Lesson 1:

Enquiry 1: Resources

Timeline of women's suffrage, 1866–1928

How sympathetic was the government's response?	What the government did	What the campaigners did	How violent were the campaigners' tactics?
		1866: The first mass women's suffrage petition was sent to the House of Commons. Many suffrage societies were set up. They used petitions and meetings to try to persuade MPs to support them.	
		1897: The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was formed, uniting 17 societies. Its leader was Millicent Fawcett.	
		1902: Women textile workers from Northern England presented a petition to Parliament. It contained 37,000 signatures.	
		1903: The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was formed in Manchester. It was led by Emmeline Pankhurst.	
		1905: Suffragettes first used militant tactics: Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested for disrupting a political meeting.	
	March 1907: A bill for women's enfranchisement was introduced to Parliament but it failed to pass.	**1907:** 76 suffragettes were arrested when the WSPU tried to storm the Houses of Parliament.	
	April 1908: Herbert Asquith became prime minister. He was an anti-suffragist.		
		July 1909: Suffragette tactics became more militant. Suffragettes in prison began to go on hunger strike.	
		October 1909: The Women's Tax Resistance League was formed. Its members refused to pay taxes without having the vote.	

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Timeline of women's suffrage, 1866–1928

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	November 1910: A Conciliation Bill, which would have given the vote to one million women who owned property, failed to become law.	**1910:** 300 suffragettes responded to the failure of the Conciliation Bill by marching to Parliament, where they were beaten and arrested by the police. This became known as 'Black Friday'.	
	November 1911: Asquith announced a bill that would give all men the vote.	**1911:** In protest at the government bill, the WSPU organised a mass window-smashing campaign through London.	
	March 1912: A new bill to give women the vote was defeated.	**1912:** Suffragette tactics became increasingly violent. Over the next two years, buildings were burned in arson attacks, property and works of art vandalised, and windows smashed.	
	April 1913: The government introduced the 'Cat and Mouse Act'. It allowed authorities to release from prison suffragettes who were on hunger strike, and then re-arrest them once they had recovered.		
		June 1913: Emily Wilding Davison, a WSPU member, was killed after she stepped out in front of the King's horse at Epsom Derby. Thousands attended her funeral.	
		18 June to 25 July 1913: 50,000 people from across the UK took part in the NUWSS's 'Pilgrimage for Women's Suffrage'.	
	July 1914: The outbreak of the First World War. An amnesty was offered to suffragettes in prison and they were released. During the war, five million women took up jobs.	**1914:** Both the WSPU and the NUWSS suspended their campaigns. The WSPU leaders started working with the government. They organised demonstrations in support of the war and encouraged women to enter the workforce to help the war effort.	

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	1916: Prime Minister Asquith declared his support for women's suffrage.		
	February 1918: The Representation of the People Bill was passed. Women over the age of 30 and men over the age of 21 were allowed to vote.		
	November 1919: Nancy Astor took her seat as the first female MP in Britain.		
	July 1928: The Representation of the People Act entitled everyone over the age of 21 to vote.		

Lesson 1:

Check your knowledge

The group who used peaceful tactics was called…

Its leader was…

The group who used both peaceful and violent tactics was called…

It was known as… Its leaders were…

Extension task

Choose two or three turning points in the story (i.e. when there was an important change in the campaigners' tactics or leadership or in the government's response) and mark them with an asterisk (*).

The organised campaign for women's suffrage began in _____ when…

Before 1903, the main group who campaigned for women to be given the vote was the _____. It was led by _____. It used tactics such as ….

A turning point in the campaign came in 1903, when …

This was an important turning point (in tactics, leadership or both) in the campaign because…

Over time, the suffrage campaign's tactics became…

The government's response at first was…

Over time it became…

When the First World War broke out in _____, the campaign for women's suffrage had achieved…

The war was an important turning point in the suffrage campaign because…

In _____, women over the age of _____ were given the vote but it wasn't until _____ that all women over the age of _____ were allowed to vote. The campaign for women's suffrage had lasted for _____ years.

