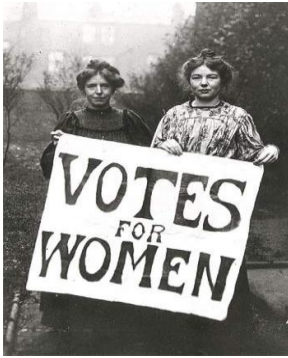


Activity 1: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Have Students read the list (“Oh No You Can’t”) below and answer the questions that follow. Have them consider the following ideas:

- *Because they were forced to stay at home, many Middle Class women of the era had more free time or spent more time in the home. This allowed many women to think about and discuss important issues of the day. How did this affect the Women’s Rights and other reform movements?*
- *How would it feel to know your potential as a human being is great, but the laws under which you live restrict almost all of your opportunities based on your gender? What could you do to achieve your life’s goals?*



To enhance classroom discussion on these topics, break the class into small discussion groups.

-Have each group read the list “Oh No You Can’t” and answer the questions that follow.

-Have students contrast the lives of women then and now.

- Consider why women were denied these rights?

**NOW READ THE
DECLARATION OF
SENTIMENTS ON
THE FOLLOWING
PAGE** 

OH NO YOU CAN’T: What Women in New York Could NOT do in 1848

If you were a woman in 1848, you could NOT:

- Vote in any local, state, or federal election.
- hold public office
- sit on a jury
- sue or be sued in court
- could not own your own property, if married.
- keep your own wages if employed and married.
- Divorce for any reason without consent of the Legislature.
- have legal custody of your children if she divorced.
- be a minister in a church
- attend most universities or colleges.
- Practice as a doctor, lawyer, or most other professional careers

Q: How did this list affect the women who attended the convention in Seneca Falls? If they could not do any of the above, what COULD they do?

Q: Elizabeth Cady Stanton referred to herself as a “caged lioness”. Why did she feel this way?

Q: Who else in American society was denied these fundamental human rights? Is there a connection to the Women’s Rights Movement?

Activity 2: **THE DECLARATION:** Read the excerpts from the Declaration of Sentiments below, including the numbered "grievances". Use this information to answer the questions below and to complete the graphic organizer in activity three.

The Declaration of Sentiments was the Convention's culminating document. Signed by 100 of the 300 women and men who attended the Seneca Falls Convention, the document summarized the wrongs women suffered throughout American history, and was a call to action for generations.

SELECTION FROM THE DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS, Seneca Falls, N.Y., 1848

Click on the link below to read the entire Declaration: (control + click to follow link)

[Declaration of Sentiments - Women's Rights National Historical Park](#)

Questions to Consider:

- 1) This document is directly modeled on the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson in 1776. Why was this document chosen as the model for the Declaration of Sentiments?
- 2) What message were the drafters and signers sending to the wider society?
- 3) How did the signers decide that they would spread the message of the movement?
- 4) What kind of reaction did they expect from the public?
Based on your own knowledge of women's rights in American history, were they right to expect these reactions?

Activity 3:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...”

- Declaration of Sentiments

The Declaration of Sentiments includes a list of 15 grievances that outlined clearly the conditions in which women lived in the 1840s. The grievances fall into five categories: education, economics, religion, and family and society. To better understand the signer’s view of the conditions of women, break the grievances into groups according to the category in which they would fall. Students may use the graphic organizer included in this packet or create their own.

Use this graphic organizer: [Graphic Org..docx](#) (link to graphic org)

Follow up activity: After categorizing the grievances of the declaration, evaluate and describe the conditions that women were living under in the year of the Convention (1848). Summarize in paragraph form at bottom of graphic organizer or on separate paper.



Lesson Objectives:

- Students will be able to categorize the 15 grievances of the Declaration after filling out the graphic organizer included in the lesson.
- Students will explain how the Declaration addressed numerous social and equality concerns confronting women of the time.

ABOLITION

Rights vote Dress Reform NOW change

REFORMERS

Women? vote Abolition

Temperance

rights Utopian Society REFORM

Education Reform

Freedom from

vote

Religious Revivalism

freedom to

Society of Friends

Activity 4:

REFORMERS LEAD THE WAY....

It is no coincidence that the Seneca Falls Convention happened in THIS place at THIS time. Seneca Falls was in the center of the region known as the “Burned Over District”. This describes the region in Upstate New York where social reform and religious revivals were not only born, but flourished. Many of the nation’s most famous *agitators* and *activists* for social and religious change were from or settled in this area, and many signers of the Declaration of Sentiments were associated with other reform movements already existing in the region, and without them, the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 may never have happened. Click on link below to see map of the “Burned Over District” [Reform Movements in the Burned-Over District](#)

LET’S EXPLORE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT REFORMERS AND THEIR CAUSES IN THE YEAR 1848! Click on links below to find out more.

ABOLITION

[Frederick Douglass](#)

[Lucretia Mott](#)

DRESS REFORM

[Elizabeth Smith Miller](#)

[Paulina Wright Davis](#)

REFORM!

TEMPERANCE

[Amelia Bloomer](#)

[Susan B Anthony](#)

EDUCATION REFORM

[Margaret Fuller](#)

[Emma Hart Willard](#)

UTOPIAN SOCIETIES

[Sodus Bay Phalanx](#)

[Oneida Community](#)

In 1920, the 19th amendment made women’s enfranchisement the law of the land. This meant that 72 years passed between the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 and the passage of the 19th amendment. What happened in these intervening decades? Follow the links below to discover more!

Activity 5: "...never was so tired."

