

# American Women and World War I

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by Ron Nash and John McNamara

## UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History™ resources, designed to align to the Common Core State Standards. The lessons can also be modified to conform to the C3 Framework. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original documents of historical significance. Students will learn and practice the skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on these source materials.

With the onset of World War I, women took on the traditional roles of providing indispensable services such as cooking, nursing, and laundry. But they also engaged in newer ones and their service during this conflict was significantly different from that of earlier wars. Thousands of women in the United States formed organizations that worked to bring relief to the war-torn countries in Europe, even before official American entry into the war in April 1917. After the United States joined the Allies, women continued to join these organizations and dedicate themselves to supporting and expanding the war effort. These groups were highly organized, much like the military, which helped women garner respect from their fellow citizens and have their patriotic endeavors taken seriously.

This unit examines the complexity of women’s contributions to World War I. Together, these resources shed light on World War I in a compelling and very human way. The students will demonstrate what they have learned through their analysis of the various primary sources by writing a response to an essential questions posed for the unit.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Analyze a secondary source document using close-reading strategies
- Interpret, analyze, and demonstrate understanding of visual materials
- Draw logical inferences and summarize the essential message of a work of art
- Compose summaries of the major points in a visual primary source
- Compare and contrast the points of view and perspectives in different types of evidence

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

#1: To what extent did World War I accelerate and magnify changes in women’s roles and status in American society?

#2: To what extent did World War I enhance women’s expectations for the rights and responsibilities of full citizenship and equality in American society?

#3: To what extent did World War I enable women to effectively challenge economic, political, and social barriers and transform their lives in American society?

Additional questions for use at your discretion:

- Does war provide opportunities for advancement?
- How did women use war as an opportunity for advancement?
- Did the experience of women in the Great War meet their expectations?
- What was the war's impact on women's lives? In what ways was the war transformative?
- To what extent does military service define citizenship?
- Why and how do citizens and more specifically women citizens support a war?
- How was women's work a "second line of defense" in World War I?
- How did the idea of a "home front" develop as part of World War I?
- Should suffrage be considered a war measure, or not?

**NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS:** 3

**GRADE LEVEL:** 6–12

### **COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6: Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on [grade-level] topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

## LESSON 1

### OVERVIEW

Students will read a secondary source that provides historical context for women’s participation in World War I. They will then carefully examine and interpret a selection of documents, using the questions on an activity sheet as a guide. They will show their comprehension through the completed activity sheets and class discussion.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of written text
- Summarize the essential message of a secondary source
- Draw conclusions based on direct evidence found in the secondary source
- Analyze and assess the meanings and messages of a selection of primary source documents

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

To what extent did World War I accelerate and magnify changes in women’s roles and status in American society?

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“American Women and World War I, Part I” by Lynn Dumenil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College, and author, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (2017)

In May 1918, the *Los Angeles Times* devoted a full illustrated page to that city’s enormous Red Cross parade, which attracted 10,000 marchers, the majority of whom were women, and which the paper described as a “Seven Mile Tribute to Women’s Work in War.” In many cities and towns other local newspapers eagerly documented patriotic parades featuring thousands of women. Much of the coverage included striking photographs or compelling descriptions of the women’s appearance. As they marched, usually wearing uniforms, they dramatically broke with conventional middle-class assumptions concerning female respectability. Just a few years before, when women in the suffrage movement began their parades to draw attention to the demand for the vote, their actions were highly controversial. But during World War I, women who marched to demonstrate their commitment to the war effort prompted a groundswell of praise amidst eager attention to the novelty of their use of public space.

Newspaper coverage of wartime parades hints at the extensive media attention focused on women who crossed gender-role boundaries as they participated in the nation’s mobilization. The reports of overall-

clad women taking men’s jobs in factories, of uniformed telephone operators who served abroad attached to the US Army’s Signal Corps, of suffrage activists who viewed women’s patriotic service as evidence of their claims to citizenship, suggested that the war was creating fundamental challenges to the gender order.

But for all the hype, signs that a “new woman” was emerging actually appeared before the Great War had begun in 1914. By 1910, 24.3 percent of adult American women worked for wages in domestic work, in factories, and in positions such as clerical and sales jobs that highlighted their public visibility. Women’s organizations flourished and prompted many women’s passionate support for the Progressive Era (1900–1914) reform movements, especially for legislation designed to improve the lives of poor women and their children. Simultaneously, the suffrage movement gained momentum and by 1914, eleven states had given women the vote. Feminism as a movement also emerged in the prewar era, as radical women challenged the strictures that limited women’s freedoms and called for economic independence and greater sexual freedom and rights in marriage. The war, then, did not necessarily create a “new” woman, but rather magnified changes already in play.

This foment around women’s roles intersected with the nation’s engagement in its first “modern” war, a total war that demanded extensive civilian support and mobilization. While all combatant nations privileged the role of the men as soldiers on the battlefield, women nonetheless contributed significantly to their country’s war aims. To be sure, women had been camp followers, cooks, and nurses in previous wars, but now their efforts were formalized and tied to the bureaucratic organization of the modern state. Thus the ways in which American women supported the war effort were part of the very definition of how a global, modern war was fought.

Much of this service was orchestrated through voluntary associations. As the United States entered the war, national women leaders successfully pressured the government to create an organization to coordinate women’s activities. The resulting Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense (WCND) was more active in some states than others, but nonetheless was an important vehicle for mobilizing women to raise funds, promote food conservation, and disseminate propaganda. For the most part, African American women were segregated or in some southern states excluded altogether from the WCND. Black women leaders, however, created their own organizations, like the Circle for Negro War Relief that focused on meeting the material needs (toiletry kits and knitted items) of black soldiers. Beyond the WCND, traditional women’s organizations like the Young Women’s Christian Association actively participated in war mobilization.

