERA Speech photo, and “ERA mows ‘em down” photo.

Ties to National Primary Sources:

Students will examine the history of the Equal Rights Amendment at The Equal Rights Amendment website and the National Organization for Women website. Students will also look at a Nestle brand of candy bar that is advertised exclusively for men.

Annotated List of Materials and Resources:

- Yorkie candy bar commercial
 - This is a British commercial advertising the Yorkie candy bar for men only.
- Yorkie candy bar wrapper manufactured by Nestle
 - This is a photo of the Yorkie wrapper that explicitly says, "IT'S NOT FOR GIRLS!"
- Equal Rights Amendment found at the National Organization for Women website at; <http://www.now.org/issues/economic/eratext.html>
- Equal Rights Amendment ratification map found at The Equal Rights Amendment website; <http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/ratified.htm>
- "Concrete reasons for ERA," Audrey Tjepkema. Chicago Tribune, May 27, 1980. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library
 - This article explains reasons behind the support for the Equal Rights Amendment.
- "Refusal to Pass the ERA," Roberta Russo. Chicago Tribune, January 6, 1982. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library
 - This is a sarcastic letter to the editor condemning Illinois Governor Thompson and the Illinois General Assembly dealing with the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment.
- "Fasting for the ERA." Chicago Tribune, June 6, 1982. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library
 - This article explains a protest that took place at the Illinois State Capitol building in order to promote the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.
- ERA & Police photo. AP Laserphoto. Chicago Tribune, June 8, 1982. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library
 - This photo is of a woman forcibly removed from the Illinois State Capitol building after chaining herself to the Senate door to promote the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.
- ERA Speech photo. Tribune photo by Con Jr. Chicago Tribune, June 23, 1982. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library
 - This is a photo of a campaign rally held in Springfield, IL after the Illinois House did not pass the Equal Rights Amendment.
- "ERA mows 'em down" photo. UPI Telephoto. Chicago Tribune, July 16, 1982. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library
 - Supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment burned "ERA" into the lawn of the Illinois State Capitol building after the Illinois State Legislature failed to pass the bill.

- Equal Rights Amendment Inquiry Chart
- Equal Rights Amendment Writing a Speech handout
- Reintroduction of the Equal Rights Amendment press statement, Terry O'Neal. July 21, 2009. National Organization for Women website:
<http://www.now.org/press/07-09/07-21.html>.

Lesson Procedure

Duration:

1-2 class periods

- To begin the lesson, play the Yorkie candy bar commercial and project a picture of the candy bar wrapper found at;
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e4/Yorkie_bar.JPG
 - After the commercial, ask students to Think-Pair-Share on the question; In today's society, are men and women equal?
- When complete, divide students into small mixed ability groups of 3-5 and give each group a copy of the Equal Rights Amendment written by Alice Paul in 1921.
 - You can find this at the National Organization for Women website at;
<http://www.now.org/issues/economic/eratext.html>
 - Read through the amendment and discuss the goals of the amendment. If time permits, have the students partake in a quick vote to pass the amendment.
- Next, explain to the class that the Equal Rights Amendment was finally passed by the United States Congress in 1972 but failed to win the support of the necessary 38 states needed to ratify the bill; 35 states did. Illinois happened to be one of the states that did not ratify the ERA, and as a result, many protests occurred preceding the deadline of the bill in 1982.
 - Project a copy of a map of states that ratified the ERA from The Equal Rights Amendment website found at;
<http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/ratified.htm>
- Inform students that they will be researching various newspaper articles and photographs about this major event in Illinois history.
- Provide each group with a folder or packet containing newspaper articles and photographs from the Chicago Tribune between the years 1980 and 1982. Instruct groups to read each source together keeping the sources in chronological order.
 - "Concrete reasons for ERA," Audrey Tjepkema. Chicago Tribune, May 27, 1980
 - "Refusal to Pass the ERA," Roberta Russo. Chicago Tribune, January 6, 1982
 - "Fasting for the ERA." Chicago Tribune, June 6, 1982
 - ERA & Police photo. AP Laserphoto. Chicago Tribune, June 8, 1982
 - ERA Speech photo. Tribune photo by Con Jr. Chicago Tribune, June 23, 1982

- “ERA mows ‘em down” photo. UPI Telephoto. Chicago Tribune, July 16, 1982
- Once finished reading the primary sources, provide each group with an Inquiry Chart to complete together.
- Lastly, instruct students to move back to their original seats and distribute a copy of the Writing a Speech handout to each student. Explain to students to pretend they are living in the 1970s and 1980s, and are fighting for equal rights for women. Their task is to write a speech to persuade others to join their cause to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. Students will need to support their ideas with reasons and examples from their research.
 - Extension Activity: Some students may want to know if the Equal Rights Amendment ever eventually passed, and the answer is no. However, as of July 21, 2009, the ERA was reintroduced to the United States Congress by New York Representative Carolyn Maloney. Allow students to examine this in further detail by looking at the National Organization for Women website at <http://www.now.org/press/07-09/07-21.html>. Here, students will be able to read the press release and see photos from the event.
 - If students seem interested in this important current event, allow them to write persuasive speeches from a current perspective instead of a historical one.
- Allow ample time for students to begin writing in class.
- Instruct students to turn in their speeches the following class, where they will have the opportunity to read them aloud.