

The Legacy of the Women's Right Movement

Documents:

- The Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848 by Elizabeth Caddy Stanton
- “Fact Sheet on Women in the United States Today: A Century and a Half After Seneca Falls” developed by the Teacher’s Curriculum Institute, Palo Alto, California, 1997
- Soapstone Document Analysis Strategy

Focus of Subject Area:

- The “logos” of persuasion;
- The “accepted and expected” role of women in the 19th century;
- The significance of the Seneca Falls Convention;
- The social, political, and economic injustices identified by women attending the convention;
- The legacy of the Declaration of Sentiments of 1848.

Instructional Objectives

- Detail the social, political, and economic concerns which spur the organization of the convention;
- Identify and explain grievances and resolutions contained in the Declaration of Sentiment;
- Analyze and draw conclusions in regard to the structure and language of the document itself;-
- Assess the degree to which the grievances have been redressed today.

Strategies

Students will accomplish the instructional objectives by:

Reading the primary document and completing assigned tasks;
Participating in class discussion and activities.

Overview of Lesson Activities

The lesson on the Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848 requires three or four (depending on class ability) 40 minute class periods or one and a half to two 90 minutes blocks. Prior to Day One, students will read the Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848 and define specific terms contained in the document. Teachers will determine how many days in advance to assign the reading and may also opt to have students complete the SOAPStone worksheet regarding the Declaration of 1848 for homework prior to Day One. It would also be helpful to instruct, prior to this specific lesson, in regard to the social, political, and economic rights of women in the decades leading to 1848.

Assessment

Students will demonstrate their comprehension of the lesson by completing the following essay assignment:

- Write an essay (minimum 5 paragraphs) that defends, refutes, or qualifies the statement “If the signers of the Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848 were to view American culture in 2002, would they be satisfied with their legacy.”

DAY ONE: The Seneca Falls Convention and the Declaration of Sentiments

QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

- What led to the meeting in Seneca Falls in 1848?
- What was the “accepted and expected” role of women in the 19th century?
- What is a grievance? Resolution?
- What is ironic about the document itself?

MATERIALS

- Multiple copies of the Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848 (students already have it)
- Multiple copies of the SOAPStone worksheet
- Video: “Dreams of Equality”. Conshocken, PA: Eastern National Park and Monument Association. 28 minutes

OPENING THE LESSON

Begin the lesson by explaining the “need” for the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 and develop an understanding of the time period and the role of women of the time period.

PROCEDURE

- View the video and discuss the historical context surrounding the convention.
- In pairs, analyze the Declaration using the SOAPStone model.
- As a class, discuss each section of the SOAPStone worksheet.
- Discuss the structure of the document, making sure to note irony and satire.
- After modeling the analysis of a grievance, pair students and assign specific grievances and resolutions to be analyzed and rewritten using modern terms, completing for homework if necessary.

DAY TWO: THE ISSUES RAISED IN THE DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS

QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

- What are the specific issues raised in the Declaration of Sentiments?
- In what areas would the women like to effect change?
- What does the term redress mean?

MATERIALS

- Copies of the Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848
- Multiple copies of “Fact Sheet on Women in the United States Today”

OPENING THE LESSON

Remind students about the purpose of the Declaration of Sentiments.

PROCEDURE

- Review the homework assignment, making sure to discuss grievances and resolutions so students have a clear understanding of the issues raised in the document.
- Divide the issues into social, political, economic, and religious categories in order for students to understand that women felt powerless in most aspects of life.
- Discuss the meaning of the term “redress.”
- Place students in small groups, and using the “Fact Sheet on Women in the United States Today,” have them evaluate the degree to which the grievances and resolutions have been redressed in the 150 years since the Seneca Falls Convention.

(This activity may need to be continued the next day.)

DAY THREE: The Legacy of the Seneca Falls Convention

QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

- To what degree have the issues identified in the Declaration of Sentiments been redressed today?
- What is the significance and legacy of the Seneca Falls Convention?

MATERIALS

- The Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848

PROCEDURE

- Create a spectrum by drawing a long horizontal line on the board, marking “NOT REDRESSED” at the left end, and marking “FULLY REDRESSED” at the right end.

- For each grievance contained in the Declaration, ask students where they would place the issue on the spectrum. If students feel women have achieved the goal, write the issue under “FULLY REDRESSED.” If students feel women might still experience limitations in that area, write the issue under “NOT REDRESSED.” Be prepared for much discussion in regard to many of the issues raised. You might want to choose specific issues to discuss beforehand in order to make sure the most important issues are discussed.
- Complete the lesson by discussing the legacy of the Seneca Falls Convention and how it applies to women today.
- Explain the assessment assignment

(Student Handout 5.2B)

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