## MATERIALS

- Historical Background: “American Women and World War I, Part I” by Lynn Dumenuil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College, and author, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (2017)
- Analyzing an Essay activity sheet
- Analyzing a Document activity sheet

- Documents
  - #1: “Do you realize how many women are in uniform?” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, November 1918, Ann Lewis Women’s Suffrage Collection, <https://lewissuffragecollection.omeka.net/items/show/2207>
  - #2: “As A War Measure,” National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company, Inc., New York, NY, ca. 1918, Samuel P. and Kate Dowdle Davis Family Papers, Central Arkansas Library System, <https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15728coll3/id/23214/>
  - #3: “Who Shares the Cost of War?” Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association, Harrisburg, PA, ca. 1915, Ann Lewis Women’s Suffrage Collection, <https://lewissuffragecollection.omeka.net/items/show/1471>

## PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Part 1 of the Historical Background essay written by Professor Lynn Dumenil. “Share read” the text with the class. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
2. Introduce the following questions:
  - What was the war’s impact on women’s lives? In what ways was the war transformative?
  - To what extent did the war offer women new or more modern roles and responsibilities?
  - How did women use war as an opportunity for advancement?
3. Distribute the Analyzing an Essay activity sheets. For the rest of the class period you may choose to have the students work individually, as partners, or in small groups of three or four. You may choose to model the selection and analysis of the first phrase and, when the class is ready, the first question.
4. After giving the class enough time to complete the activity sheet, reconvene the whole class and discuss different interpretations developed by individual students or groups.
5. Distribute the three primary source documents to the class along with the Analyzing a Document activity sheet. The students will select important phrases from each of the three primary sources. This activity could also be completed as a homework assignment.

## ASSESSMENT

The strategy for this lesson will involve an informal assessment of the students’ comprehension through the completed activity sheets and the class discussion. The students should be able to demonstrate understanding of the connection between women, social change, and history in the context of World War I.

## LESSON 2

### OVERVIEW

Students will read a secondary source that provides historical context for women’s participation in World War I. They will then carefully examine and interpret a selection of posters, using an activity sheet to guide their work. The students will show their comprehension through the completed activity sheets, class discussion, and a written response to one of the unit’s essential questions.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of text- and image-based evidence
- Summarize the essential message of visual primary sources
- Draw conclusions based on direct evidence found in the visual primary sources

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

To what extent did World War I enhance women’s expectations for the rights and responsibilities of full citizenship and equality in American society?

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“American Women and World War I, Part 2” by Lynn Dumenil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College, and author, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (2017)

While most women supported the war effort on the home front, others sought more dramatic experiences. Approximately 25,000 women served abroad, some as volunteers helping with relief aid for war refugees, but most working in some capacity for agencies like the American Red Cross or the Young Men’s Christian Association and for the US Army. Their activities underscored the way in which the modern military machine required much more than combat soldiers to conduct a war. Approximately 20,000 women were nurses, although only about half of these served in Europe. While some African American nurses were eventually enrolled, none of these served abroad during the war. Valued for their skills, nurses were nonetheless denied military rank, which limited their authority in the hierarchy of military command. Other women, who worked for the YMCA or the Salvation Army, operated “canteens” for soldiers, providing them with modest refreshments, entertainment, and chaperoned female companionship. Only two black women served in the canteens, doing so in segregated facilities. The aim behind the canteens was to deflect men from bars and prostitutes by offering the opportunity to chat with “wholesome” American women. Although media descriptions of these canteen workers tended to emphasize their tender, nurturing qualities, the women themselves were adventuresome “new women” eager to serve near the front.

Canteen women often likened themselves to soldiers, and this was even more evident among the more than 200 women who served abroad as telephone operators in response to the army's desperate need for bilingual telephone operators. Although the women took a formal oath and wore the official insignia of the Signal Corps, they were contract workers, not members of the army. Many assumed, however, that they were army recruits and were surprised to discover after the war that they were not eligible for any military benefits. It was not until 1978 that Congress acknowledged their claim to military service and rewarded benefits to the handful of women still living.

Less dramatic but nonetheless crucial were women who worked for wages in the United States, taking the place of men in factories, offices, shipyards, and railroads. The war did not significantly increase the number of women working. Rather, it gave those who already worked opportunities to take better paying and often more interesting jobs. Blue-collar jobs, especially in the armaments and railroad industries, allowed women to cross workplace boundaries, dressing in overalls and uniforms to do so. Women also expanded their presence in white-collar work, in the federal bureaucracy, and in offices that had formerly employed only men. A small group of women enlisted in the Navy and the Marines, and their work consisted mainly of clerical work. The Army resisted calls to enroll women even though it would free men for combat service.

African American women were largely excluded from white-collar work and were denied entrance into the Navy or Marines. World War I nonetheless brought exciting possibilities. The labor crisis was a major factor in prompting the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the cities of the North. For the first time African American women, who had been almost exclusively employed in domestic and agricultural labor, found their way into factory work, although usually the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs and only for the brief period of wartime mobilization. These women usually worked in segregated facilities and received less pay than white women. But both black and white women faced stiff resistance from employers and male workers to women taking over men's jobs. Although defense industries with federal contracts were required to pay women "equal pay for equal work," a provision designed to protect men's wages from being devalued by the presence of women, equity in pay was rarely achieved. And however much women hoped to retain their better paid jobs, at war's end, most lost their slender footing in more skilled work, although the clerical field continued to expand for women in the post war years.

## MATERIALS

- Historical Background: "American Women and World War I, Part 2" by Lynn Dumenil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College, and author, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (2017)
- Details, Description, and Decision activity sheet
- Posters
  - #1: "For Every Fighter, a Woman Worker," artwork by Adolph Treidler, United War Work Campaign, 1918 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09550,

- <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/every-fighter-woman-worker-care-her-through-ywca>)
- #2: “Yes Sir - I Am Here! Recruits Wanted,” artwork by Edward Penfield, Motor Corps of America, 1918 (Texas War Records War Poster collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, <https://hrc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15878coll26/id/448/>)
  - #3: “Corn: The Food of the Nation,” artwork by Lloyd Harrison, Harrison-Landauer, Inc., Baltimore MD, 1918 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3g10124/>)
  - #4: “Service. Fall In!” National League for Woman’s Service, artwork by Lucille Patterson, ca. 1917–1918 (Texas War Records War Poster Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, <https://hrc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15878coll26/id/457/rec/95>)
  - #5: “True Blue,” Renesch Company, 1919 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09644, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/true-blue>)
  - #6: “Back Our Girls Over There, United War Work Campaign, YWCA,” artwork by Clarence F. Underwood, YWCA, 1918 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00652158/>)
  - #7: “Hold Up Your End,” artwork by W. B. King, 1917 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002711992/>)
  - #8: “The Woman’s Land Army of America Training School,” artwork by Herbert Andrew Paus, Woman’s Land Army of America, 1918 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.13492/>)
- Exit Card

## PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Part 2 of the Historical Background essay written by Lynn Dumenil. Share read the essay as described in Lesson 1.
2. Introduce the following questions for discussion:
  - To what extent did the war offer women new or more modern roles and responsibilities?
  - To what extent does military service define citizenship?
  - Why and how do citizens and more specifically female citizens support a war?
  - How was women’s war work a “second line of defense” in World War I?
  - In what ways did the idea of a “home front” develop as part of World War I?
  - How did war allow women to make a claim for an enlarged sense of citizenship?
3. Distribute the first two posters and two copies per student of the Details, Description, and Decision activity sheet.



4. Model the activity with the class for the first two posters, eliciting answers to the questions through class discussion.
5. Distribute posters #3–#8 and the activity sheets (1 per poster per student or group). Based on the available time, you may also choose a selection of the remaining posters.
6. After giving the class enough time to complete the activity sheets, reconvene the whole class and discuss different interpretations developed by the individual students or groups.

## ASSESSMENT

The strategy for this lesson will involve an informal assessment of the students' comprehension through the activity sheets and the class discussion. The students will also write a brief essay developing a point of view on the essential question for this lesson:

To what extent did World War I enhance women's expectations for the rights and responsibilities of full citizenship and equality in American society?

## LESSON 3

### OVERVIEW

Students will read a secondary source that provides historical context for how women’s participation in World War I, on the home front and overseas, influenced the fight for women’s suffrage. They will read and analyze two primary source texts linking World War I service and suffrage. Students will then examine and interpret a selection of political cartoons, using an activity sheet to guide their work. The students will show their comprehension through the completed activity sheets, class discussion, and a written response to the lesson’s essential question.

When war was declared in August 1914 the women’s suffrage campaign had been going on for fifty years. Some historians have argued women were close to achieving their aims while others have argued that women were no closer than previous years. However, it is undeniable that the women’s suffrage campaign was significantly affected by WWI. The major suffrage organizations had different approaches. These approaches are important in our understanding of the beliefs and the women involved.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Identify an author’s major claims and points of view using textual evidence.
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of written and visual texts
- Draw conclusions based on direct evidence found in primary sources
- Synthesize multiple sources of information in order to arrive at a logical conclusion that is supported by textual evidence

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

To what extent did World War I enable women to effectively challenge economic, political, and social barriers and transform their lives in American society?

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“American Women and World War I, Part 3” by Lynn Dumenil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College, and author, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (2017)

If war did not permanently improve women’s position in the work force, it did accelerate women’s political equality. By the time of the war, the suffrage movement dominated by white women consisted of two competing groups. The largest was the National American Women’s Suffrage Association (NAWSA), led by Carrrie Chapman Catt. Although NAWSA had been part of a large antiwar movement that flourished after the European war began in 1914, as the US moved toward war, NAWSA reversed its antiwar stance and soon began to urge women to support wholeheartedly the war effort as a means of demonstrating women’s loyalty and right to full citizenship. It eagerly publicized all of the ways in which

American women served as “the second line of defense,” while keeping up its efforts to persuade politicians, especially President Woodrow Wilson, to endorse suffrage.

The National Woman’s Party (NWP), led by Alice Paul, in contrast, turned to the dramatic tactic of picketing the White House, flourishing banners that read “Democracy Should Begin at Home” and “Kaiser Wilson.” The disruption led to the arrest of hundreds of women, ninety-seven of whom served up to six months in a federal prison, where some of them went on a hunger strike and were brutally force-fed. The flurry of bad publicity for the White House may well have been a factor in President Woodrow Wilson’s decision to urge Congress to pass the Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the vote. Historians debate whether NAWSA’s moderate campaign or the NWP’s disruptive one was the deciding factor in Wilson’s support and Congress’s eventual approval (in 1919). But it is clear that the war facilitated the passage and ratification of the suffrage amendment. If the war did not bring permanent change to women’s workforce opportunities, it did lay the groundwork for giving women a larger political voice, although it would not be until the 1960s Civil Rights Movement that black women found full enfranchisement, and it would be still many more years before women began to achieve significant political power.

## MATERIALS

- Historical Background: “American Women and World War I, Part 2” by Lynn Dumenil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College, and author, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (2017)
- Texts
  - #1: Excerpts from “Is Suffrage Work War Work?” *The Woman Citizen*, April 27, 1918, p. 425.
  - #2: Excerpt from “Why a War Measure?” *The Woman Citizen*, August 17, 1918, p. 225.
- Analyzing a Text activity sheet
- Analyzing a Political Cartoon activity sheet
- Political cartoons related to women’s suffrage
  - #1: “Mrs. Voteless Citizen: ‘The Country Needs Some Responsible Housekeepers Up There!’” cover of *The Woman Citizen*, July 28, 1917
  - #2: “Our Right to Democracy! What’s Yours?” cover of *The Woman Citizen*, December 28, 1918
  - #3: “We Shall Fight for Democracy at Home” by Nina Allender, October 6, 1917, Nina Allender Political Cartoon Collection, National Woman’s Party, <https://nationalwomansparty.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/6E97B5D6-EF6E-4FB0-BA0B-551425128260>
  - #4: “American Justice” by Nina Allender, June 1, 1918, Nina Allender Political Cartoon Collection, National Woman’s Party,

<https://nationalwomansparty.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/A9DE86CC-4DE5-4010-B7F3-995596403434>

