

## Setting the scene:

*Debate: A formal discussion of a subject between people with opposing viewpoints.*

Have you ever seen a debate? In a debate, two or more people talk about an issue that matters to them with the goal of convincing the other person (or the people watching) that their opinion is correct.

The most well-known debates today are between political candidates. In Maine's 2018 election, the candidates for Maine Governor and U.S. Senators debated. In the 2016 presidential election, a record 84 million people watched the presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.



2018 Maine Gubernatorial Debate  
Photo by Robert F. Bukaty, Associated Press

Studies suggest that political debates don't have a huge impact on the results of the election. They usually happen late in the election when people have already made up their minds. However, debates show voters what issues candidates care about, how candidates handle pressure, and how candidates respond to their opponents' arguments.



Maine Suffrage Parade

The women's suffrage debates of the late 1800s and early 1900s focused on a single issue: should women be allowed to vote?

Suffragists knew that if they wanted to get the vote, they had to take to the streets and shout their message to anyone who would listen. There was no option to watch on TV or online. They sent women to cities and towns across the country to give speeches.

Speakers drew crowds to town halls and street corners. Suffrage organizations like the National Woman's Party recruited speakers and sent them across the country to change minds and hearts.

### The women who made it happen

Florence Brooks Whitehouse of Augusta became active in women's suffrage in about 1913. She heard an anti-suffrage speech and it upset her enough that she decided to join the Congressional Union/National Woman's Party (NWP) and fight for women's right to vote. She helped form a Maine chapter of the NWP as well as local groups throughout the state.

Whitehouse frequently spoke about women's suffrage, debated anti-suffrage speakers, and wrote a suffrage column for newspapers.

In addition to Maine speakers, nationally known suffragists came to Maine to give speeches about women's suffrage. Susan B. Anthony spoke in Bangor in 1854. In 1855, Lucy Stone came to Augusta and Cornish to talk about equal rights for women.



Florence Brooks Whitehouse



Illustration of Susan B. Anthony giving a speech  
*Courtesy Library of Congress*

Speeches and debates were effective in spreading the suffrage message. They gained a lot of both positive and negative attention from the media. In the early years, people thought it was strange and fascinating that a woman would stand up and talk in front of a crowd.

One famous example of an American suffrage speaker is Inez Milholland, a New York attorney, social activist, and suffragist. She worked to organize a huge suffrage parade in Washington D.C. and rode on a white horse at the head of the parade.

Milholland was a talented speaker and electrified audiences on a 12-state suffrage speaking tour. She was sick and her doctor warned her to rest, but she refused to stop. In 1916, she collapsed in the middle of a suffrage speech in Los Angeles

She died weeks later of pernicious anemia. She was only 30 years old, and her death made front-page news. She became a martyr of the suffrage movement and inspired suffragists to fight even harder for victory.

The last words Inez Millholland spoke before she collapsed on stage were, "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?"



Inez Milholland in a Washington D.C. suffrage parade, 1913

<http://www.rememberinginez.com/index.html>

***Does your speaker mention some topics you've never heard of? Here's a quick rundown of some of the more confusing issues in the article:***

### **"...the argument that it does not take much time to cast a vote"**

One of the common arguments that anti-suffragists made was that voting would make women's lives harder than they already were, placing an extra burden on them. They said it would take a long time for women to vote and that women are already very busy caring for families and working. The pro-suffrage response was to say that voting actually does not take a lot of time—some women even worked out an estimate of how much time it took. Their goal was to prove that voting wasn't much of a burden at all—it only took a few minutes. Anti-suffragists like Mrs. McIntyre then responded to that argument as we see in this article.

### **Expediency**

ex·pe·di·en·cy (noun): the quality of being convenient, practical, and advantageous, regardless of justice and morality. This word comes up on both sides of the suffrage argument. By "expediency" suffragists often mean practicality, and that there are logical and necessary reasons for something even if you're not worried about wrong vs. right.

### **Suffrage in the East vs. West**

Women in states and territories in the American West got the right to vote earlier than women in the Eastern United States. At the time of this debate, women could already vote in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Washington, California, Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon. Because of this, suffrage debates often compare the east and west.