The campaign for women's suffrage can best be described as…

Lesson 2:

Card sort

The WSPU planned eye-catching publicity stunts. They posted 'human letters' to the prime minister, and their Women's Sunday in 1908 attracted half a million members to Hyde Park. These events were novel and visually spectacular. Huge crowds gathered to watch them.	**The Pankhurst family, who led the WSPU, were strong leaders. Emmeline Pankhurst was a great public speaker, fashionable and eye-catching. Christabel, her daughter, was beautiful and charismatic. She knew how to attract publicity by being controversial. She was very single-minded.**	**The WSPU planned tactics that were deliberately designed to be photographed. The WSPU press office arranged for a photographer from the *Daily Mirror* to capture its very first street procession. Later tactics (e.g. chaining themselves to railings) were easy for newspapers to photograph.**	The suffragettes' tactics became increasingly spectacular and violent over time. By 1912, they were burning down buildings and going on hunger strike in prison. The WSPU press office monitored local and national newspapers. Emmeline Pankhurst regularly spoke or wrote to newspaper editors.
Sylvia published a book called *The Suffragette* in 1911. It emphasised the differences between the suffragettes and suffragists and downplayed the story of the earlier campaigns. She emphasised the importance of Christabel and Emmeline as leaders.	The WSPU newspaper, *Votes for Women*, was high-profile and was read by a lot of people. The WSPU used it to challenge and question the mainstream media's reporting of the suffragette campaigns.	In the early twentieth century, a new kind of newspaper – where pictures were important – was becoming increasingly popular. Newspaper editors were looking for dramatic, shocking stories and exciting pictures that they could put on their front pages.	The WSPU branded themselves so that they were instantly recognisable. In 1908, the WSPU chose a colour scheme for the suffragettes: purple for dignity, white for purity and green for hope. Suffragettes were encouraged to wear the colours to show their support. The WSPU sold popular mementos of their campaigns.

Lessons 2-4:

Versions of the story table

At the end of the enquiry you will decide on what is the story of the women's suffrage campaign.
Use this table to record your summary of the different stories that have been told.

Version of the story	The story in a sentence	Problems with the story	What sources of evidence is the story mostly based on?
The suffragettes' story			
George Dangerfield's story			
Liddington and Norris's story			
Big data's story			

Lessons 2-4:

Dangerfield extract

The energy of the whole movement… increased in the most infuriating manner. The country now detested militancy. And yet – it was very peculiar – the more outrageous these militants became, the more support their cause received. The WSPU might be considered an organisation of intolerable lunatics, but the same could hardly be said of the United Suffragists. … Could it be that – in spite of these odious Pankhursts – women's suffrage was actually to be achieved?

George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*

Lesson 3:

Dangerfield's claims worksheet

Dangerfield's claims:

- The suffragist campaign was **unimportant**.
- Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst behaved like **dictators**.
- Ordinary suffragette campaigners were like **'sheep'** – they just did what they were told by the Pankhursts and hero-worshipped them.
- The suffragettes' behaviour was **irrational** and **dangerous**.

In January 1914, Sylvia had just been released from prison following a six-day imprisonment. She was living and working in the East End of London for the East London Federation of the WSPU. Most of the women she worked with were working class.

Her sister Christabel was by this time living in Paris, having fled London to avoid arrest. When Sylvia got home she found she had been sent several messages by Christabel, telling her to come to Paris immediately.

As soon as we reached Paris the business was opened. Christabel, nursing a tiny Pomeranian dog, announced that the East London Federation of the WSPU must become a separate organisation; The Suffragette would announce this, and unless we immediately chose to adopt one for ourselves, a new name would be given to us.

'You have a democratic constitution for your Federation. We do not agree with that.' Moreover, she urged, a working women's movement was of no value: working women were the weakest portion of the sex: how could it be otherwise? Their lives were too hard, their education too meagre to equip them for the contest. 'Surely it is a mistake to use weakest for the struggle! We want picked women, the very strongest and most intelligent!' She turned to me. 'You have your own ideas. We do not want that; we want all our women to take their instructions and walk in step like an army!' Too tired, too ill to argue, I made no reply. I was oppressed by a sense of tragedy, grieved by her ruthlessness. Her glorification of autocracy seemed to me remote indeed from the struggle we were waging, the grim fight even now proceeding in the cells. I thought of the many others who had been thrust aside for some minor difference.

Afterwards, when we were alone together, Christabel said that sometimes we should meet, 'not as suffragettes, but as sisters.' To me this seemed meaningless; we had no life apart from the movement. I felt bruised, as one does, when fighting the foe without, one is struck by the friend within.