- #5: “Mr. President, Why Not Make American Safe for Democracy?” by William Charles Morris, *New York Evening Mail*, December 1917
- #6: “Just Like the Men! Votes for White Women,” *New-York Tribune*, March 1, 1913, New York Heritage Digital Collections, South Central Regional Library Council, <https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16694coll52/id/677/rec/33>

## PROCEDURE

1. At the end of Lesson 2, distribute Part 3 of the Historical Background essay written by Lynn Dumenil as homework. The students will read this section of the essay and write a summary of Dumenil’s key points.
2. Begin this lesson with a review of the Historical Background and the students’ selection of the key points.
3. Divide the class into groups of four students. Distribute two copies of each of the two texts and four copies of the Analyzing a Text activity sheets to each group. Two of the students in each group will work on #1 (“Is Suffrage Work War Work?”) and two will work on #2 (“Why a War Measure?”). Have them use the activity sheet to drill down into the individual texts. The students should share their findings with the other students in their group.
4. Distribute political cartoons #1 and #2 and two copies per student of the Analyzing a Cartoon activity sheet. Model the activity with the class for the first two cartoons, eliciting answers to the questions through class discussion.
5. After analyzing the first two sources with the class, distribute the remaining four political cartoons along with the Analyzing a Cartoon activity sheets.
6. Give the class time to discuss and complete organizers within their groups, and then reconvene the whole class to discuss different interpretations developed by the groups.

## ASSESSMENT

Students will develop orally or in writing a point of view on the Lesson 3 essential question:

To what extent did WWI enable women to effectively challenge economic, political, and social barriers and transform their lives in American society?

## Historical Background

“American Women and World War I, Part I” by Lynn Dumenil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College, and author, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (2017)

In May 1918, the *Los Angeles Times* devoted a full illustrated page to that city’s enormous Red Cross parade, which attracted 10,000 marchers, the majority of whom were women, and which the paper described as a “Seven Mile Tribute to Women’s Work in War.” In many cities and towns other local newspapers eagerly documented patriotic parades featuring thousands of women. Much of the coverage included striking photographs or compelling descriptions of the women’s appearance. As they marched, usually wearing uniforms, they dramatically broke with conventional middle-class assumptions concerning female respectability. Just a few years before, when women in the suffrage movement began their parades to draw attention to the demand for the vote, their actions were highly controversial. But during World War I, women who marched to demonstrate their commitment to the war effort prompted a groundswell of praise amidst eager attention to the novelty of their use of public space.

Newspaper coverage of wartime parades hints at the extensive media attention focused on women who crossed gender-role boundaries as they participated in the nation’s mobilization. The reports of overall-clad women taking men’s jobs in factories, of uniformed telephone operators who served abroad attached to the US Army’s Signal Corps, of suffrage activists who viewed women’s patriotic service as evidence of their claims to citizenship, suggested that the war was creating fundamental challenges to the gender order.

But for all the hype, signs that a “new woman” was emerging actually appeared before the Great War had begun in 1914. By 1910, 24.3 percent of adult American women worked for wages in domestic work, in factories, and in positions such as clerical and sales jobs that highlighted their public visibility. Women’s organizations flourished and prompted many women’s passionate support for the Progressive Era (1900–1914) reform movements, especially for legislation designed to improve the lives of poor women and their children. Simultaneously, the suffrage movement gained momentum and by 1914, eleven states had given women the vote. Feminism as a movement also emerged in the prewar era, as radical women challenged the strictures that limited women’s freedoms and called for economic independence and greater sexual freedom and rights in marriage. The war, then, did not necessarily create a “new” woman, but rather magnified changes already in play.

This foment around women’s roles intersected with the nation’s engagement in its first

“modern” war, a total war that demanded extensive civilian support and mobilization. While all combatant nations privileged the role of the men as soldiers on the battlefield, women nonetheless contributed significantly to their country’s war aims. To be sure, women had been camp followers, cooks, and nurses in previous wars, but now their efforts were formalized and tied to the bureaucratic organization of the modern state. Thus the ways in which American women supported the war effort were part of the very definition of how a global, modern war was fought.

Much of this service was orchestrated through voluntary associations. As the United States entered the war, national women leaders successfully pressured the government to create an organization to coordinate women’s activities. The resulting Women’s Committee of the Council of National Defense (WCND) was more active in some states than others, but nonetheless was an important vehicle for mobilizing women to raise funds, promote food conservation, and disseminate propaganda. For the most part, African American women were segregated or in some southern states excluded altogether from the WCND. Black women leaders, however, created their own organizations, like the Circle for Negro War Relief that focused on meeting the material needs (toiletry kits and knitted items) of black soldiers. Beyond the WCND, traditional women’s organizations like the Young Women’s Christian Association actively participated in war mobilization.

## Analyzing an Essay

**Important Phrases:** Which are the most informative and important phrases and or sentences in this scholarly essay? Choose three phrases.

Phrase 1:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 2:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 3:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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### Critical Thinking Questions:

Cite examples from the text in your answers.

1. Why did many American women participate in patriotic parades during World War I?

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2. How did the feminist movement of the early twentieth century (during the Progressive Era) affect the lives of American women?

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3. How did the war affect gender roles and social status of women in American society?

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4. Explain the challenges and significant contributions of African American women during World War I.

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5. Briefly explain and evaluate this statement: "World War I did not create a 'new woman' but rather accelerated and magnified recent emerging changes in their roles and status in American society."

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## Analyzing a Document

**Document #1: Important Phrases:** What are the most powerful phrases in the document?

Choose 3 phrases.

Phrase 1:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 2:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 3:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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**Document #2: Important Phrases:** What are the most powerful phrases in the document?

Choose 3 phrases.

Phrase 1:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 2:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 3:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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**Document #3: Important Phrases:** What are the most powerful phrases in the document?

Choose 3 phrases.

