

VOTES FOR WOMEN!

INTRODUCTION

The *Declaration of Independence* is a revolutionary document. Its most memorable phrases include “all men are created equal” and “they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.” No less revolutionary was the phrase that followed: “Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.” This bottom-up political philosophy ran counter to the top-down philosophy that has reigned through most of human history.

From our founding, however, women had been excluded from participating in our political process – local, state, and federal governments exercised their “just powers” without their consent. *I Could Do That! Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote* tells the story of a courageous woman who helped secure the first statewide victory for women’s suffrage. The fifty-year struggle culminated in the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, guaranteeing women the right to vote and be full partners in America’s political process.

Also important are the other themes the author, Linda Arms White, weaves into her story. Esther Morris, with her “I Could Do That!” attitude, epitomizes the work ethic and self-reliance that are important elements of American exceptionalism. Esther Morris is also an undaunted, serial entrepreneur, who repeatedly opened her own millinery businesses as she migrated west.

BOOK

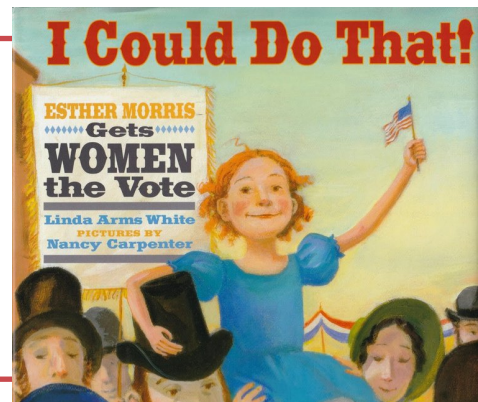
Title: *I Could Do That! Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote*

Author: Linda Arms White

Illustrator: Nancy Carpenter

Year published: 2005

Length: 40 pages



ACTIVITY	TIME	FREQUENCY	PREPARATION
American Songbook: <i>Sufferin' Till Suffrage</i>	3 minutes	Daily	Minimal
American Texts: <i>19th Amendment</i>	5 minutes	Daily	Minimal
Political Geography: Wyoming	10 minutes	Once	Minimal (if you have puzzle map)
Arts & Crafts: Make Your Own Hat	30-60 minutes	Once	10-15 minutes
Re-enactment: Voting	10-20 minutes	Once	Minimal
Re-enactment: Tea Party	30-45 minutes	Once	15-20 minutes
Math: Counting Hats	10 minutes	Once	Minimal
Art: Tea Party Motif	10 minutes	Once	Minimal
Language Arts: Vocabulary	10 minutes	Once	Minimal



SAMPLE WEEK

Below is one suggestion for your week with the book *I Could Do That!* Please experiment with what works for your family!

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Songbook: <i>Sufferin' Till Suffrage</i>	Political Geography: Wyoming	Vocabulary (before reading)	Re-enactment: Tea Party	Re-enactment: Voting
Text: <i>The 19th Amendment</i>	Craft: Make Your Own Hat	Art: Tea Party Motif		Math: Counting Hats
Supplies: N/A	Supplies: U.S. Puzzle; Cardstock, Hole punch, Scissors, Stapler, Markers, String or ribbon	Supplies: N/A	Supplies: Regular or child-sized china tea set, Loose tea leaves, Strainer, Tea kettle, Sugar, Cream or milk	Supplies: N/A

AMERICAN HERITAGE SONGBOOK: SUFFERIN' TILL SUFFRAGE

Schoolhouse Rock has an engaging and age-appropriate song and video celebrating women's suffrage and the passage of the 19th Amendment.

*Now you have heard of Women's Rights,
And how we've tried to reach new heights.
If we're "all created equal"... That's us too!*

*Oh, we were sufferin' until suffrage,
Not a woman here could vote, no matter what age,
Then the 19th Amendment struck down that restrictive rule.*

*And now we pull down on the lever,
Cast our ballots and we endeavor
To improve our country, state, county,
town, and school.*

You can find it on [YouTube](#) or Disney+.



FAMOUS AMERICAN TEXTS: THE 19TH AMENDMENT

The 19th Amendment to the Constitution is short and to the point, making it ideal for memorization for older children.

*The right of citizens of the United States to vote
shall not be denied or abridged
by the United States or by any state
on account of sex.*

Ask your kids: Do you know what state you were born in? Did women have the right to vote in that state before the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1920? The answer to this question is a little nuanced.

Only 15 states, almost all in the West, had granted women full voting rights: Wyoming (1869), Utah (1870), Washington (1883), Montana (1887), Colorado (1893), Idaho (1896), California (1911), Arizona (1912), Kansas (1912), Oregon (1912), Nevada (1914), New York (1917), Michigan (1918), Oklahoma (1918), and South Dakota (1918). The graphic below shows how women's suffrage started in the West before spreading to the East.

Another twelve states had granted women more limited suffrage; they were granted the right to vote in presidential elections. Several of them jumped on the bandwagon in 1919 during the ratification fight: Illinois (1913), Nebraska (1917), Ohio (1917), Indiana (1917), North Dakota (1917), Rhode Island (1917), Iowa (1919), Maine (1919), Minnesota (1919), Missouri (1919), Tennessee (1919), Wisconsin (1919).



POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: WYOMING IN 1869

When Esther was forty-six, she went with John to the presidential election polls and watched through the window while he voted. "You know," she told him when he came out, "I could do that."

