# Women and the Vote

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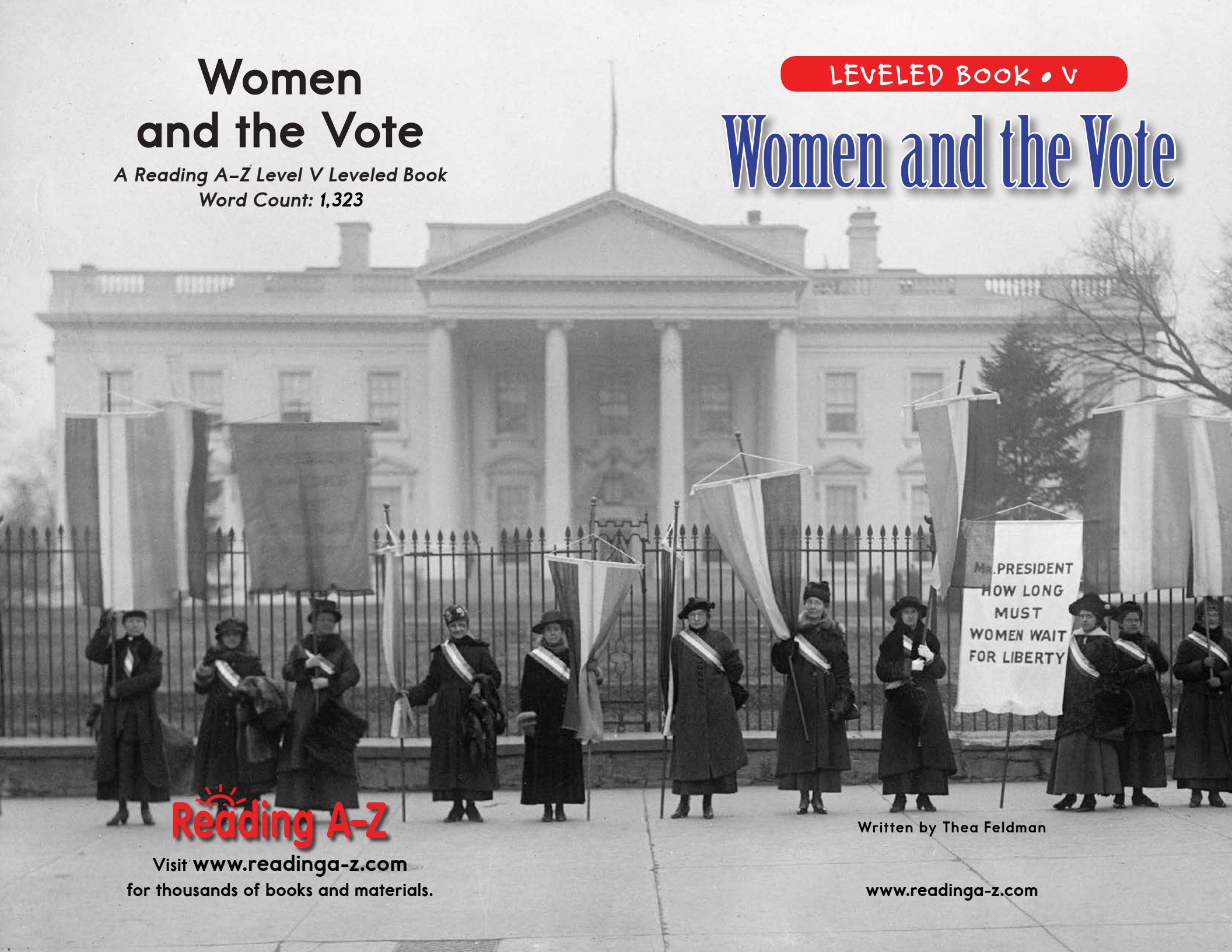
LEVELED BOOK • V




# Women and the Vote

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Written by Thea Feldman

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## Glossary

**amendment** *(n.)* a change or addition to a document or law (p. 4)

**Constitution** *(n.)* the written rules that govern the United States (p. 4)

**election** *(n.)* the act of selecting a person for government office by voting (p. 4)

**gender** *(n.)* the state of being male or female (p. 10)

**injustices** *(n.)* instances of unfair treatment of a person or group of people (p. 9)

**movement** *(n.)* an organized effort by many people to reach a goal or bring about change; the people or groups involved in such an effort (p. 6)

**picketed** *(v.)* stood or marched in a public location to protest against something (p. 14)

**sentinels** *(n.)* people who keep watch or guard something (p. 14)

**suffragists** *(n.)* people who support granting the right to vote to those who don't already have it (p. 10)



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Front cover: Women picket the White House in 1917 for the right to vote.

