



I am here as a soldier

Emmeline Pankhursts

EXPLORE

- **Video:** *Sister Suffragette* (*Mary Poppins*)
- **Document:** 23 Inspiring Women Fighting For Women

■ **WARM UP**

1 Watch the scene taken from the film *Mary Poppins* and listen to the song Mrs Banks is singing.

We're clearly soldiers in petticoats
 And dauntless crusaders for woman's votes
 Though we adore men individually
 We agree that as a group they're rather stupid!

5 Cast off the shackles of yesterday!
 Shoulder to shoulder into the fray!
 Our daughters' daughters will adore us
 And they'll sing in grateful chorus
 "Well done, Sister Suffragette!"

10 From Kensington to Billingsgate
 One hears the restless cries!
 From ev'ry corner of the land:
 "Womankind, arise!"
 Political equality and equal rights with men!
 15 Take heart! For Missus Pankhurst has been clapped in irons again!

No more the meek and mild subservients we!
 We're fighting for our rights, militantly!
 Never you fear!

So, cast off the shackles of yesterday!
 20 Shoulder to shoulder into the fray!
 Our daughters' daughters will adore us
 And they'll sing in grateful chorus
 "Well done! Well done!
 Well done Sister Suffragette!"



2 Now complete the chart.

1 Who she is singing about	
2 What these people are asking	
3 The movement mentioned in the song	
4 The person mentioned in the song	
5 The situation of the leader mentioned	



■ THE SPEECH

[...] I do not come here as an advocate, because whatever position the suffrage movement may occupy in the United States of America, in England it has passed beyond the realm of advocacy and it has entered into the sphere of practical politics. It has become the subject of revolution and civil war, and so tonight I am not here to advocate woman suffrage. American suffragists can do that very well for themselves.

I am here as a soldier who has temporarily left the field of battle in order to explain – it seems strange it should have to be explained – what civil war is like when civil war is waged by women. I am not only here as a soldier temporarily absent from the field at battle; I am here – and that, I think, is the strangest part of my coming – I am here as a person who, according to the law courts of my country, it has been decided, is of no value to the community at all: and I am adjudged because of my life to be a dangerous person, under sentence of penal servitude in a convict prison. So you see there is some special interest in hearing so unusual a person address you. I dare say, in the minds of many of you – you will perhaps forgive me this personal touch – that I do not look either very like a soldier or very like a convict, and yet I am both. [...]

You see, in spite of a good deal that we hear about revolutionary methods not being necessary for American women, because American women are so well off, most of the men of the United States quite calmly acquiesce in the fact that half of the community are deprived absolutely of citizen rights, and we women, in trying to make our case clear, always have to make as part of our argument, and urge upon men in our audience the fact – a very simple fact – that women are human beings. It is quite evident you do not all realize we are human beings or it would not be necessary to argue with you that women may, suffering from intolerable injustice, be driven to adopt revolutionary methods. We have, first of all to convince you we are human beings, and I hope to be able to do that in the course of the evening before I sit down, but before doing that, I want to put a few political arguments before you – not arguments for the suffrage, because I said when I opened, I didn't mean to do that – but arguments for the adoption of militant methods in order to win political rights. [...]

We found that all the fine phrases about freedom and liberty were entirely for male consumption, and that they did not in any way apply to women. When it was said taxation without representation is tyranny, when it was “Taxation of men without representation is tyranny,” everybody quite calmly accepted the fact that women had to pay taxes and even were sent to prison if they failed to pay them – quite right. We found that “Government of the people, by the people and for the people,” which is also a time-honored Liberal principle, was again only for male consumption; half of the people were entirely ignored; it was the duty of women to pay their taxes and obey the laws and look as pleasant as they could under the circumstances. In fact, every principle of liberty enunciated in any civilized country on earth, with very few exceptions, was intended entirely for men, and when women tried to force the putting into practice of these principles, for women, then they discovered they had come into a very, very unpleasant situation indeed.

FACT FILE

- **WHO?** Emmeline Pankhurst
- **WHERE?** Hartford, Connecticut
- **WHEN?** November 13th 1913



■ LET'S WORK ON IT

3 Do the activities below and answer the questions.

1 List the main points of the speech.

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2 What is the metaphor used by Emmeline Pankhurst to speak about the situation she is depicting?

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3 Underline the references to this metaphor.

4 She refers to one specific historical event. Which one?

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5 What is she asking for?

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■ BEYOND THE WORDS

4 By reading the article *23 Inspiring Women Fighting For Women* (<http://tiny.cc/zur7tz>) you will be able to investigate some of their stories in your webquest.

STEP 1 Choose a woman.

STEP 2 Find some information about the person you've chosen.

STEP 3 Create a brochure to present the story you've chosen with pictures and text.

5 Divide into three groups. Every group will watch a different movie and present the story and the historical and social background to the class.

