

The Magic Sash Episode 3: Susan B. vs. the Law

This lesson plan accompanies Episode 3 of the podcast *The Magic Sash*, produced through a partnership of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, National Park Service, public media organization PRX, and Gen-Z Media.

GUIDING QUESTION

What rules should apply to deciding who has the right to vote?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Students will identify Susan B. Anthony and summarize her significance in the history of U.S. women's suffrage movement.
- 2 Students will analyze text from the 14th Amendment and draw conclusions about whether U.S. citizens' equal protection under the law extended to women's right to vote.
- 3 Students will compare and contrast the voting rights movements of the mid-20th century with the Women's Suffrage movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

MEET THE MAIN CHARACTER



Susan B Anthony, 1870

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Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) Susan grew up in a Quaker family in Rochester, New York. She and other members of her family became involved in movements to end slavery, limit the drinking of alcohol, and improving conditions for workers through unions. Susan is best known for her work in women's rights and women's suffrage. In fact, she may be the best-known women's suffrage activist in U.S. history.

IMPORTANT WORDS TO REMEMBER

Voter Registration The requirement for persons to enroll on a list of eligible voters in order to vote in an election.

Suffrage The right to vote in political elections.

Ballot A printed sheet of paper or an electronic form on which a voter marks their vote.

Amendment A change made to the U.S. Constitution.

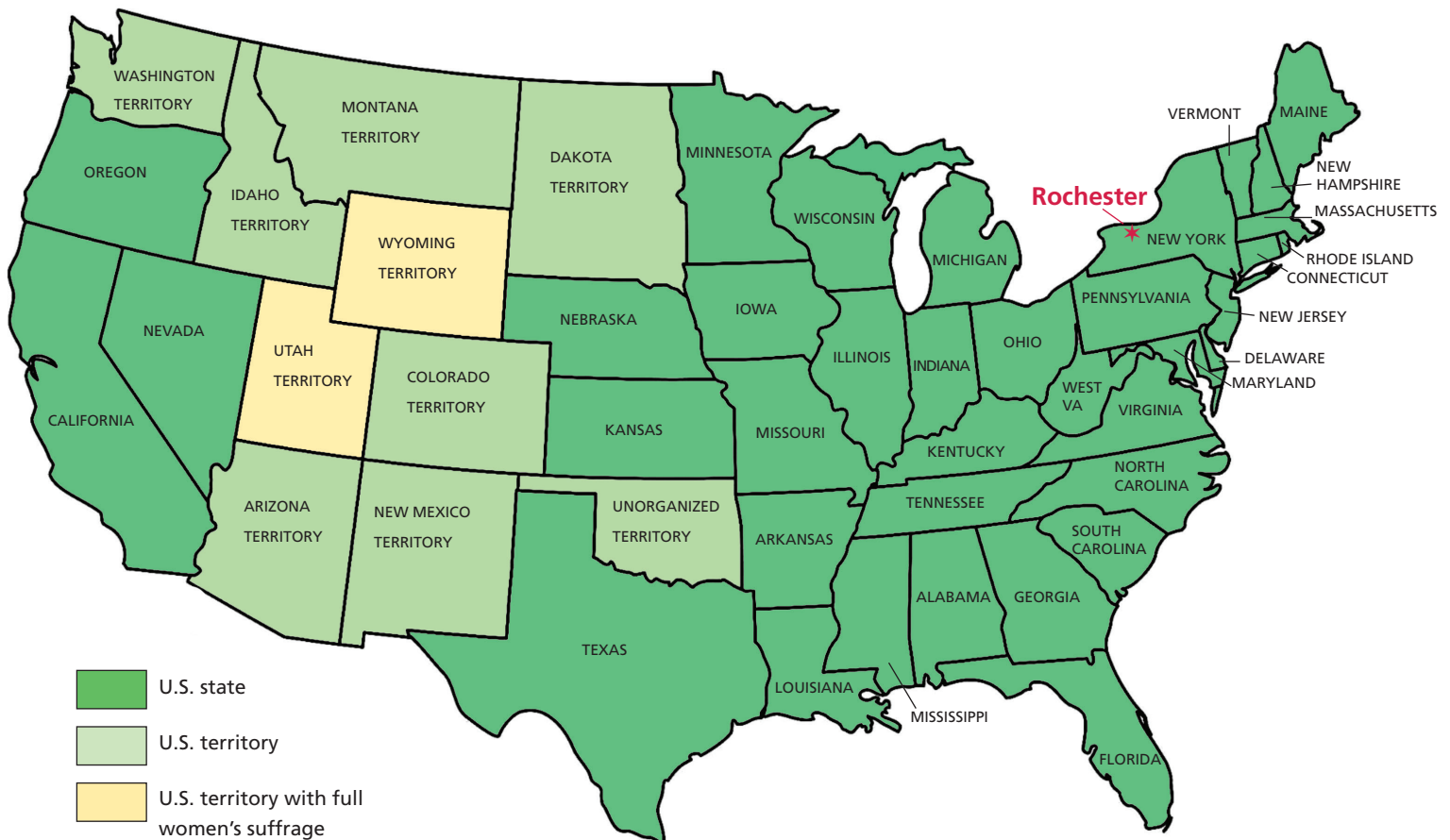
Suffragist A person working to expand voting rights.

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<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/womenshistory/magicsashep3.htm>

FIND THE LOCATION The United States in 1872



"Find the Location" continued.