Read the Text of the 19th Amendment here: [Our Documents - 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Women's Right to Vote \(1920\)](#)

Pickets, Protests, Tracts, Speeches, Conventions, and Petitions; these were some of the tactics used to agitate for women's rights between 1848 and 1920. Interrupted by the Civil War, and then splintered over the issue of enfranchisement of black men, the Women's Rights and Suffrage Movements did not disappear after the convention of 1848. Both women and men realized that there was a need for challenging the men in control of society and the laws that forced women into subservient positions. Click on links to read about some of the organizations that fought for the rights of women in the United States.

[National Women's Rights Conventions](#): Annual conventions, inspired by Seneca Falls, were held in a number of northern cities from 1850 – 1863.

[American Equal Rights Association](#): Founded in 1866, this was the first nationwide organization dedicated to universal suffrage, for both women and people of color.

[National Women's Suffrage Association](#): Founded by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in 1869, in reaction to the 15th amendment granting voting rights to freed slave men, but not to women. They focused on a Constitutional Amendment granting suffrage to women.

[American Women's Suffrage Association](#): Created by more conservative members of American Equal Rights Association; supported the 15th amendment. This group focused on a state by state approach to women's suffrage.

Below are excerpts from a diary dated 1870. It was written in that year by a woman named Arvilla Case Nichols. She was married to Charles Nichols and had one daughter, Hattie. According to genealogical records, Hattie was born in 1867, which makes her 3 years old at the time of the writing of the diary. Arvilla Nichols died in 1886, at age 55. Her husband Charles pre-deceased her by seven years, dying in 1879. The diary was written in the village of Borodino, in central New York State.

This diary gives excellent insight into the life of a rural woman in the second half of the 19th century. Her daily routine seems *monotonous* and she seems isolated from the wider world around her. Although she never would have dreamt it, her words penned so long ago tell us volumes about the condition of rural women in the United States in the 19th century.

(Note: The excerpts are transcribed as written)

[Click here to see images of the actual diary.](#)

Winter Entries

January 3, 1870:

*"A cold and windy day – froze up last night. I wash and stitch a pair of shoes in the forenoon. Afternoon I do up work and boil potatoes for hens... Chas (Charles) painting Hattie's cutter (sled) and mending Sofa. I am pretty tired. I must try & get rested so as to go to Singing School. Chas stayed with Hattie. I am trying to learn the notes so as to play on a **Melodeon** some day."*

January 5, 1870:

"I spun five knots in the forenoon, had to stop and rock Hattie she is most sick. I thought worms were choking her in the night, and put some turpentine on her throat & I presume it makes her feel bad today... go to Singing School in evening. Cold night"

January 11, 1870:

"I bake bread & fruit cake & cook pork & beans. Very busy all forenoon, got Hattie to sleep then did up the work then I took Hattie up to Mrs. Miner's & left her & I went up to Mrs. Tripp's a while. Came home and went after Hattie, got supper... been warm and bright all day."

January 18, 1870

"A little colder – rains and freezes. I got up about 5, stitched a pair of boots as soon as I could see, took them down. Ironed some. After H(attie) had a nap we went over to Robinsons a little while. The Scott folks are having an exhibition here tonight but we did not go. I churned (butter) just at dark, was quite tired. Slept first rate- a very cold night.

February 8, 1870

"My birthday,³⁹ today. I am getting old and I feel old. I made the cushion for the cutter, practiced (piano lessons) and churned in the eve...Hattie took cold last night, most sick. I bake bread today."

Summer Entries:

July 20, 1870:

"..I got up at 5 & _____ the washing, did a large wash & canned a quart of cherries & picked currants & made a tumble of Jell (?) and iron my dress then went to bed tired out. Cooked peas and lamb."

July 24, 1870

"I bake bread and cake and mince pies, had the mince canned last spring & did all the ironing & pick berries in the garden & crochet...went into Anderson's a few minutes. Feel some better today but oh how I've sweat yesterday and today; terrible warm."

July 31, 1870

"I got up at 5 went to work, Charles at home all day... I rinse white clothes & iron calicos & boil dinner & pit and can & fix to drying the bushel of cherries, oh so tired, a very warm day... oh how I did sweat, never was so tired."

August 5, 1870

"got up at 5 and ironed a large washing of clothes and baked a load of bread and make her overskirt afternoon. When C(harles) came home he took Hattie and I for a ride a little ways; came home and mend and put up clothes. I am tired. I picked peas and dug new potatoes for breakfast."

August 17, 1870

"Quarterly meeting at Spafford (N. Y.) today, I am home all day, make succotash, pleasant camp meeting begins tomorrow. Aaron's wife taken sick yesterday... Charles works on fence."

September 6, 1870

"...rainy in the morning but cleared off about 9, quite cold. We went to the picnic in Clark's orchard – had a very good time. Hattie spoke chatterbox..."

September 8, 1870

"I wash and lay clothes down."

September 11, 1870

"I pickle pears and dry sweet corn and cut apples and mop."

September 12, 1870

"I cut apples and pull the beans and wash a few things..."

Now and Then...So what's the difference?

This diary was written 22 years after the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Using the entries above, answer the following questions. If possible, use specific details from the diary entries in your answers.

- 1) Although this diary only covers one year of her life, how would you describe Arvilla Nichols' situation?
- 2) Refer to the Declaration of Sentiments. What conditions was Arvilla living in that were addressed by the Declaration of Sentiments in 1848?
- 3) Life for most rural people in the 1870s was difficult. Why was it particularly MORE difficult for women? How do Arvilla's diary entries illustrate this? Use examples from the text of the diary.
- 4) What were some reoccurring themes in the diary entries? How would those themes be different if this were written by a modern rural woman?

For Teachers:



[CLICK HERE FOR NEW YORK STATE STANDARDS.](#)

(Link NYS Social Studies Standards)