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APPRECIATION GUIDE



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SEASON 14

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Suffragists vs. Suffragettes

Although they sound almost identical, **suffragists** and **suffragettes** were distinct groups with strikingly different modes of operating. Suffragists believed in nonviolent campaign methods operating within the confines of British law. In the early 20th century, after suffragists failed to make significant gains, a new generation of activists emerged. These women, who became known as suffragettes, were willing to take direct, militant action for the cause. They adopted the motto, “Deeds not words.”

The suffragette movement is beginning to gain momentum during the time of the play.

BLUE STOCKINGS BY JESSICA SWALE

★ ABOUT THE PLAY

1896. Girton College, Cambridge, the first college in Britain to admit women. Tess Moffat and her fellow first years are determined to win the right to graduate. But little do they anticipate the hurdles in their way: the distractions of love, the cruelty of the class divide or the strength of the opposition, who will do anything to stop them. The play follows them over one tumultuous academic year, in their fight to change the future of education.

📖 PLAYWRIGHT'S BIO

Jessica Swale is an Olivier award winning writer and director. She trained at Central School of Speech and Drama and Exeter University.

As playwright, Jessica's first play *Blue Stockings* (Shakespeare's Globe) won her an Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright nomination and is now on the GCSE drama syllabus. *Nell Gwynn* transferred from the Globe to the West End starring Gemma Arterton, and won the Olivier for Best New Comedy. Jessica is currently writing the screenplay for *Working Title*, alongside the *Horrible Histories* movie and an original feature, *Summerland*, also starring Arterton, which will be Jessica's directorial debut, supported by the BFI. Learn more at www.jessicaswale.co.uk.



PROMETHEAN THEATRE ENSEMBLE

In the fall of 2005, a group of theatre artists founded Promethean Theatre Ensemble with the goal of creating productions that would emphasize rich, vivid language and imaginative storytelling. Over the following years, PTE has evolved into a committed ensemble of artists who collaborate to tell resonant, timeless stories through fresh perspectives in a style that prompts audiences to imagine the world of the play alongside its creators.

Where did the term 'bluestocking' come from?

In mid-18th century England, a group of ladies decided to replace their habitual evenings of cards and idle chatter with "conversation parties," to which they invited prominent men of letters to discuss literary and intellectual topics with them. One regular guest at these gatherings was scholar-botanist Benjamin Stillingfleet. Although the blue worsted stockings he wore were typically disdained by the elite, his hostess happily overlooked them in order to enjoy his lively conversation. Critics of the group, who considered it inappropriate for women to aspire to higher learning, began to mock them with the name, "Blue Stocking Society." The women in this original bluestockings group decided to appropriate the name proudly, and the epithet became the typical term for the intellectual women of the day.

Waitaminute!

Did this really happen? Cause that's hard to believe.



Cambridge Daily News, 21 May 1897.

As the debate grew hotter between proponents of a resolution to admit female students into Cambridge University and those who considered it an outrageous desecration of the institution, relations between the groups became increasingly ugly.

This photo shows a group of male students storming into a square to hang, in effigy, a bicycle-riding woman to protest the resolution.

Following this, the men proceeded to decapitate the mannequin and tear it to pieces. Its shredded remains were then stuffed through the gates of the women's college.



Stuff to think & talk about

during intermission, with your friends after the show,
or while tossing and turning in bed tonight

When is it necessary to challenge the status quo? Who decides?

How does institutionalized gender discrimination differ from institutionalized racial, religious, or class discrimination?

How is it the same?

Under what circumstances might violent social upheaval be preferable to "nonviolent," and incremental change?

What are the elements of true friendship and how might these change or grow over time?

Who should be responsible for society's most vulnerable members (children, the elderly, the chronically ill, etc.)?

How do science and art inform each other?

What is the role of a teacher and how might it vary depending on time, place, and students' needs?

REPRINT—JULY, 1913.
Send for free Catalogue of N.U.W.S.S. publications.

B 23
National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies,
14, Great Smith Street, S.W.
President: Mrs. HENRY FAWCETT, LL.D.

SOME REASONS
Why Working Women Want the Vote.

Because as long as women cannot vote for Members of Parliament they are not asked what they want, and they are treated like children who do not know what is good or what is bad for them.

Because only those who wear the shoe know where it pinches, and women know best what they want and what they don't want.

Because Members of Parliament must attend to the wants and wishes of those who have votes, and they have not time to attend to the wants and wishes of women who have not got votes.

Because laws are made which specially affect women's work and the work of their children.

Because if women are working as dressmakers, tailoresses, printers, confectioners, and laundresses, or in any factory or workshop, the laws under which they work are made for women without women being asked if these laws are good or bad for them.

Because if the laws under which women work are bad, women cannot have those laws changed unless they have the vote.

Because the vote has been given to women in some of our Colonies and has been of great use.

Because the way to help women is to give them the means of helping themselves.

Because the vote is the best and most direct way by which women can get their wishes and wants attended to.

Price 4d. per 100; 2/6 per 1,000.

Published by the NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES,
14, Great Smith Street, S.W., and
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Promethean Theatre Ensemble | Chicago, IL

Timeline

Putting it in perspective

1832: The Great Reform Act defines voters as 'male persons,' officially excluding women from the electorate.

1857: Civil Divorce Courts are formed to litigate divorce, thus ending the practice whereby men were permitted to sell their unwanted wives at auction.

1870: The Married Women's Property Act allows that money earned by a married woman may be treated as her own property, rather than her husband's.

1890: Philippa Fawcett, a female student from Newnham College, ranks first in the mathematical examinations held at the University of Cambridge. She is not permitted to receive a university degree.

1896-1897: The action of the play

1918: Women over 30, with property qualifications or a UK university degree are permitted a full vote in the United Kingdom — as are all men age 21 and older.

1928: The United Kingdom grants full equal voting rights to women.

1948: The University of Cambridge confers its first degree on a woman.

1998: The University of Cambridge conducts a ceremony honoring all the women who had passed its exams but not been awarded degrees



Bicycles & bloomers

In the late 1800s bicycles became the rage and women began to ride them, suddenly finding their horizons broadened beyond their own neighborhoods. They adopted cycling attire modeled on bloomers, which also gave them a newfound freedom from restrictive Victorian era fashions.

“Before the bicycle came along, women were expected to progress on foot, in carriages, or on horseback, always while supervised and preferably with the utmost slowness and delicacy.”

– JR Thorpe, “The Feminist History of Bicycles”

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