

**Title of Lesson: *What Were They Thinking? Why Some Alabamians Opposed the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment***  
(Suggested grade level: 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Advanced Placement American History)

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**Background Information:**

Depending on how this lesson will be used and on what theme will be emphasized, the teacher will need to refresh students' memories regarding earlier seminal events that fit with the chosen theme. For example, if the focus is on Constitutional law, do a quick review of the amendment process, perhaps highlighting earlier state and/or national laws restricting or expanding voting rights. If this material is used in conjunction with the topic of women's rights, then a mini-lecture/review stretching from Abigail Adams to Susan B. Anthony would be helpful. Linking to previously studied events helps students internalize information and integrate facts from different time periods into a broader, more meaningful context. The [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#) has a very helpful article entitled, [Alabama Equal Suffrage Association](#), which provides more information about the suffrage movement in Alabama.

**Overview of lesson:**

Most students today can't understand why so many people once believed women should not be allowed to vote. By analyzing two primary documents from the Alabama Department of Archives and History dating from 1919, when the state-wide drive for female suffrage was at its most intense, students will directly encounter different facets of the debate. One document in particular expresses some of the social, economic, racial, and political fears on the minds of opponents. Students will probably find the objections strange, even offensive, by today's standards, but that will force them to acquaint themselves with the realities of the time period. This lesson is relatively short and not intended as an in-depth exploration of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. It's designed to be used as one small part of larger unit of the teacher's choice. Possibilities include the Progressive Era (1890s to 1920s), gender stereotypes (coming out of the Victorian era), the struggle for suffrage by African-Americans and women, women's history, constitutional law (requirements for passing an amendment and links between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Amendments), or a unit on civil rights.

**Content Standards**

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)  
Grade 11: Content Standard 5, p.77

[National Standards for History, 1996](#)

**Standards in History for Grades 5-12** (p. 110)

Era 7, Standard 1B – Describe how the 16, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> amendments reflected the ideals and goals of Progressivism and the continuing attempt to adapt the founding ideals to a modernized society.

Era 7, Standard 1C – Specify the issues raised by various women and how mainstream Progressives responded to them.

[National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#), (Bulletin 111, 2010)

Standard 2 – Time, Continuity, and Change, p.30

Standard 5 – Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, p. 42

### **Primary Learning Objective(s):**

The student will:

- Analyze primary documents, including two written documents and one visual image.
- Examine (without endorsing) some of the reasons early 20th century Alabamians opposed female suffrage.
- Examine and discuss the implications of the arguments encountered in the documents (unstated assumptions).
- Analyze the arguments against the 19th Amendment in their historical context, tracing them to the Civil War and Reconstruction.
- Refute one of the arguments made against the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment (rather than just dismissing it as “dumb”) by writing a brief editorial (250-350 words), expressed in logical, respectful, and persuasive prose.

### **Additional Learning Objective(s):**

The student will:

- Develop an understanding of how people in a former time period thought and felt regarding an important issue (avoiding “presentism” i.e., explaining the past and judging it though the eyes of the present, instead of seeing it in its historical context).
- Engage in critical thinking as he/she analyze these documents.
- Practice persuasive writing skills when countering one of the anti-suffrage arguments.

**Time allotted:** 90-100 minutes

### **Materials and Equipment:**

- [“Will the Suffrage Amendment be RATIFIED?”](#), a one-page document was printed by the National Woman’s Party, headquartered in Montgomery, Alabama. Although no exact date is provided, it was obviously written AFTER Congress formally proposed the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment (June 4, 1919) but BEFORE the last required state approved it (which was Tennessee in August, 1920).
- “Questions to Accompany Image of Female Clothing” (Attached)
- “Ratification Record for 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment” (Attached)
- [“Gentlemen of the Legislature of Alabama”](#), a written copy of a speech delivered to the Alabama State Legislature.
- “Questions to Accompany ‘Gentlemen of the Legislature of Alabama’ Speech” (Attached)
- Persuasive Essay Instructions (Attached)
- “Essay Rubric” (Attached)
- [“American Women: Fashioning a National Identity”](#), which is the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s on-line counterpart to their 2010 exhibit showing women’s clothing from the 1890s to the 1940s. Click on the “View All Objects” to view individual outfits. They’re presented in general chronological order, so choose any one from around 1915.
- [“Votes for Women” Suffrage Pictures, 1850-1920](#); this is part of the Library of Congress American Memory Collection. It has 38 photos of Suffragists in action. There’s a link on the homepage to a time-line “One Hundred Years toward Suffrage.”
- [“Women, Their Rights and Nothing Else: The Suffrage Movement from 1840-1920”](#); this is a complete lesson plan from the Library of Congress dealing with female suffrage.

