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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2012 Volume III: The American Presidency

The Women's Movement in Presidential Rhetoric

Guide for Curriculum Unit 12.03.03, published September 2012

by Stefano Cadoppi

This unit addresses the topic of gender and political rhetoric. It is divided in two distinct parts. The first one deals with the women's equal rights movement. Major leaders and turning points are presented to explain how the movement was able to overcome cultural and social obstacles. The final part of the paper focuses on the hopes and reasons why the Equal Rights Amendment failed. The section on presidential rhetoric analyzes how five presidents used their executive and political influence relating to women's rights from 1900 to 1972. T. Roosevelt, W. Wilson, Eleanor Roosevelt, L. Johnson, and R. Nixon are important figures who played a prominent role to the shape popular and political perception about the social status of women.

My interest in this topic rests with my conviction that high school students ought to start a dialogue about gender to exchange and discover about each other detached from the world of consumerism and deep rooted stereotypes. Another objective of my unit is bridge the gap and challenge misconceptions about the topic high school textbooks either fail to cover or consider. An honest and serious discussion about gender will inevitably enhance students' of both sexes about their needs and potential well into adulthood.

(Developed for U. S. History, High School Juniors, grade 11; recommended for U. S. History, High School Juniors, grade 11 [U. S. 11.5.2. California Content Standards: Analyze the 19th Amendment and the Changing Role of Women in Society. U.S. 11.2.9 Understand the Effect of Political Programs of the Progressives.])

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