Title page: Two women stand on a city street in 1905, hoping to gain support for women's right to vote.

Page 16: The Susan B. Anthony dollar coin was minted in the United States from 1979 to 1981 and again in 1999.

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**Correlation**

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In 1918, President Wilson agreed to support a constitutional amendment that granted voting rights to all female citizens. This became the Nineteenth Amendment. Congress passed it in 1919, and it became law on August 26, 1920.

On Election Day in 1920, for the first time in U.S. history, women across the country legally voted for president. The fight for women's suffrage in the United States that had begun more than seventy years earlier was finally won.

Five days after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, suffragettes celebrate on August 31, 1920.

Thousands of women marched in the streets. Many men in the crowd, including some police, tripped, grabbed, shoved, and insulted the women. More than two hundred of those who marched were hurt. Afterward, the newspapers and many in the public criticized the treatment of the women.

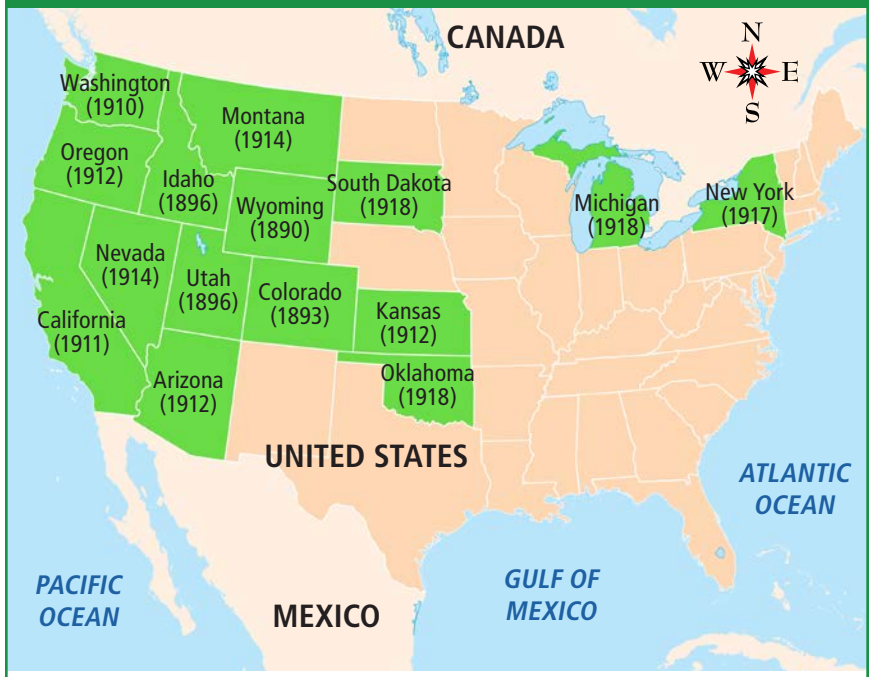
In 1917, Paul organized a protest in front of the White House. Suffragists, called "silent **sentinels**," **picketed** twenty-four hours a day, six days a week, and carried signs demanding the right to vote.

Nearly five hundred silent sentinels, including Alice Paul, were arrested. Some of the women were treated badly in prison. They decided to go on a hunger strike as a way to protest and bring public attention to their treatment. The women gained public sympathy and were released. Support for women's suffrage was at an all-time high.


Suffragist Lucy Burns sits in jail after picketing in Washington, D.C., in 1917.



## Where Women Could Vote Before 1920




Prior to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, the right of women to vote in the United States was decided at the state level. Some states gave women full voting rights prior to 1920.

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### "I Have Been and Gone and Done It!"

As soon as voting began for the 1872 national **election**, Susan B. Anthony was ready in Rochester, New York, eager to vote. She took a ballot, marked it with her choice for president, folded it, and put it in the ballot box.

Anthony went home and wrote to her friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "I have been and gone and done it!"

According to the Fourteenth **Amendment** to the United States **Constitution**, Anthony was a U.S. citizen with rights. However, the Fourteenth Amendment also stated that only men could vote. It was against the law for a woman to vote. Two weeks later, Anthony was arrested.

Susan Brownell Anthony near the time she broke the law by voting. Her weekly newspaper, *The Revolution*, had this motto: "Men their rights, and nothing more; women their rights, and nothing less."