- [“Teaching With Documents: Women Suffrage and the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment \*Failure is Impossible\*”](#); this includes the narrative script of a play that was performed at the National Archives in 1995 in celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

### **Technological Resources:**

- Computer with internet access
- Digital projector

### **Background/Preparation:**

Depending on how you plan to use this lesson and what theme you want to emphasize, you might need to refresh students’ memories regarding earlier seminal events that fit with that theme. For example, if your focus is on Constitutional law, then you’d want to do a quick review of the amendment process, perhaps highlighting earlier state and/or national laws restricting or expanding voting rights. If you plan to use this material in conjunction with the topic of women’s rights, then a mini-lecture/review stretching from Abigail Adams to Susan B. Anthony would be helpful. Linking back to previously studied events helps students internalize information and integrate facts from different time periods into a broader, more meaningful context.

### **Procedures/Activities:**

#### **Engagement/Motivation Activity:**

- Using the [Metropolitan Museum of Art web link](#) provided above, select and display (or print off copies) an image of one of the outfits a well-off woman living in the late 1800s or very early 1900s might have worn in public. (This clothing would have been typical in both the North and South.)
- Ask the class to process the image using these questions as a guide (questions can also be found under “Attachments”):
  1. What do you notice about this outfit? Be specific.
  2. How restrictive/burdensome would it be to wear these clothes?
  3. What sort of activities would a woman NOT be able to do if she were wearing this ensemble?
  4. Given that this kind of female clothing is fairly typical for its time period, what sort of attitudes about women does it suggest? (What assumptions might underlie the belief that women should dress this way?)
  5. Compare this outfit with modern female garb. Why the differences? What do the differences suggest in terms of assumptions about women?
- Stress to students that some Americans living in the early 1900s, particularly those in the South after World War I, felt uncomfortable with what they perceived as the expanding role of women in society and politics. While we don’t accept most of their ideas as valid today, it’s important to understand what they were thinking. Doing so provides valuable insights into the character of a particular time period as well as lessons about how and why society changes (and in what ways it remains the same).
- Tell the class they will be focusing on female suffrage and examining why some people in Alabama, including many women, opposed the idea. As they read the documents, their goal should be to understand as fully as possible the thoughts behind the words, even if they find some of the ideas objectionable.  
Encourage students to make connections between the outfit they just viewed and the documents they’ll read. What might be some shared values?

<p><b>Step 1</b></p>	<p>Display (using overhead projector) or print off copies of the one-page Alabama Archives primary document entitled <a href="#">“Will the Suffrage Amendment be RATIFIED?”</a> (See link under “Attachments.”) This document, printed by the National Women’s Party Alabama headquarters in Montgomery, reveals something about the dynamics of the push for the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment as it neared the finish line. (The amendment became law in 1920 when the Tennessee legislature approved it by a one-vote margin.) Although no date appears on this document, tell students it was written in the summer of 1919. The document will show them which states had already approved the amendment and which states, according to the National Women’s Party in Alabama, were <b>certain</b> to approve it, and which were <b>likely</b> to. In spite of the seemingly straight-forward style of this handbill, it does have a certain dramatic quality. It issues a kind of challenge: will Alabama endorse what this party claims is the inevitable passage of the amendment or will it go down on the wrong side of history?</p>
<p><b>Step 2</b></p>	<p>Use the following questions to guide a discussion of this document. If you have time, you could let students work on them in groups before asking them to respond. Alternatively, this could be assigned as homework. (Questions can also be found under “Attachments.”)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How many states in the Union had to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment before it could become law? (Although the answer---36---is stated at the bottom of the sheet, ask students why it’s that specific number. Highlight the fact that there were only 48 states in the Union in 1919-20, and that three-quarters of all states have to approve a Constitutional amendment. Three-quarters of 48 states equals 36. With 50 states today, 38 would have to approve any proposed amendment.)</li> <li>2. The third heading in this document reads: “Eighteen Suffrage States Are Certain to Ratify.” What do they think is meant by the term “suffrage state?” Ask students to take a guess. (Accept any logical explanation. Someone will probably figure out that, based on the definition of the word “suffrage,” these were states that already allowed women to vote, although in some cases they placed certain restrictions on that vote.)</li> <li>3. Look at the list of the 18 “Suffrage States” which this document claims are “Certain to Ratify” the amendment. What do most of them have in common geographically, and how do you think that factor might help explain why women in these states had already achieved the vote? (Most of the states are West of the Mississippi River or in more remote areas of the nation---frontier states. Historians argue about why these states were the first to endorse female suffrage, so accept any reasonable explanations. Tell them that the first state to give women the vote was Wyoming in 1869.)</li> <li>4. At the time this handbill was printed, had Alabama voted on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment? (No) Who was going to get to vote on the issue? (The Alabama legislature.)</li> <li>5. Why do you think the National Women’s Party printed this handbill? What was its purpose and how did it go about trying to achieve the desired effect? (Accept all reasonable and thoughtful answers.)</li> </ol> <p>Since we know the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment eventually became law, did Alabama have to obey it even though they never approved it? (Yes, that’s the point of passing a constitutional amendment versus a patchwork state-by-state approach. Once an</p>