Phrase 1:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 2:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 3:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Document #1

*The Ladies' Home Journal for November, 1918* 139

## DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY WOMEN ARE IN UNIFORM?

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION**

She is a Chief Operator in the Signal Corps Women's Telephone Unit

Uncle Sam's Girl Munition Workers Wear the Practical Uniform on the Right

This is Worn by a Reconstruction Aid in the Army Medical Department

A Very Attractive Uniform is That Worn by the Women Driving Passenger Vehicles for the Depot Quartermaster's Department

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Very Military-Looking is the Uniform Worn by the Women of the Radio Corps

On the Left is a Driver of One of the War Camp Community Service Lunch Trucks

We Know the Blue-and-White Uniform of the Food Administration

This Trim Tailored Uniform is Worn by the Y. M. C. A. Secretaries "Over There"

Very Similar in Style is the Uniform of the Y. W. C. A. Workers Abroad

She is a Yeoman in the United States Navy Now. Her Blue Winter Uniform is of the Same Style

The Service Apron of the Y. M. C. A. Canteen Workers Abroad is Seen on the Left

On the Right is the Girl Scouts' Uniform. The Decorations Were All Won by the Wearer

This is the Summer Uniform of the American Library Association, Library War Service

The Military-Looking Uniform of the Red Cross Motor Corps is the Envy of Aspiring War Workers

Much Loved by the French is This Blue Cape, Lined With Red, Worn by the Red Cross Nurse Overseas

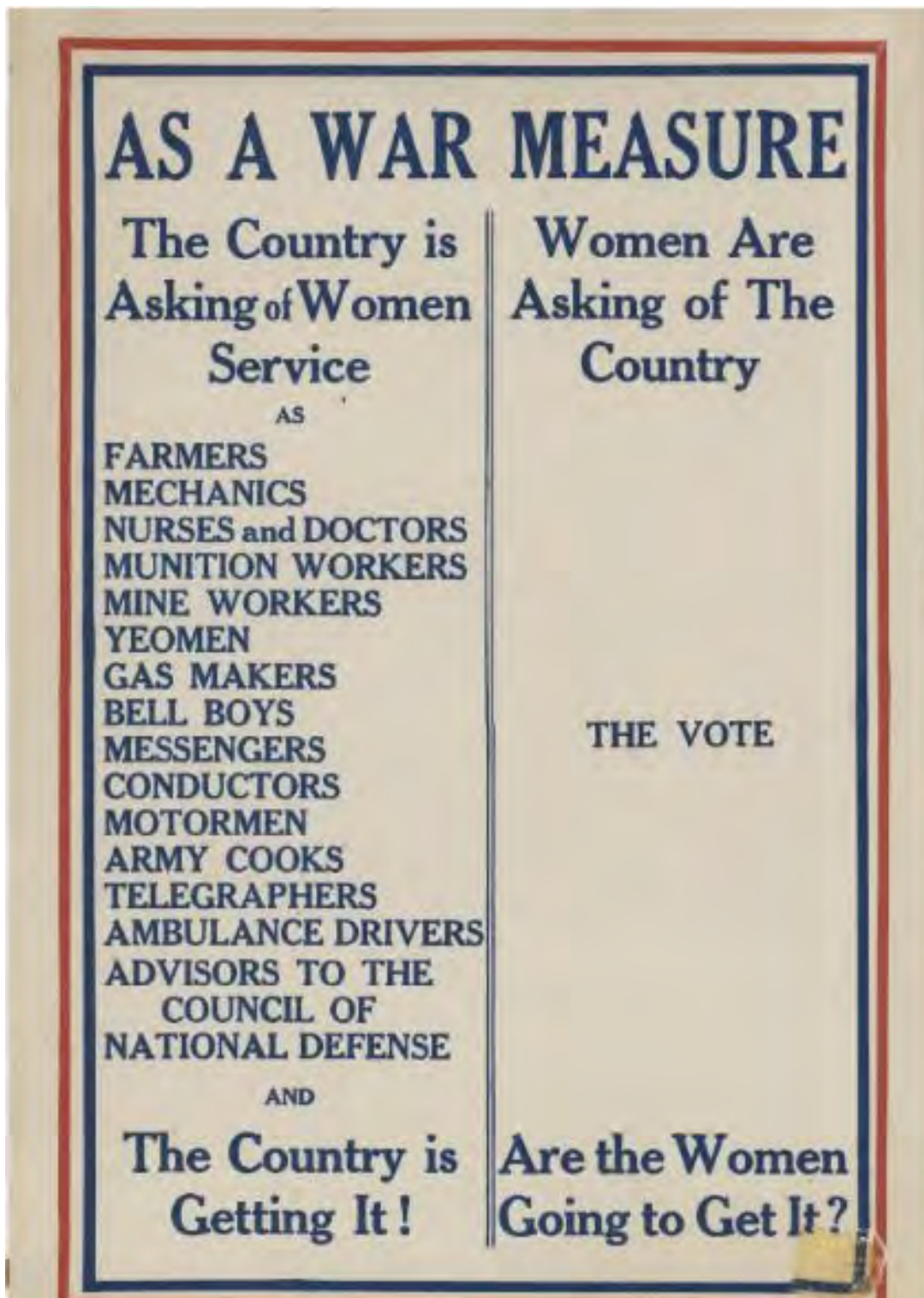
This Uniform of the Red Cross Public Health Nurse is Often Seen in the Sanitary Zones Surrounding Our Army Cantonments

The Distinctive Coat-Cape Which is Worn by the United States Navy Nurse When on Duty

There is a Very Decided Military Touch in This Uniform of the Army Nurse, for Street Wear

Ladies' Home Journal, November 1918, Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection

Document #2



*National Woman Suffrage Publishing Company, Inc., New York, NY, ca. 1918, Samuel P. and Kate Dowdle Davis Family Papers, Central Arkansas Library System*

Document #3

**WHO SHARES THE COST OF WAR?**

- Who** face death in order to give life to men? **WOMEN.**
- Who** love and work to rear the sons who then are killed in battle? **WOMEN.**
- Who** plant fields and harvest crops when all the able-bodied men are called to war? **WOMEN.**
- Who** keep shops and schools and work in factories while men are in the trenches? **WOMEN.**
- Who** nurse the wounded, feed the sick, support the helpless, brave all danger? **WOMEN.**
- Who** see their homes destroyed by shell and fire, their little ones made destitute, their daughters outraged? **WOMEN.**
- Who** are sent adrift, alone, no food, no hope, no shelter for the unborn child? **WOMEN.**
- Who** must suffer agony for every soldier killed? **WOMEN.**
- Who** are called upon to make sacrifices to pay the terrible tax of war? **WOMEN.**