The movement continued with the next generation of suffragists, some of whom believed in big, bold actions to bring attention to their cause. In 1913, suffragist Alice Paul, one of the leaders of NAWSA, helped organize a women's suffrage parade that took place in Washington, D.C., the day before Woodrow Wilson took the oath of office to become president.

A 1915 suffrage march in New York City

## Anything for the Cause

Anthony's trial made her famous. This political cartoon's caption is "The Woman Who Dared."

In 1872, Anthony voted for president. She believed that doing so was within her rights as a U.S. citizen as stated in the Fourteenth Amendment. According to Anthony, the part of the Amendment that stated only men could vote was unjust, or unfair, and needed to change. She hoped that by voting, she would call attention to the law, and more women would demand that it be changed.

Anthony was arrested and brought to trial. The newspapers covered the entire story. Anthony gained attention, and her actions helped the suffragist movement gain new support. Her case and the tireless work of other suffragists kept women's suffrage in the news. However, Anthony and her fellow suffragists would all pass away without seeing women's suffrage come to the United States.



## A Restricted Right

When the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1787, it did not address voting rights. That was left up to the individual states. By 1807, every state's laws said that only free, white men could vote.

Abigail Adams

### Men and Women: A Deep Divide

John Adams was on the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence for the United States. He later became the new country's first vice president and its second president. For fifty-four years, he and his wife, Abigail, had a very close relationship. He trusted her with their business affairs whenever he was away from home. However, even he did not believe in women having the right to vote.

Abigail felt differently. In a 1776 letter to John, she warned him that someday women would rebel against having to follow laws they had no voice in making.

However, a time of great change was coming. Until the 1820s, most married women did not work outside their homes. They raised their children and took care of their houses while their husbands went out to earn money. Most unmarried women, if they worked at all, worked as teachers, seamstresses, nannies, or housekeepers.

By the 1820s, machines allowed goods to be produced quickly and cheaply. More factories and mills opened every year, offering low-paying jobs that many men didn't want. Women began to work at these jobs. Some women enjoyed being able to contribute not only to their family income but also to the larger world.

In the 1830s, women started to lend their voices to several causes, including the growing **movement** to end slavery in the United States. Women wrote to newspapers and made speeches in support of freeing all the slaves. However, women were often barred from speaking to audiences that included men.

Under the laws in the early 1800s, a married woman owned nothing of her own—not even the clothes on her back. Divorce was often impossible. If a couple did separate, the woman did not get custody of her children. They stayed with their father.



The executive committee of the International Council of Women met in 1888 in Washington, D.C. Elizabeth Cady Stanton is in the front row, fourth from left.

However, Lucy Stone and some other ERA members did support the amendment. In 1869, the ERA split into two new organizations. Anthony and others formed the National Women's Suffrage Association. They worked for women's suffrage to be granted at the national level. Lucy Stone and others formed the American Women's Suffrage Association. They continued to work for women's suffrage at the state level.

In 1870, Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment. It did not grant suffrage to women.

In 1890, hoping they might accomplish more if they worked together, the two women's suffrage groups joined together to become the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

