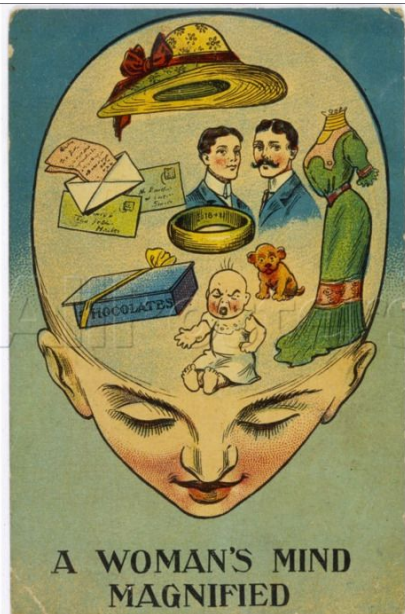**Setting the scene:**

By 1900, American women could only vote in some Western states. Most Americans either didn't care about women voting or were actively against it. Suffragists were trying hard to win the vote, but writing articles, letters, and speeches didn't seem to be enough. They needed another way to convince the American public.

The anti-suffragists got an early start and were spreading negative images of suffragists since the mid 1800's—just about as long as the suffrage movement had existed. Cartoons made fun of suffragists by showing them in ways designed to be offensive by the social standards of the time: ugly, aggressive, mean, old, lonely, bitter, and masculine. Some suffragists in cartoons force their husbands to take care of the children and housework.

By the late 1800s, many newspapers and magazines included political cartoons on the topic of women's suffrage. Some of the cartoons supported women voting, others made fun of the very idea that women would want to or be able to vote. Almost all of the artists were men.

Anti-suffrage cartoon ca. 1920-1915
https://lewissuffragecollection.omeka.net/items/show/2032

Political cartoons are drawings meant to express the artist's opinion. They are a way to reach a broad group of readers, since they use images to catch people's attention and say more than can sometimes be said just using words.

Images carried power in the 1800s and 1900s, just as they do today. Women were often portrayed in the media as silly, vain, weak, and emotional. A common anti-suffrage argument was that women were incapable of understanding politics and making logical decisions, and that "women's place is in the home." *What gender stereotypes do you see today in movies, television, advertisements, and products we buy? Are there other images that fight these stereotypes?*

Anti-suffrage postcard, 1906
https://spartacus-educational.com/Wanti.htm

<u>**Taking a stand**</u>

In the early 1900s, suffragists started taking back control by spreading more images of their own. Even though almost all comic artists were male, a surprisingly large group of female artists started drawing cartoons. Their drawings spread throughout the country in newspapers and magazines, sharing the suffrage message.

One of the first and the most popular female cartoonists was Annie "Lou" Rogers (1879 – 1952) from Patten, Maine. Rogers was born, educated, and taught school in Patten. When she was about 21 years old, after going to the Massachusetts Normal Art School in Boston, she went to New York City to pursue a career as a political cartoonist.

Lou Rogers
http://cbldf.org/2017/03/she-changed-comics-lou-rogers-advocate-for-womens-rights/

During the 1910s, Rogers' cartoons were published by *The New York Call, Woman's Journal, Woman Citizen,* and *Judge Magazine,* where she regularly contributed to the column, "The Modern Woman." In 1918 she joined Margaret Sanger's *Birth Control Review* as one of three art editors.

Lou Rogers' drawings show injustice in a country where women have no control over the laws that govern their bodies.

Harry G. Peter, the artist who originally drew Wonder Woman, worked alongside Lou Rogers at the magazine *Judge.* Lou drew many women's suffrage cartoons, including an image of a woman in chains that looks similar to Peters' early drawings of Wonder Woman. We can't be positive that Peters was directly inspired by Rogers, but his drawings were certainly influenced by images from the women's suffrage campaign (such as the symbolism of breaking out of chains and ropes).

After the 19th Amendment passed in 1920 and women got the vote, Rogers continued to draw cartoons, wrote and illustrated children's stories and books, and became an NBC radio personality. She died in 1952 and is buried in Patten, Maine.

> *"It is not art as art that I am interested in; it's art as a chance to help women see their own problems, help bring out the things that are true in the traditions that have bound them; help show up the things that are false."*
> -Lou Rogers, 1913 Cartoons magazine article