### **Limited municipal suffrage**

Municipal suffrage is the right to vote in city or town elections. That means that a woman couldn't vote for president (which is a federal election) but she could vote for local candidates. It was easier to convince the public that women deserved municipal suffrage, since local issues like school board elections were seen as more closely tied to women's traditional duties (caring for children and the home).

### **"Mormon influence" in the West**

Suffragists and anti-suffragists across the country had an interest in Utah, where women already had the right to vote. The issue of women's suffrage in Utah was linked with Mormons, a religious and cultural group with a large population in Utah. In this time period, Mormons practiced polygamy, a marriage system in which a husband could have more than

one living wife. Many Americans thought that polygamy was morally wrong and harmful to women. In addition, anti-suffragists argued that in a polygamous family, there would be multiple wives voting however their husbands told them to vote, meaning one man's vote could be magnified into multiple votes. Some Mormon women in Utah fought back against stereotypes of themselves as oppressed and voiceless.

### **"... the next President would probably be chosen by a direct primary"**

A direct primary election is when people vote for candidates of their political party by direct vote instead of by delegates at a convention. Every vote counts, so women's votes definitely would have an impact on the next presidential race.

### **Saloon**

Saloon is an old-fashioned word for a bar or tavern. They were spaces primarily associated with men. Some people at the time disliked saloons because they were associated with drinking alcohol, gambling, fighting, and other "vices." The women's suffrage movement was closely tied with the temperance movement, which worked to stop the consumption of alcohol.

### **"... female office seeker"**

A female office seeker is a woman running for a political position such as mayor.

### **White slavery**

People in this time period used this term to refer to white women who were forced into abusive relationships and what people thought was immoral work. There were newspaper accounts about innocent women being kidnapped and sold. It does not seem like this was as common as reports made it seem. This was very different from the multigenerational enforced enslavement of African American people which was legal in America until the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1865. Different groups in later years use the term "slavery" because it is a symbol which the American public recognizes. White slavery was talked about in the suffrage movement because suffragists believed that if women could vote, they would pass laws that would protect other women from abuse and moral corruption.

March 16, 1914

# A BIG CROWD HEARS DEBATE

Suffrage Question Discussed At Meeting of the Congregational Club.

RIVERTON NEVER HAD A GATHERING LIKE THIS.

**Pro and Con Ably Supported By Six Brilliant Women Speakers.**

The largest gathering ever assembled at Riverton park attested the interest in the equal suffrage cause by the people of Portland and it tested the facilities of the place to the very utmost and a little beyond. The farthest stretch of seating capacity at Riverton park casino is 204. This includes the big dining room, the red room and also the Dutch room. These were all filled to overflowing last night when the Congregational club met, and fully 20 more people had to wait for second table. Add to this some 30 more who came in after the feasting and went directly upstairs to listen to the debate and we have close on to 275 people who listened to the telling arguments as put forth by the proponents and by the opponents of the cause and cheered and applauded their respective sides. But if the dining room capacity was overflowed, the resources of Manager Smith were in nowise strained and he quickly added a second service for the overflow and let nobody go away hungry or unsatisfied.

HAD SINGING SCHOOL.

The people went up stairs after the first table was cleared and while the second set were eating their supper a singing school was organized with Henry F. Merrill as the leader. Some of the old-fashioned songs were sung and then at 8.45 Rev. Dr. Jesse Hill, president of the club, rapped for order and in a brief introduction started the great debate. He stated the question thus:

“Resolved, that the privilege of suffrage should be granted to women on the same conditions that it is granted to men.”

The judges announced were Henry F. Merrill, Edmund T. Garland and Edgar R. Payson. There was a great buzz of excitement as the people took their places and the first speaker was announced. This was Mrs. Barton Jenks of Concord, N. H.

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MRS. JENKS'S REMARKS.