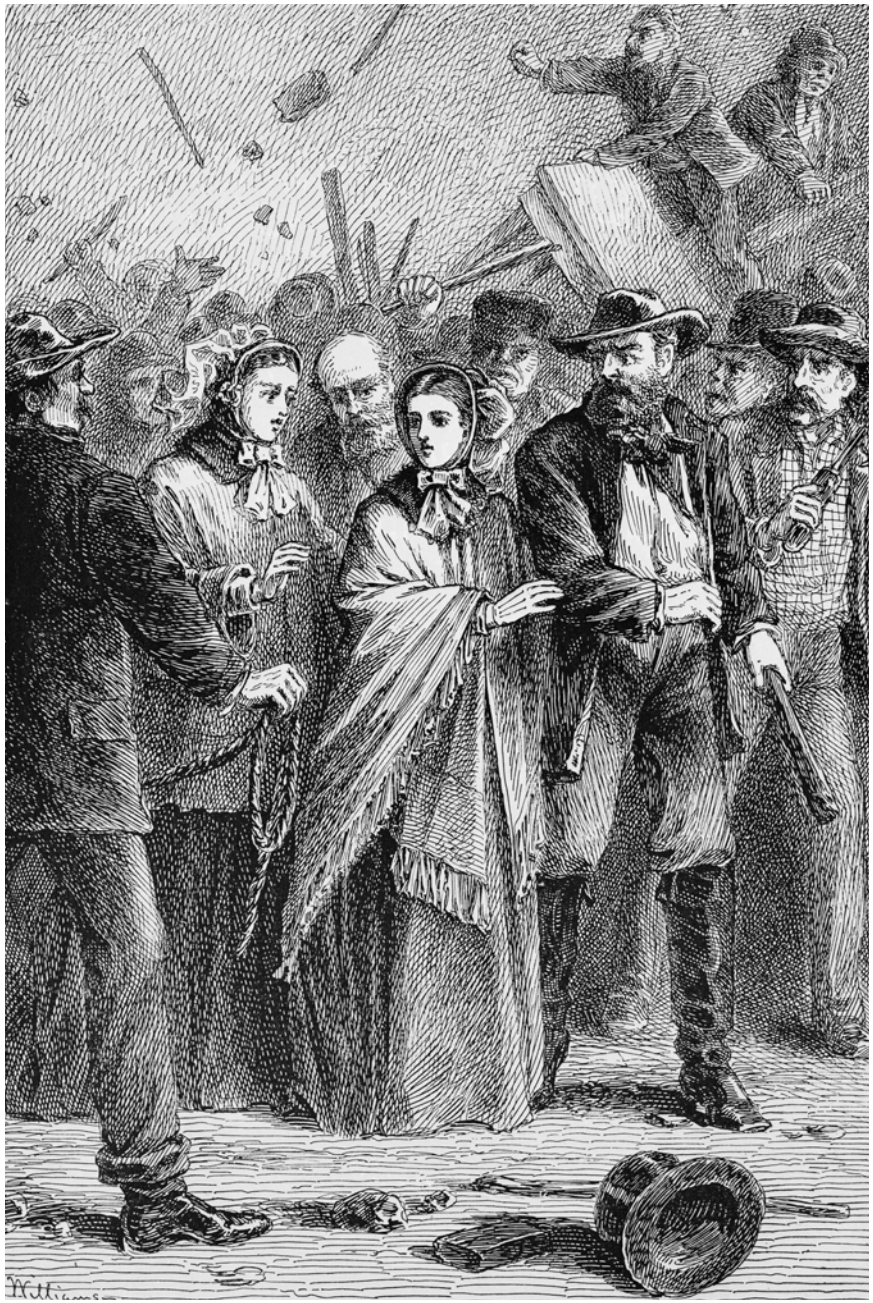
The war ended in 1865 with a Northern victory, and an amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution. It was the Thirteenth Amendment, which ended slavery. In 1867, Congress voted to add the Fourteenth Amendment. It stated that everyone born in the United States was a citizen with rights, but it also said that only men could vote.


Lucy Stone

Women refused to accept this. In 1867, **suffragists** Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone formed the Equal Rights Association (ERA), the first large-scale organization for women's suffrage. According to the Constitution, women's suffrage could still only be granted at the state level, so the ERA tried to get each state to change its voting laws.

In 1869, members of Congress proposed the Fifteenth Amendment, which stated that a citizen could not be denied the right to vote based on race. Anthony, Stanton, and others wanted to change the Fifteenth Amendment to include **gender** as well as race. They now believed that women's suffrage needed to be granted at the national level and refused to support the Fifteenth Amendment if it did not include women.





Lucretia Mott (center) faced an angry mob of men in 1838 when she spoke out against slavery. She would soon become a hero of the movement for women's rights.

Lucretia Mott

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

In 1840, at an anti-slavery convention in London, England, Lucretia Mott met Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Mott had been part of the anti-slavery movement and was looking forward to speaking at the convention. Stanton was so passionate about equal rights for all people that she and her husband attended the convention while on their honeymoon!

To the great dismay of both women, they were not allowed to speak because men were present at the convention. They had to sit behind a curtain with other women and listen as men gave all the speeches. They decided to put together a convention for women's rights.



## The Women's Rights Movement Begins

It took eight years for Stanton, Mott, and others to organize the first Women's Rights Convention, but finally, in July of 1848, it took place in Seneca Falls, New York. The meeting place was packed with three hundred delegates, including forty men.

Stanton read from a document she had written that was based on the Declaration of Independence. It stated "all men *and women* are created equal" and included a list of **injustices** that women suffered. One hundred delegates signed the declaration. They also gave their support to women's suffrage—the right to vote.

The Seneca Falls Convention marked the beginning of the women's rights movement in the United States. The movement grew and succeeded in bringing about some important changes. In 1860, many of the marriage laws changed. A woman now had the same legal rights to her children as her husband. She could also own things and keep any money she earned. However, she still couldn't vote.

In 1861, the Civil War began, and Northern states battled Southern states, in large part over the question of slavery. Many people in the Northern states wanted to end it, while many in the Southern states did not.