The map on the previous page shows the United States in 1872, the year that Susan B. Anthony organized a group of women to register and vote in the presidential election. Since the Seneca Falls Convention for women's rights in 1848, the United States fought a four-year civil war that ended slavery in all states and territories of the U.S. Take another look at the map from Episode 1 and notice the addition of new states and territories. Compare the two maps and complete the following activities:

- Find the star locating Rochester, New York, the city where Susan B. Anthony and several other women registered and voted in the presidential election of 1872.
- Compare the location of Rochester with the location of Seneca Falls on the map from Episode 1. Do you think this area continued to be a center of activity for women's rights after the Civil War? Why?
- Count the total number of states on the map. _____
- Count the total number of territories on the map. _____
- How many more states entered the union since the 1850 map from Episode 1? _____
- How many more territories are organized since the 1850 map from Episode 1? _____
- Are there any places where women have voting rights? Do any states allow women to vote?



Women register to vote, early 1900s

BACKGROUND HISTORY

Susan B. Anthony Leads a Group of Women to Vote in 1872

Susan B. Anthony had worked alongside women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton supporting rights for women for many years. In 1872, Anthony organized her sisters and several other women in Rochester, New York, to register and attempt to vote in the presidential election that fall. On November 1, 1872, Susan and her sisters successfully persuaded the male officials at the voter registration office that the 14th Amendment guaranteed that all U.S. citizens be treated equally under the law. Susan argued that this meant that women, as U.S. citizens, were also covered under voting laws. The registration officials didn't know what to do so they let the women register.



Barber shop in New York City, late 1800s

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The local newspaper published an interview with Susan B. Anthony about her experience in voter registration. The newspapers also suggested that the men who worked at the voter registration office, located in a barber shop, should be arrested for allowing the women to register. The story was read widely around the Rochester area. Over the next several days, almost 50 more women, who heard about Anthony's success, also decided to register.

On election day, November 5, 1872, Susan B. Anthony and 13 other women who had registered to vote in Rochester, arrived at the polling place to cast their ballots. The women were asked to take an oath stating that they were qualified to vote. The women took the oath. New York state law required the election officials to allow anyone who takes the oath to vote. The women cast their ballots.

Over the next two weeks, arrest warrants were issued for Susan B. Anthony and the other women who had cast ballots. On November 18, a deputy U.S. Marshal arrived at Susan's house and took her to jail. The other 13 women who voted were also arrested and taken to jail. They were released on bail until their trial, which would not begin until June 17, 1873. This gave Susan several months to travel around the country and make speeches about why she thought women had the legal right to vote under the U.S. Constitution.

THINK ABOUT IT



1 The voter registration office in Rochester, New York, in 1872 was located in a barber shop. Would a barber shop be a place where women would regularly go in 1872? Why or why not? Do you think it would be uncomfortable for women to go to a barber shop to register to vote in 1872?

2 The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution says “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law.” What do you think this means? Does this promise that the government will treat all citizens equally?

3 When Susan B. Anthony quoted from the 14th Amendment, she argued that women are also citizens of the United States. Do you think the election officials found her argument convincing? Could the election officials argue that women are not included under voting laws even if they are U.S. citizens?

ACTIVITY

Be a voting rights newspaper journalist

In this episode, Susan B. Anthony and a group of women challenge voting laws in the state of New York in 1872 by registering to vote and casting their ballots. Anthony had been working as a women’s rights activist for many years by that time and was familiar with strategies to get the public’s attention.

One of her strategies was to give interviews to newspaper reporters about her experiences so her story would be widely read by men and women alike. Newspapers were the primary form of media in this time period and often stories were shared with local newspapers across the country. This made Susan B. Anthony well known throughout the United States.

Interview an adult you know that could tell you about their experiences in voting. Perhaps you could talk with a grandparent or an older family friend that remembers the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s that led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Think about the questions you would ask your interview subject. What would you like to learn about voting rights? What would be interesting for your “newspaper readers”? Write a newspaper article based on the interview.

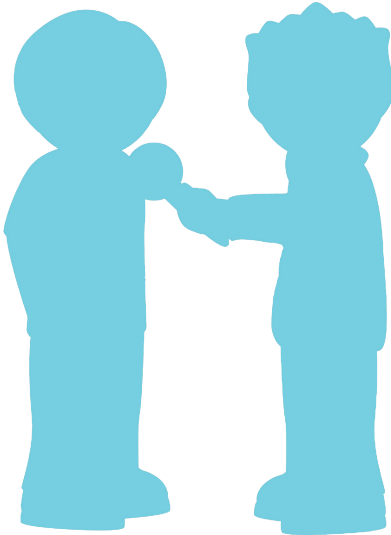


Postcard, early 1900s

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Some points to consider

- Who are your “newspaper readers”?
- What do you want your readers learn about voting in the past?
- Did your interview subject discuss any differences in voting in 2020 from their experiences in the past? What is the same or different in their experiences?
- Did your subject remember the voting rights movement in the 1960s? What was the main source of media that they received their information from? Newspapers? Television or radio? Personal experiences?
- What was the most interesting or surprising story or information you learned from your interview? How will you write about this story in your article?
- How were the voting rights efforts during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s similar or different from the Women’s Suffrage Movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s?



PLACES

The Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester, New York, is a museum open to the public. It is also on the National Register of Historic Places, a program run by the National Park Service. You can read about the house and find a picture of it to color at <https://www.nps.gov/places/anthonyhouse.htm>

To learn more about the people and settings for the 1848 Women’s Rights Convention, visit Womens Rights National Historical Park at <https://www.nps.gov/wori/index.htm>