	<p>amendment is approved by three-quarters of the states, it immediately applies to every state, even the ones that didn't approve it.)</p>
<p><b>Step 3</b></p>	<p>Give <b>each student</b> a photocopy of the document that begins with the heading <a href="#"><u>"Gentlemen of the Legislature of Alabama"</u></a>. This is a copy of a speech, signed and thus presumably also written by females, that was delivered to the Alabama legislature as they were considering the issue of female suffrage. Because it is longer than the previous paragraph and the wording is more complex, it would be best to number the paragraphs (a total of 5 if you assign the first and second paragraphs as one unit), and divide the class into 5 groups, with each group being responsible for analyzing one assigned paragraph. Give the following guiding questions to each group. They should write down their answers and underline relevant words and phrases in the document. (Questions can also be found under "Attachments.")</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What position do the authors of this document take in your paragraph and what claims do they make about female suffrage? List each one, as there may be several.</li> <li>2. What "loaded" (strongly emotional) words and phrases do they use in support of their position/claims? List all of them. Do they strike you as reasonable? Why or why not?</li> <li>3. What does this document teach you about the assumptions many Alabamians held in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding what women should and shouldn't do? What are the concerns of the women who wrote this document? What are their fears? List as many as you can.</li> <li>4. Label these concerns/fears by using abbreviations for the following categories: political, social, racial, and economic. (There's some overlap.)</li> </ol> <p>What historical background information might help explain why Alabamians, as well as other southerners, had these fears and concerns? (Defeat in the Civil War, economic insecurities, and re-imposition of segregation during Reconstruction. Although by the time this speech was delivered, more than fifty years had passed since the end of the Civil War, some things had not changed. Racial prejudice was still common; the Democratic Party continued to support segregation and thus was the only viable political party in the South; and the South still embraced the same traditional, conservative values that it had before the war, particularly values related to blacks and women.)</p>
<p><b>Step 4</b></p>	<p>Process this document with students. Try to get them to draw some broad but reasonable conclusions. Emphasize that they need to focus on <b>understanding</b>, not just <b>judging and dismissing</b>, the opinions these women expressed. Ask them what the documents, particularly the last one, taught them about social, economic, racial, and economic realities of the time period.</p>
<p><b>Step 5</b></p>	<p>Display or distribute copies of the "Ratification Record for the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment" (attached). Ask students: "What do you notice in terms of which states approved the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and when?" (Students will undoubtedly notice that Alabama did not approve the amendment until 1953, thirty-three years after it became law. In fact, the last eight states to approve the amendment were all southern, starting with Virginia in 1952 and ending with Mississippi in 1984.)</p>

<b>Step 6</b>	<p>Assign a brief persuasive essay using these instructions (another copy can be found under “Attachments):</p> <p>“Select ONE of the arguments made in the last document you read, the speech with the heading <a href="#">‘Gentlemen of the Legislature of Alabama’,.</a>’ In a written editorial of at least 250 words, but no more than 350 words, identify and then counter that argument in a logical, respectful, and persuasive manner. Do NOT reference any historical facts or developments beyond 1920, the year the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was finally approved, to bolster your own argument (e.g. “Everyone now believes women should vote, so obviously you were wrong to oppose it.”).”</p> <p>You can use the attached rubric to grade the essay. Whatever evaluation tool you use, be certain to share your exact expectations with the students ahead of time.</p>
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**Assessment Strategies:**

- Evaluate task assignment sheets for effort and completeness.
- Evaluate the essay explaining the connection between one photograph and the Van Vorst text (rubric attached)

**Extension:**

- Define “propaganda.” Have students find a current example of propaganda used to influence a person’s behavior or belief. Have students share the examples which they found.