Mrs. Jenks declared that the suffrage question was one that levelled the artificial barriers among women and made them all equal—the wash-woman with the society leader. She spoke of the women who work not from choice but from necessity and of the many evils that had been discovered by women among women when they got out into the world looking around. Men are prone to accept things as inevitable. Not so with women. They see these evils that have crept in under the best form

of man made government and ask to be allowed to take a hand in trying to cure them. She declared that in 11 countries where they have equal suffrage the death rate is the lowest of any in the world, due to the fact that the world has been lifted up where the women have a chance. In closing she showed a large map of the United States with the aid of Mrs. Rounds and Mrs. Waterhouse, who each held one corner. On this the suffrage territory and non-suffrage territory was marked appropriately. Mrs Jenks figured out that the next President would probably be chosen by a direct primary and showed how the votes of 35 electors could turn the scale and that with the suffrage states all in line these could control 140 votes. She closed with an appeal to the men of the East to come up to those of the West and to grant suffrage to their women even as it had been granted in the West.

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#### MRS. IDA VOSE WOODBURY.

Mrs. Ida Vose Woodbury, the leader for the anti-suffrage side, began her argument by calling attention to the limitations of the subject. She declared that such a fallacy as limited municipal suffrage for women was shut out. This she declared to be the greatest fallacy of the age. Women voters either must be full and equal with men or else they should not have the vote at all. Suffrage is not an inherent right. It is simply a matter of expediency. And the question is, for whom is it expedient? Shall we enlarge or limit it? The argument that suffrage will increase the wages of working women is too futile to waste time upon. The law of supply and demand regulates wages. Industrial equality must precede, not succeed political equality.

Out of 370 groups of employment 361 are open to women. The trouble with the working women is that they do not intend to make it their life work. The average length of time a woman works is five years; the average age of the working women is 22 years and they are too young for the ballot. Mrs Woodbury gave some figures to show the numbers of working women who are not eligible to vote either by reason of youth or foreign birth or other disability measured from a man's standpoint. She said that the ballot will not regulate anything. It is simply an expression of opinion and it must be enforced to be of any value. It took battles to enforce the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. Public sentiment alone can't raise wages. Behind the law must be the force to enforce the law and the force belongs to the man, who has it.

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#### MRS. L. P. ROUNDS.

Mrs. L. P. Rounds, the second speaker for the proponents, took the ground that the ballot will protect the home, that the home is the real center of life and that the government has done much to take away from woman those things that were once hers, has taken her children from her at the age of five, has prescribed when and where they shall go to school, when they shall be vaccinated, how they shall study and what, and when they shall work and when they shall not work. It is not at all unnatural, therefore, that women should take an interest in the science of government. Mrs. Rounds claimed that the housekeeping instinct is still strong with woman and that when she has a chance at government affairs she will devote herself to those features of it that pertain to that branch of the business.

She will work for the wiping out of plague spots, the white slave traffic and all forms of exploiting women for commercial purposes. Based on these grounds Mrs. Rounds appealed to the men to grant women the ballot, so they could assist in running the city, State and nation. She said there is much work to be done to straighten out the public house-keeping and that the women are ready and anxious to take part in it.

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#### MRS. MCINTYRE'S ARGUMENT.

Mrs. Philip W. McIntyre was introduced as the second speaker for the negative side. She was introduced as the only woman in the six who has actually lived under equal suffrage conditions. Mrs. McIntyre said she was an old-fashioned woman who still believed that the duty of women was to raise up children and to provide for them. She said that in all the animal creation the division of work between the male and female was well arranged and well understood and the only animal that rebelled was the female suffragist and there is no more restless and dissatisfied animal in the world than she. Mrs. McIntyre ridiculed the argument that it does not take much time to cast a vote. She said she trembled for the country when it is ruled by such careless voters as that. She then drew a picture of the women in politics attending meetings and primaries and other gatherings and then when there are women candidates, as she said there would be very soon, there was more to be done taking up a great deal of time wasting a great deal of energy and resulting in nothing good. She then denounced the female office seeker and gave a catalogue of office seekers and office holders among the women in places where the women have the ballot. She denounced the conditions that exist in some of the suffrage states and emphatically declared that women do not care after they once get the ballot and will not turn out to vote upon moral questions. In Oakland, Cal., where she herself lived, there was an effort to regulate the saloons and this was beaten by 1843 votes, the women not going to the polls at all.

In San Francisco an effort to vote out the saloons failed, only one in eight of the registered women taking the trouble to vote on it at all.

The real solemn fact is that ten per cent of the women want the ballot, ten per cent do not want it and the other 80 per cent don't care whether they have it or not.

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#### MRS. WHITEHOUSE.