On the suffragists: p. 182

In March the NUWSS held a meeting in the Queen's Hall in support of the Bill. I went there alone. Fifty members of Parliament, all in evening dress, were on the platform, and one after one, they testified their approval in a few trite words. A trim, prim little figure, in a clear, pleasant voice, assured them that she regarded them merely as 'ins and outs.' It was Millicent Garret Fawcett. Other ladies follow with brief utterances, in nervous, high-pitched voices; suffrage ladies were not accustomed to speaking at big meetings in those days. It was all very polite and tame; different indeed from the rousing Socialist meetings of the North, to which I was accustomed.

Lesson 3:

Dangerfield's claims worksheet

On her mother, Emmeline Pankhurst, speaking at a meeting in 1914. Because of the threat of arrest, Emmeline was accompanied by the 'women's body-guard', a group of suffragettes armed with clubs.

On March 9th she [Emmeline Pankhurst] was billed to speak in the St Andrew's Hall, Glasgow. She succeeded in reaching the platform and spoke in the midst of the 'body-guard.' The platform was draped in barbed wire, ingeniously hidden by ivy, on which the police tore their hands in attempting to storm the platform. Buckets of water were emptied upon them and flower-pots thrown. A woman kept some of them at bay for a while by firing blank shots from a revolver. Under cover of the struggle, an attempt was made to hurry Mrs Pankhurst away at the side, but detectives seized her and dragged her away with much violence. In conveying her to the police station, they forced her on to the floor of the cab amongst their feet, refusing her a seat with the gibe: 'You are only a prisoner.'

On Annie Kenney: pp. 185–6

When I returned to Manchester for the summer holidays I found some new recruits at Nelson Street. The most active of these was Annie Kenney, a cotton operative, who had lived all her life at Lees, near Oldham, and had begun work as a half timer at ten years of age. She was eager and impulsive in manner, with a thin, haggard face and restless knotted hands, from one of which a finger had been torn by the machinery it works to attend. Her abundant, loosely dressed golden hair was the most youthful thing about her. As a worker in the movement she had enthusiasm, and great self-confidence. Yet she was essentially a follower, and when she was organising a district, it was necessary to bolster up by an efficient secretary. … Her lack of perspective, her very intellectual limitations, lent her a certain directness of purpose when she became the instrument of a more powerful mind. Her obedience to instructions ignored all difficulties.

Extracts from Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals* (1931; reissued 1984 by Chatto & Windus)

Lesson 4:

Liddington and Norris extract

We suspected that there was far more to the suffrage movement than the picture presented in the conventional histories. They usually suggest that the genteel Manchester Suffrage Society, formed in 1867, quietly faded out during the 1890s; and that little important happened until Mrs Pankhurst formed her Women's Social and Political Union in 1903. It implied that, two and a half years later when the Pankhursts moved down to London, Lancashire virtually disappeared from the political battle over giving votes to women.

Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*

Lesson 4:

Selina Cooper's story

Life for urban workers in the late nineteenth century was hard, especially for women. Large families lived in cramped, back-to-back terraced housing. Most working-class women married but had to work outside the home. They worked long hours at the mill or factory and then came home to do all the household chores. Bread had to be baked, clothes washed by hand, dried, mended and ironed, and the house cleaned inside and out. It was back-breaking work. Children stayed at school only until they were old enough to work. Even with the earnings of a husband, wife and children, many families struggled to survive.

Darwen, Lancashire.

Efforts to organise workers grew. Some formed **co-operative societies** (businesses owned by their members that sold food and other goods). Others set up **trade unions** to bargain with employers for better pay and working conditions. Still others joined political organisations, especially the **Independent Labour Party**, which was set up in 1893 to represent the interests of the working class.

Selina Cooper was born in 1864 to a working-class family. She began working in a mill aged just ten. In her twenties, she began to organise working women in trade unions but was frustrated when the male leaders refused to take her complaints about the harassment of women workers seriously. In 1897, she joined the **Women's Co-operative Guild**. The guild encouraged women to discuss politics, and she began to read books on history and politics. She had also joined the local branch of the Independent Labour Party, where she met her husband, Robert.

In 1900, she met two middle-class suffragists, Esther Roper and Eva Gore-Booth, and quickly realised that getting the vote would mean that the concerns of working-class women could no longer be ignored. She later told an open-air meeting in Wigan:

Women do not want their political power to enable them to boast that they are on equal terms with men. They want to use it for the same purpose as men – to get better conditions… We do not want it as a mere plaything!