### Questions to Accompany Women's Speech to Legislature

1. What position do the authors of this document take in your paragraph and what claims do they make about female suffrage? List each one, as there may be several.
2. What "loaded" (strongly emotional) words or phrases do they use in support of their position/claims? List all of them.
3. What does this document teach you about the assumptions many Alabamians held in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding what women should and shouldn't do? What are these women's concerns? What are their fears? List them.
4. Divide these concerns/fears into the following categories: political, social, racial, and economic.
5. What historical background information might help explain why Alabamians, as well as other Southerners, had these fears and concerns?

RATIFICATION RECORD FOR 19<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT

#	State	Date	*
1	Illinois	Jun 10, 1919;	
2	Michigan	Jun 10, 1919	
3	Wisconsin	Jun 10, 1919	
4	Kansas	Jun 16, 1919	
5	New York	Jun 16, 1919	
6	Ohio	Jun 16, 1919	
7	Pennsylvania	Jun 24, 1919	
8	Massachusetts	Jun 25, 1919	
9	Texas	Jun 28, 1919	
10	Iowa	July 2, 1919	
11	Missouri	Jul 3, 1919	
12	Arkansas	Jul 28, 1919	
13	Montana	Aug 2, 1919	
14	Nebraska	Aug 2, 1919	
15	Minnesota	Sep 8, 1919	
16	New Hampshire	Sep 10, 1919	
17	Utah	Oct 2, 1919	
18	California	Nov 1, 1919	
19	Maine	Nov 5, 1919	
20	North Dakota	Dec 1, 1919	
21	South Dakota	Dec 4, 1919	
22	Colorado	Dec 15, 1919	
23	Kentucky	Jan 6, 1920	
24	Rhode Island	Jan 6, 1920	
25	Oregon	Jan 13, 1920	
26	Indiana	Jan 16, 1920	
27	Wyoming	Jan 27, 1920	
28	Nevada	Feb 7, 1920	
29	New Jersey	Feb 9, 1920	
30	Idaho	Feb 11, 1920	
31	Arizona	Feb 12, 1920	
32	New Mexico	Feb 21, 1920	



33	Oklahoma	Feb 28, 1920	
34	West Virginia	Mar 10, 1920	
35	Washington	Mar 22, 1920	
36	Tennessee	Aug 18, 1920	*
37	Connecticut	Sep 14, 1920	
38	Vermont	Feb 8, 1921	
39	Delaware	Mar 6, 1923	
40	Maryland	Mar 29, 1941	
41	Virginia	Feb 21, 1952	
42	Alabama	Sep 8, 1953	
43	Florida	May 13, 1969	
44	South Carolina	Jul 1, 1969	
45	Georgia	Feb 20, 1970	
46	Louisiana	Jun 11, 1970	
47	North Carolina	May 6, 1971	
48	Mississippi	Mar 22, 1984	
Ratified in 441 days			

This amendment was specifically rejected by Georgia on Jul 24, 1919; by Alabama on Sep 22, 1919; by South Carolina on Jan 28, 1920; by Virginia on Feb 12, 1920; by Maryland on Feb 24, 1920; by Mississippi on Mar 29, 1920; by Delaware on Jun 2, 1920; and by Louisiana on Jul 1, 1920.

## Questions to Accompany Women's Speech to Legislature

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3. What does this document teach you about the assumptions many Alabamians held in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding what women should and shouldn't do? What are these women's concerns? What are their fears? List them.
4. Divide these concerns/fears into the following categories: political, social, racial, and economic.
5. What historical background information might help explain why Alabamians, as well as other Southerners, had these fears and concerns?

## Persuasive Essay Instructions

“Select ONE of the arguments made in the last document you read, the speech with the heading ‘Speech to the Gentlemen of the Legislature.’ In a written editorial of at least 250 words, identify and then counter that argument in a thorough, logical, respectful, and persuasive manner. Do NOT reference any historical facts or developments beyond 1920, the year the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment was finally approved, to bolster your own argument (e.g. “Everyone now believes women should vote, so obviously you were wrong to oppose it.”).

## Persuasive Essay Rubric

### Ideas

- A. Clearly identifies the ONE argument he/she intends to counter and does so at beginning of essay (5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Maintains focus throughout, does not digress or mention post-1920 facts (5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. Writes in a respectful manner, does not dismiss or demean the opposition (5) \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. Student supports his own arguments in a logical and persuasive way (20) \_\_\_\_\_
- Subtotal (35) \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

### Organization

- A. Essay meets the minimum requirement of 250 words and does not exceed 300 words (10) \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Student provides transitions between points (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- Subtotal (15) \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

Total (50) \_\_\_\_\_