Florence Brooks Whitehouse closed the debate for the affirmative by reading the cleverest and best prepared suffrage speech that has been given in this city in many years. She said they based their claims on two premises, first a right and second an expediency. She proceeded to enumerate the various points whereby they sought to establish the right to the vote claiming that men now hold the reins only by usurpation and that in every proposed test women have met the conditions that have been imposed. It is only of women by the way that a test is required and the ballot is the next step in the evolution of women.

It is expedient that women shall have the ballot because the corrupt politicians and those who are banded together for evil are all solidly opposed to it. These creatures realize that there is a power for good to the public and a power for evil to them and they are afraid accordingly. Mrs. Whitehouse



then enumerated the laws that have been enacted in suffrage states for the betterment of human conditions giving her figures and facts in each case amid loud and long continued applause. Regarding the charge that women will be office seekers she said she knew of no reason why the offices should not be held by those most fitted to hold them. It is fitting that in school matters women should be in charge. She closed with a stirring appeal to the law maker to reverse the vote of the last Legislature wherein suffrage failed In Maine by only six votes.

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MRS. W. B. JOHNSON.

Mrs. W. B. Johnson closed the debate for the negative side by quoting from the prophet Isaiah as to the time when the glory of Israel was low indeed and when the women ruled. She said the duty of woman was to conserve the people of the world by conserving her own strength for her own proper duty that of providing and maintaining the home and those who are to be in the homes of the future. It is her duty, too, to conserve the human race. She severely denounced the conditions in the West where women vote and where the Mormon influence is so solid and so baneful.

The principals then were given five minutes in which to rebut after which the judges retired to determine upon their verdict.

While they were gone and after a hundred or more had left the hall vote was taken as to the opinion of the audience on the merits of the question; that is those who favored suffrage were asked to stand, then those who were opposed and, lastly those who were on the fence. The vote stood thus: in, favor, 68; opposed, 62; undecided, 15.

Then the judges came in and their decision was announced based on the merits that the antis... *[the scrapbook cuts off the article here. From another newspaper account, we know that even though the audience thought the pro-suffrage side won, the judges gave the victory to the anti-suffragists.]*



## Debate Schedule of Events

Women's Long Road  
Teacher Materials, Lesson 3  
Maine State Museum 2019

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1. Gathering begins, people crowd into the Riverton park casino's rooms (including the big dining room, the red room and also the Dutch room)
2. People eat supper
3. Singing school sings "old-fashioned songs"
4. Rev. Hill "rapped for order" and gives introduction
  - a. The debate question is announced
  - b. Judges announced
5. The President (Rev. Hill) will announce each of the six speakers. When their name is called they come to the stage, present their argument (applause), and then leave the stage in the following order:
  - a. Mrs. Jenks
  - b. Mrs. Woodbury
  - c. Mrs. Rounds
  - d. Mrs. McIntyre
  - e. Mrs. Whitehouse
  - f. Mrs. Johnson
6. **[Optional rebuttal]** *Each team gets the chance to rebut, or respond, to the opposing side. The teams will quickly meet to decide if they want to make a final statement (did you miss something the first time? Did the other side make a weak argument you want to tear apart?). Each team will have five minutes to make a plan and respond to the full group. Teams must choose one member to speak on behalf of the full team.*
7. Judges gather privately to make their decision
8. Vote taken in the hall
  - a. If you favor suffrage, stand
  - b. If you are opposed, stand
  - c. If you can't decide, stand
9. Results of popular vote announced
10. Judges decision announced
11. End the debate, thank students, share the actual results, and reflect on the debate.



# Debate Speech Planning Sheet

Women's Long Road  
Teacher Materials, Lesson 3  
Maine State Museum 2019

Carefully read the article and use the left-hand column to write down each individual argument and point that your character makes. When you're finished, use the right-hand column to ask yourself questions that you might need to research or add your own thoughts. Think about:

- *Are there any words you want to look up? Many were used differently than they are today.*
- *Does something make no sense to you? Highlight it so you can go back and figure it out.*
- *Does the character reference a person or event you need to learn more about?*
- *Think about which of the character's claims are supported by reasons and evidence and which are not. How does that impact their argument?*

ARGUMENTS FROM THE ARTICLE

YOUR NOTES AND QUESTIONS

