In 1900, no woman in Britain – more than half of the population – had the right to vote. The nation was completely ruled by men from Parliament and women were expected to know their place. It was widely believed (by men of course – and some women, including Queen Victoria) that a woman’s place was in the home, looking after her children and husband. If a woman had a job, they were always paid less than men and they were only allowed to work in positions deemed suitable by men. Some women obviously thought this was terribly unfair and decided to do something about it. So how did these women try and win the vote? What tactics did they use? And what finally won the vote for women?

2: How did women win the vote?

**MISSION OBJECTIVES**

- To explain who the suffragettes and suffragists were.
- To decide what finally won the vote for women.

**Mothers for justice**

By 1900, over 50,000 women were members of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (suffrage is another word for vote). Known as suffragists, they collected petitions, wrote to Parliament and went on marches to highlight their cause. By 1905, they had got nowhere –

**Spectacular suffragettes!**

The Pankhursts decided that the best way to highlight their cause was to commit spectacular stunts that would guarantee an appearance in the newspapers. They disrupted political meetings, chained themselves to railings in Downing Street, pelted politicians with eggs and flour and smashed Parliament’s stations, some poured acid on golf courses and others attacked MPs on the way to work. When they were arrested and fined, they refused to pay and were sent to prison – knowing this would make the papers. Soon, they were refusing all food in prison (hunger strike). This gave the government a terrible choice – free the suffragettes or let them starve to death! At first, they released all hunger strikers, but soon decided to force-feed them instead. All this guaranteed that the suffragettes were front page news!

**SOURCE A:** This poster from 1900 shows what many men thought of women’s mental abilities.

**SOURCE B:** Hunger strikers were force-fed meat and lime juice. The suffragettes tried to use this harsh treatment to gain sympathy for their cause.

**SOURCE C:** The Speaker of the House of Commons writing about the events of 1913. Many MPs sympathised with the cause of votes for women, but didn’t want to look as if they had given in to the suffragettes’ demands.

**SOURCE D:** Written by Emmeline Pankhurst in My Own Story (1912).

**SOURCE E:** Here the Pankhursts are being prevented from approaching Buckingham Palace by the police.

**FACT**

No votes for women! Not all women agreed with the Pankhursts. There was even a Women’s Anti-Suffrage League that campaigned to stop women getting the vote. They were doomed to fail and by 1928, all women over the age of 21 had the right to vote. Women had finally got the same political rights as men.

**SOURCE F:** From a Government enquiry into the quality and output of women’s war work.

**War brings a truce**

By 1914, women had still not won the right to vote. When the war broke out, the Pankhursts called off their campaign and asked supporters to help with the war effort. With more men leaving to become soldiers, women got the chance to do jobs they’d never done before. They became bus drivers, milk deliverers, police officers and car mechanics. Thousands of women worked in munitions factories too (see Source F). By the end of the war, many people felt women had earned the right to vote. In 1918 Parliament changed the voting laws to allow women over the age of 30 to vote.

**Quality:**

- Metal – women’s work better than men’s • Aircraft woodwork – women equal to men • Bullet making – women equal to men • Shell making – women’s work poorer than men’s

**Quantity:**

- Metal – women’s production equal to men’s • Aircraft woodwork – women’s production equal to men’s • Bullet making – women’s production equal to men’s • Shell making – women’s production behind men

**Wise-up**

**WORDS**

munitions suffragettes suffragists

** wise-up questions **

1. Define these words: sexist • suffragist • suffragette
2. Write a sentence explaining the suffragette motto – ‘deeds not words’.
3. Read Source D. How did the suffragettes intend to win women’s right to vote?
4. Read source C. How may the actions of the suffragettes have damaged support for their cause?
5. Which factor do you think was the most important for winning women’s right to vote?

**Mission accomplished?**

Could you tell someone what the difference was between a suffragist and a suffragette? Have you decided why women were finally granted the vote?
The Derby is one of the most famous horse races in the world. Every year, thousands of people – including the Royal Family – flock to Epsom Downs to watch the best horses and riders in the land battle it out for the prestigious trophy. It always gets plenty of coverage in the newspapers, which is why a suffragette named Emily Davison thought it would make the ideal opportunity for their next publicity stunt. Historians cannot agree over what happened next. What we do know is that Davison was knocked down and killed by the king’s horse, Anmer, and that over 20,000 people attended her funeral. But did Davison deliberately kill herself to become a suffragette martyr? Did she misjudge the speed of the horses and die in a tragic accident? And what does the evidence say?

3: The Emily Davison mystery

MISSION OBJECTIVES

- To be able to describe the tragic and unusual event that took place at the 1913 Derby.
- To decide whether Emily Davison committed suicide or was killed in a tragic accident.

Read through the following pieces of evidence before finalising your conclusions in the Work section.

EVIDENCE A
Emily Davison’s prison record. She was a very militant suffragette who believed in ‘deeds not words’.
March 1909 One month in prison for obstruction (blocking a road)
September 1909 Two months for stone throwing
November 1909 One month for stone throwing
November 1910 One month for breaking windows
January 1912 Six months for setting fire to post boxes
November 1912 Ten days for assaulting a vicar who she mistook for a Member of Parliament

EVIDENCE B
From a book by G Colmore, The Life of Emily Davison, 1913. The Suffragette Summer Festival was a week-long meeting of hundreds of suffragettes. It was her usual answer…when she had planned something. “Look in the evening paper,” she added, “except tomorrow. I’m going to the Derby tomorrow.”

EVIDENCE C
The King’s horse, Anmer, came up and Ms Davison went towards it. She put up her hand, but whether it was to catch hold of the reins or to protect herself, I don’t know. It was all over in a few seconds. The horse knocked her over with great force and then stumbled and fell, throwing the jockey violently onto the ground. Both he and Ms Davison were bleeding a lot. I feel sure that Ms Davison meant to stop the horse and that she didn’t go onto the course thinking the race was over.”

EVIDENCE D
From Sylvia Pankhurst’s The Suffrage Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideas, published in 1931.

EVIDENCE E
The front page of a newspaper published the day after the Derby and before Davison had died of her injuries. Look closely at the photograph. Why do you think there were so few reliable witnesses despite the thousands of people who attended the race?

EVIDENCE F
From the official report surrounding Davison’s death. She had asked for the flag a few days before the race meeting.

EVIDENCE G
Adapted from the writings of Emily Davison herself. These events occurred in Holloway Prison, two weeks before her release after a six-month sentence for arson.

WISE-UP

Words

1 Copy this table into your book:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission objectives</th>
<th>wise-up words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tragic accident</td>
<td>Political martyr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write a brief description of each piece of evidence in the column in which you think it belongs.

2 Now imagine you are part of a government enquiry team that has been given the job of deciding how and why Emily Davison died. You must explain your answer clearly and outline the evidence that has led you to your conclusion. Good luck!