Selina joined the **North of England Society for Women's Suffrage** in 1900. When the women cotton workers' petition for women's suffrage was launched that year, Selina volunteered to collect signatures. Volunteers travelled from town to town by train, speaking to groups of workers at the mill gates or at trade union meetings.
In the evenings, they knocked on doors, collecting signatures one by one. It was slow work but, by 1901, more than 29,000 women had signed. Having collected an impressive 800 signatures, Selina was chosen to take the petition to Parliament.

image credit: LSE Library

Lesson 4:

Selina Cooper's story

Selina knew the Pankhursts, as they lived in Manchester when they founded the **WSPU** in 1903. At first, she was sympathetic to the WSPU's campaigns, but she lost patience with their violent and attention-grabbing tactics. Instead, she worked to build support for women's suffrage among ordinary working women in the cotton towns of Lancashire.

She spoke at many local meetings, often taking her baby daughter Mary with her. Her talent as a public speaker was quickly recognised and she was employed as an **NUWSS** organiser in 1906. She travelled around the country, speaking to large crowds. They were often unfriendly: in Cambridge, she was carried by a mob of students through the city streets; when speaking in Norfolk, the lorry on which she was standing was hijacked and driven into the pond; and while addressing a group of dock workers in Grimsby, she realised that the box she was using as a platform was full of live, wriggling cod. She wrote later: *'I stuck it… they were very much disopoentid [sic] that I did not scream.'* On another occasion, when campaigning in the Yorkshire town of Haworth, she was pelted with rotten eggs and tomatoes. Her daughter Mary recalled:

Anyhow, my mother went out, and she stood on this cross and she said, 'I'm stopping here, whatever you throw, so go and fetch all the stuff you've got to throw, because,' s he says, 'I'm going to speak to you, I've come here to speak.'

She was also one of a few working-class women, including Ada Nield Chew, Sarah Reddish and Sarah Dickenson, who became national leaders of the women's suffrage campaign. In 1910, she was chosen as one of four women to present the case for women's suffrage to Prime Minister H.H. Asquith. In 1913, she spoke in Hyde Park, sharing a platform with Millicent Fawcett, the leader of the NUWSS.

Selina Cooper opposed Britain's entry into the First World War. After the war, she campaigned for women's and children's welfare. She died in 1946.

Liddington and Norris's claims:

1)	Working-class leaders played an important role in the campaign, both locally and nationally.
2)	The aims of working-class suffrage campaigners were much broader than those of either the suffragists or suffragettes.
3)	They developed their own tactics that were different to both middle-class suffragists and the suffragettes.
4)	There was a lot of support for women's suffrage among working-class women.
5)	Working-class campaigners often worked with other working-class organisations to campaign for women's suffrage.

Image credit: Jill Liddington

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 1: Suffragette procession in Hyde Park, 1910.

Image credit: © Museum of London

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 2: Welsh suffragettes in traditional costume at the Women's Coronation Procession in 1911.

Image credit: © Museum of London

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 3: Emmeline Pankhurst at the Women's Exhibition, held in 1909. The different stalls were decorated in the suffragette colours of purple, green and white, and sold crafts and other goods to raise money for the WSPU. This stall sold hats.

Image credit: © Museum of London

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 4: Indian suffragettes on the Women's Coronation Procession in 1911. To mark the coronation of King George V, a huge march of 40,000 women was held in London demanding votes for women. Indian suffragettes marched along with women from New Zealand, South Africa and the West Indies.

Image credit: © Museum of London

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 5: The Drummers Union, set up by the WSPU for young supporters of the WSPU. Both boys and girls could be members.

Image credit: © Museum of London

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 6: Members of the Oldham (Lancashire) NUWSS taking part in the Suffragist Pilgrimage in 1913.

Image credit: Oldham Historical Research Group

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 7: Newspaper clipping from the *Daily Mirror*, reporting on the suffragists' Great Pilgrimage.