**Who dares say that war is not their business? In the name of Justice and Civilization give women a voice in Government and in the councils that make or prevent war.**

**VOTE for the WOMAN SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT IN NOVEMBER**

PENNSYLVANIA WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION

Headquarters: 201-5 Arcade Building, Harrisburg



N. W. S. Publishing Co., Inc.

*Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association, Harrisburg, PA, ca. 1915, Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection*

## Historical Background

“American Women and World War I, Part 2” by Lynn Dumenil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College

While most women supported the war effort on the home front, others sought more dramatic experiences. Approximately 25,000 women served abroad, some as volunteers helping with relief aid for war refugees, but most working in some capacity for agencies like the American Red Cross or the Young Men’s Christian Association and for the US Army. Their activities underscored the way in which the modern military machine required much more than combat soldiers to conduct a war. Approximately 20,000 women were nurses, although only about half of these served in Europe. While some African American nurses were eventually enrolled, none of these served abroad during the war. Valued for their skills, nurses were nonetheless denied military rank, which limited their authority in the hierarchy of military command. Other women, who worked for the YMCA or the Salvation Army, operated “canteens” for soldiers, providing them with modest refreshments, entertainment, and chaperoned female companionship. Only two black women served in the canteens, doing so in segregated facilities. The aim behind the canteens was to deflect men from bars and prostitutes by offering the opportunity to chat with “wholesome” American women. Although media descriptions of these canteen workers tended to emphasize their tender, nurturing qualities, the women themselves were adventuresome “new women” eager to serve near the front.

Canteen women often likened themselves to soldiers, and this was even more evident among the more than 200 women who served abroad as telephone operators in response to the army’s desperate need for bilingual telephone operators. Although the women took a formal oath and wore the official insignia of the Signal Corps, they were contract workers, not members of the army. Many assumed, however, that they were army recruits and were surprised to discover after the war that they were not eligible for any military benefits. It was not until 1978 that Congress acknowledged their claim to military service and rewarded benefits to the handful of women still living.

Less dramatic, but nonetheless crucial were women who worked for wages in the United States, taking the place of men in factories, offices, shipyards, and railroads. The war did not significantly increase the number of women working. Rather, it gave those who already worked opportunities to take better paying and often more interesting jobs. Blue-collar jobs, especially in the armaments and railroad industries, allowed women to cross workplace boundaries, dressing in overalls and uniforms to do so. Women also expanded their presence in white-collar work, in the federal bureaucracy, and in offices that had formerly employed only men. A small group of women enlisted in the Navy and the Marines, and their work consisted mainly of

clerical work. The Army resisted calls to enroll women even though it would free men for combat service.

African American women were largely excluded from white-collar work and were denied entrance into the Navy or Marines. World War I nonetheless brought exciting possibilities. The labor crisis was a major factor in prompting the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the cities of the North. For the first time African American women, who had been almost exclusively employed in domestic and agricultural labor, found their way into factory work, although usually the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs and only for the brief period of wartime mobilization. These women usually worked in segregated facilities and received less pay than white women. But both black and white women faced stiff resistance from employers and male workers to women taking over men's jobs. Although defense industries with federal contracts were required to pay women "equal pay for equal work," a provision designed to protect men's wages from being devalued by the presence of women, equity in pay was rarely achieved. And however much women hoped to retain their better paid jobs, at war's end, most lost their slender footing in more skilled work, although the clerical field continued to expand for women in the post war years.





Poster #1



United War Work Campaign, 1918 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09550)

Poster #2



Motor Corps of America, 1918 (Texas War Records War Poster collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin)

Poster #3



Harrison-Landauer Inc., Baltimore MD, 1918 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

Poster #4



*National League for Woman's Service, ca. 1917–1918 (Texas War Records War Poster Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin)*

Poster #5



*Renesch Company, 1919 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09644)*

Poster #6



*United War Work Campaign, 1918 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)*

Poster #7



1917 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

Poster #8



*Woman's Land Army of America, 1918 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)*





## Historical Background

“American Women and World War I, Part 3” by Lynn Dumenil, Robert Glass Cleland Professor of American History, Emerita, Occidental College, and author, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (2017)

If war did not permanently improve women’s position in the work force, it did accelerate women’s political equality. By the time of the war, the suffrage movement dominated by white women consisted of two competing groups. The largest was the National American Women’s Suffrage Association (NAWSA), led by Carrie Chapman Catt. Although NAWSA had been part of a large antiwar movement that flourished after the European war began in 1914, as the US moved toward war, NAWSA reversed its antiwar stance and soon began to urge women to support wholeheartedly the war effort as a means of demonstrating women’s loyalty and right to full citizenship. It eagerly publicized all of the ways in which American women served as “the second line of defense,” while keeping up its efforts to persuade politicians, especially President Woodrow Wilson, to endorse suffrage.

The National Woman’s Party (NWP), led by Alice Paul, in contrast, turned to the dramatic tactic of picketing the White House, flourishing banners that read “Democracy Should Begin at Home” and “Kaiser Wilson.” The disruption led to the arrest of hundreds of women, ninety-seven of whom served up to six months in a federal prison, where some of them went on a hunger strike and were brutally force-fed. The flurry of bad publicity for the White House may well have been a factor in President Woodrow Wilson’s decision to urge Congress to pass the Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the vote. Historians debate whether NAWSA’s moderate campaign or the NWP’s disruptive one was the deciding factor in Wilson’s support and Congress’s eventual approval (in 1919). But it is clear that the war facilitated the passage and ratification of the suffrage amendment. If the war did not bring permanent change to women’s workforce opportunities, it did lay the groundwork for giving women a larger political voice, although it would not be until the 1960s Civil Rights Movement that black women found full enfranchisement, and it would be still many more years before women began to achieve significant political power.

**Text #1: Excerpt from “Is Suffrage Work War Work?”**  
*Woman Citizen, April 27, 1918*

From the beginning of the war these women have leaped at every presenting opportunity to help, to stand by America, to see the war through.

No detail of the war program has been slighted by them.

The crassest and stupidest critic has been silenced by the eagerness of their loyalty and the effectiveness of their war service.

These women are the suffragists of America, and it was the duly appointed representatives of their 2,000,000 membership that foregathered in the council meeting at Indianapolis.

In all their counseling the war stood out foremost.

It filled their minds.

It thrilled their hearts.

It informed all discussion.

It was part of every report.

It conditioned all prospects.

They were logical women.

They were balanced.

They were practical.

You could not listen to them without realizing the coherency of their purpose and intention.

*And never for a moment did they visualize suffrage work as anything but war work!*

It was there in the war work scheme just as Red Cross work and Thrift and Conservation and Liberty Loan work were there.

Were they wrong?

Is woman’s right of self-government not pertinent to the world’s right of self-government?

Is practice not pertinent to theory?

Is the thing we are fighting for not pertinent to the fight?

As well say that the freeing of the slaves should have been deferred until the Civil War for their freedom was over as to say that woman's right of self-government should not be considered until the war for self-government is over.

Suffrage work is war work and as such must go forward unceasingly until the war for democracy ends in triumph.

**Text #2: Excerpt from “Why a War Measure?” *Woman Citizen*, August 17, 1918**

The war has another than the military side.

Call it political, call it psychological, call it what you will. That side, too, must be looked after.

America’s political defensive and offensive must be built up. Her democracy at home must be impregnable.

Self-government within her borders must be of, for, and by the people, not of, for, and by one-half of it.

President Wilson has just said that the passage of the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment at this time is an essential *psychological* element in the war for democracy.

Why?

Because women love their land and want their voice and vote to stand behind every measure which will hasten the ultimate triumph of its armies overseas.

Because, enfranchised woman feels the thrill and the exaltation of standing with the enfranchised men of her country.

Because, unenfranchised woman is shamed and discredited before a watching world which asks, in effect: “Are not American women intelligent? Are they no longer moral? Have they been proved disloyal? that a democracy cannot trust them with a vote, when the monarchies of Great Britain, of Canada, of Denmark have enfranchised women since the war began”.

But woman suffrage is not only a psychological element for winning the war, it is an element of *efficiency*.

Why?

Because the vote gives the wife and mother of the soldier a chance to back up at the polls in America the cause for which he is fighting in France. It helps her to protect his home and children from the slacker and the profiteering enemy over here.

Because the unenfranchised woman must expend part of her energy on the fight for democracy instead of spending all of her energy on the prosecution of the war.

Because the enemies of woman suffrage are the real enemies of a true democracy. By every day’s delay in the United States Senate in which they are leaving American womanhood pilloried before the world as unworthy to share the political freedom for which braver men are shedding their blood they are proving it. For the enemies of woman suffrage are not in the trenches of France. The soldier vote in New York State proved this. They are in the easy chairs of America.

### Analyzing a Text

**Important Phrases:** What are the most powerful phrases in the article? Choose three phrases.

Phrase 1:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 2:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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Phrase 3:

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Why is this phrase important or powerful?

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### Critical Thinking Question

*Cite examples from the text in your answer.*

1. Does the information in this article effectively answer the question posed in the headline?  
Why or why not?

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## Analyzing a Cartoon

Cartoon # \_\_\_\_\_

Give the cartoon a title:

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What is the significance of the central figure(s) or object(s)?

---

---

What action is taking place in the cartoon?

---

---

What mood is created by the cartoon and what in the image is creating that mood?

---

---

What message is the artist giving to the viewer?

---

---

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Cartoon # \_\_\_\_\_

Give the cartoon a title:

---

What is the significance of the central figure(s) or object(s)?

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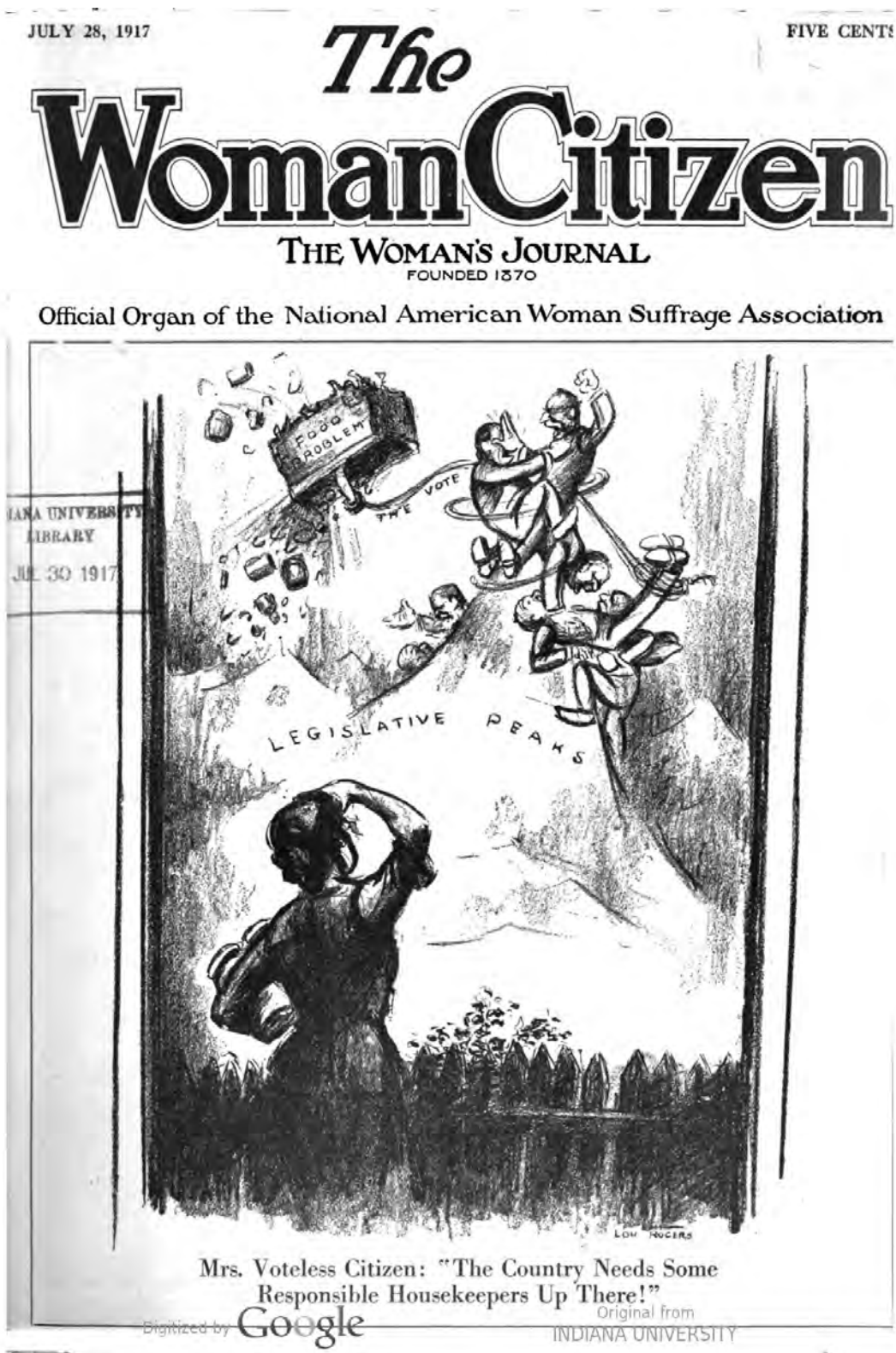
What message is the artist giving to the viewer?