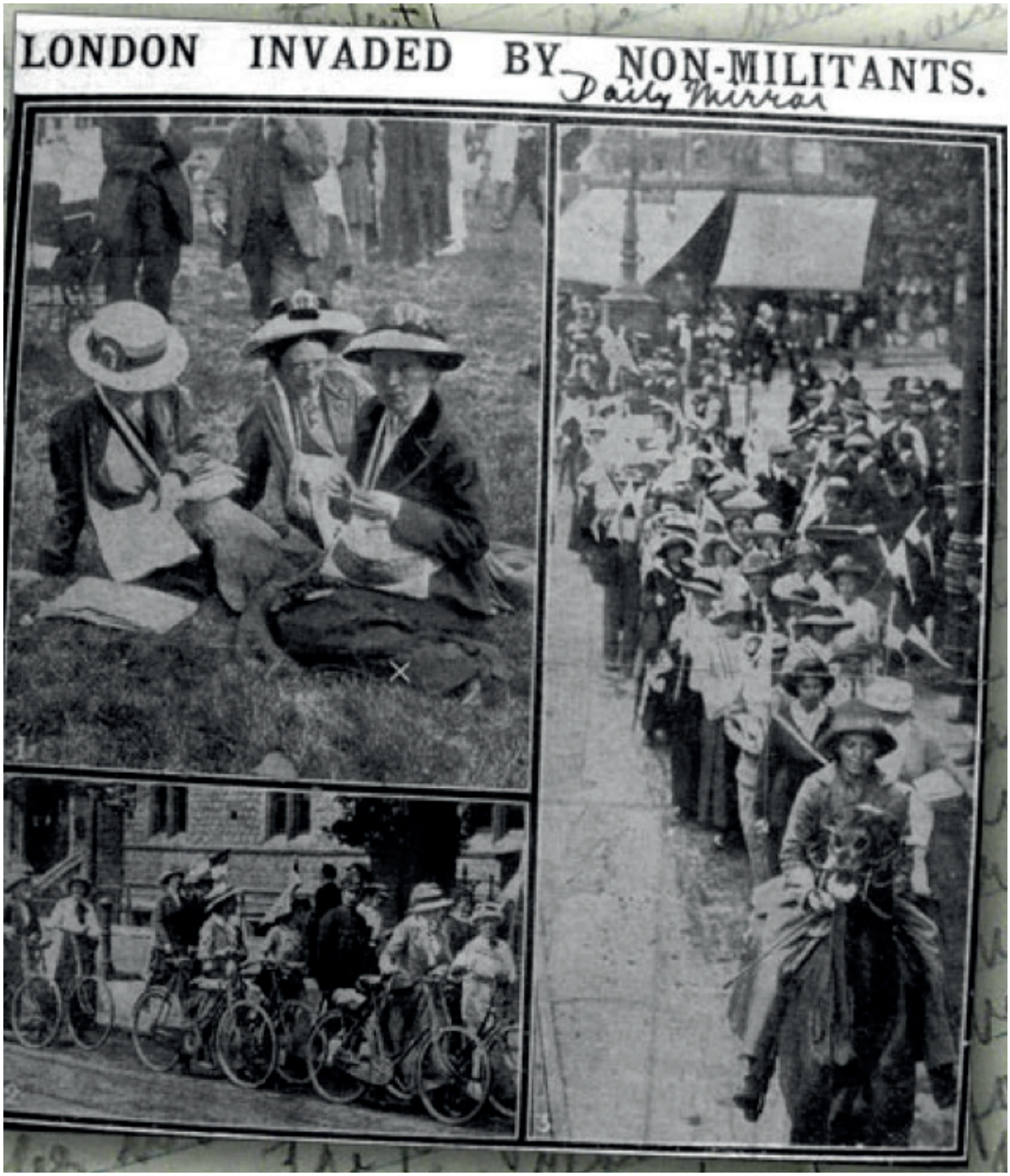

Image credit: Daily Mirror Archives

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 8: The Men's League for Women's Suffrage exchange a banner with female suffrage campaigners.

Image credit: US Library of Congress

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 9: A defaced census form. In 1911, the Women's Freedom League (a group who broke away from the WSPU because it opposed their violent tactics) suggested that women refused to take part in the census, either by hiding or by spoiling the form. Over 500 women took part in the boycott, including WSPU and NUWSS members.