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Cartoon #1





Cartoon #2

# The Woman Citizen

THE WOMAN'S JOURNAL  
FOUNDED 1870

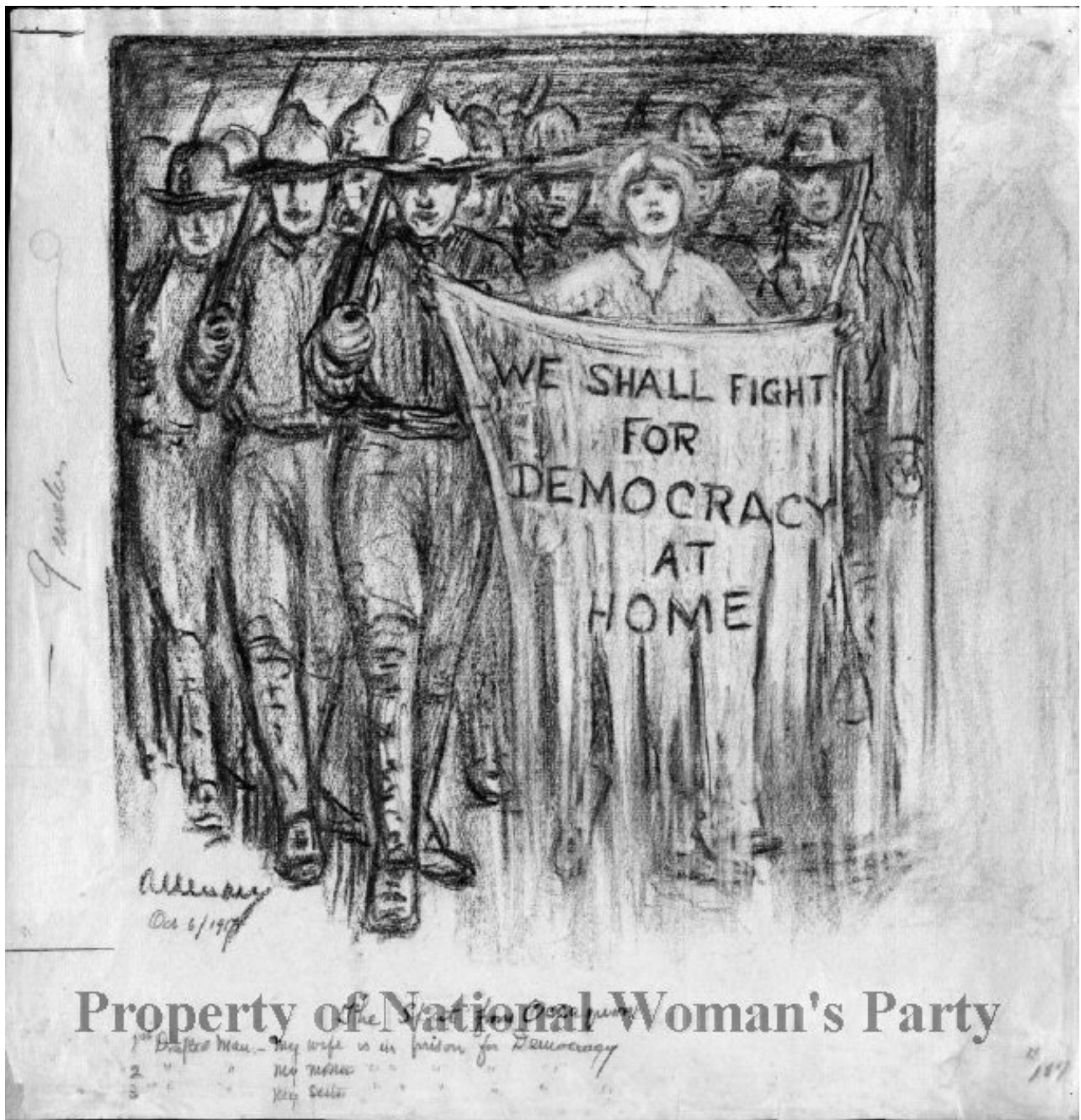
10 Cents a Copy

December 28, 1918



“OUR RIGHT TO DEMOCRACY! WHAT’S YOURS?”

Cartoon #3



Nina Allender Political Cartoon Collection, National Woman's Party

Cartoon #4



Nina Allender Political Cartoon Collection, National Woman's Party

Cartoon #5



Cartoon #6



New-York Tribune, March 1, 1913