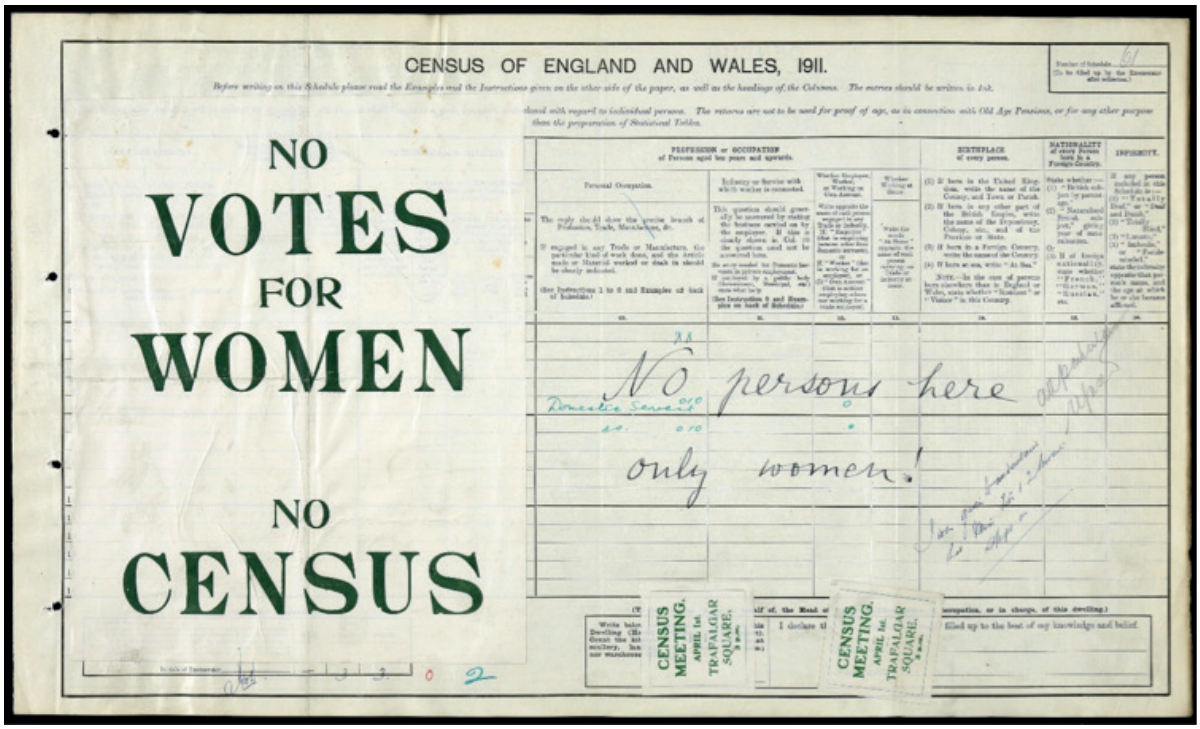

Image credit: The National Archives

Lesson 5:

Sources

Source 10: Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was the first woman in Britain to qualify as a doctor, in 1865. In 1866, she helped to organise the first mass petition for women's suffrage. She was an active member of the suffragists' campaigns but, impatient at the lack of progress, she joined the WSPU when she was 72. She even stormed the Houses of Parliament. However, she left the WSPU in 1911 because she disagreed with how violent their tactics had become.

Image credit: © National Portrait Gallery, London

Lesson 5:

Claim and evidence table

Claim	Evidence that supports this	Evidence that challenges this	My conclusion is that…
1. It was **middle-class** women who wanted the vote.			
2. Campaigners were **either** suffragists (peaceful) or suffragettes (violent).			
3. Suffragette tactics were violent.			
4. It was women who wanted women's suffrage.			
5. The campaign mostly took place in London.			
Your questions			
1.			
2.			

Lesson 6:

Script from the February 2018 BBC cartoon 'What did the suffragettes do for you?'

Imagine living at a time in which basic rights are denied to half the people you know. Imagine that you have to be born a certain sex to have any say in how the country was run. Imagine being told that you couldn't vote because you weren't clever enough to know what you were voting for.

1832: The Great Reform Act was brought in to change a confusing political system. Intended to make the system fairer, the Act explicitly banned women from voting. Women began campaigning for the right to vote in the mid-nineteenth century, and in 1903 the suffragette movement was launched by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Sylvia and Christabel. The suffragettes used increasingly extreme methods to promote their cause, throwing stones, smashing windows and burning down unoccupied buildings. Many were imprisoned and went on hunger strike.

In June 1913, Emily Wilding Davison died when she protested by walking out onto the track at the Epsom races and was hit by King George V's horse. Many believe her death marked a turning point in the campaign, bringing it to the widest public audience, although no one knows whether Davison had planned the tragic act. That August, Emmeline Pankhurst suspended campaign activity. She committed the movement to supporting the war effort and in return the government released imprisoned suffragettes. The suffragettes' focus on war work boosted their profile and led to some women being granted the vote in 1918. At first, the Representation of the People Act meant that a limited number of women over the age of 30 could vote. Had they been given the same voting rights as men, they would have been in the majority because so many men died during World War One. Approximately 8.4 million women were newly enfranchised but about 22% over 30 still couldn't vote at all. Finally, the 1928 Act extended the vote to all women aged 21 and over. At last, women had the same rights that men had been permitted ten years earlier.