Wyoming led the way in giving women the right to vote in 1869; the Wyoming men who voted for women's suffrage were more than half a century ahead of the 19th Amendment. In 1870, Wyoming became the first state with a female public official, when Esther Morris was appointed justice of the peace. In 1893, Wyoming celebrated its role as a leader in women's suffrage by incorporating the motto "Equal Rights" into their official state seal and their state flag. In 1924 Wyoming was the first state to elect a female governor (Nellie Tayloe Ross). In 1960, Wyoming placed a statue of Esther Morris in the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S. Capitol (each state gets to place just two statues.) Wyoming's nickname is "The Equality State."





In 1820, Esther was only six years old. How many stars are on the flag on the second page? [23] Ask your child(ren) to start the puzzle of the United States by placing those 23 states in their place. By 1869, when Esther was 55 years old and Wyoming's legislature gave women the right to vote, another 14 states had joined the United States. Ask your child(ren) to show how the United States was spreading across the West by adding those states to the puzzle. Wyoming became the 44th state in 1890. Ask them to place the next six states in the puzzle before finishing by placing Wyoming as the 44th.

ARTS & CRAFTS: MAKE YOUR OWN HAT

*When the ladies wanted hats to match the dresses, Esther designed and made those, too.
Soon, she thought about opening a millinery shop.*

There are a lot of different options for making your own hat. I tried to keep things in a similar style to Esther's hats. [Here is a link for paper plate Easter bonnets](#) and [here is one for tea party hats](#). However, we decided on two different approaches:

PAPER HAT

Supplies:

- Cardstock or other stiff paper
- Hole punch
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Markers
- String or ribbon

Directions:

1. Take one sheet of paper and measure your child's head, stapling the paper into a cylinder shape at the correct size.
2. Cut a brim for the hat. We did a shorter top-hat style brim for my son and a larger bonnet-style brim for my daughter.
3. Decorate hats with markers, stickers, etc.
4. Attach brim (tape or staplers).
5. Make a hole punch on either side of the hat.
6. Thread string or ribbon through the holes to enable the hat to be tied on.
7. Optionally add a ribbon around the base of the hat for style and more of a bonnet look.
8. See picture.





FELT HAT

Supplies:

- Sheets of felt (depending on age of child something larger than 8.5x11 sheet would be preferable)
- Scissors
- Hot glue gun
- Ribbon
- Hole punch

Directions:

1. Take one sheet of felt and fold the long edge in on either side until they meet in the middle (forming a triangle shape at the top). See picture.
2. Fold the top of the triangle down to the edge of the previous fold. See picture. Hot glue gun this piece in place.
3. Cut a wide bonnet brim out of felt. Hot glue to the first piece of felt.
4. Punch holes in the sides and thread ribbon through (you can knot the ribbon to hold it in place).
5. See picture.

HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENT: VOTING

Esther smiled. She turned to the candidates.

“Then, would you, if elected, introduce a bill in the legislature that would allow women to vote?”

There are many ways to illustrate voting. A very simple one that we used with our kids mimicked women’s suffrage. We decided to vote on which restaurant to order our dinner from. We made ballots with the three pre-selected alternatives (two restaurants and a home-cooked spaghetti dinner). Before distributing the ballots we asked the older kids:

- Should their 18-month-old sister vote? (They decided “no” because she couldn’t talk or write yet.)
- Would it be fair if we only counted the votes from the boys? (They decided “no” on that one also.)
- Would it be fair if we only counted the votes from the girls? (Our four-year-old daughter was okay with that but relented after some lobbying by her brother.)

After the votes were tallied, we had two more votes to illustrate the “tyranny of the majority” and why some decisions were inappropriate for voting.

- The first vote was to decide who should pick up dinner. Rather than a secret ballot, we counted to three and asked everyone to point to who should pick up dinner. With a little pre-planning, the adults all pointed to the six-year-old. That elicited an immediate protest: “I can’t drive yet!”





We discussed how voting was not a fair way to select (or force) someone to do something they weren't willing or able to do. However, voting would be an appropriate way to select one person when multiple people had volunteered for a job.

- The second vote was to decide who should pay for dinner. Again, we counted to three but this time we pointed at the four-year-old. She subverted the lesson by saying, "Okay, I have money in my piggy bank." We thanked her for her generosity and then pointed out that it wasn't fair for people to vote to force other people to pay for things they hadn't volunteered to pay for.

HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENT: HAVE YOUR OWN TEA PARTY

Esther invited the two men running for the territorial legislature to her house to speak to the citizens. Then she sent out invitations to the most influential people in the territory: "Come for tea, and talk to the candidates."

The formal tea party is featured multiple times in this story. This is a great opportunity to include extended family members, family friends, or other homeschooling families. You can invite them for a casual tea party or a more formal affair by asking them to dress up. At the very least, the kids can wear the hats they made if they did the "Make Your Own Hat" activity.

To imitate Esther's tea parties, try making the tea using tea leaves and pour using a strainer.

(Ideal) Supplies:

- Child-sized (or regular) china tea set
- Loose tea leaves
- Strainer
- Tea kettle or other way to boil and pour water
- Small finger food snacks
- Sugar
- Cream or milk
- Hats

Set the table for tea: tea cups and saucers, (fancy) table cloth, spoons, sugar, cream, snacks. Boil water. Have the children put tea leaves into a serving pot and then watch as you pour the boiling water over them. Let steep for a few minutes. Have the children set the strainer over a tea cup and pour the tea through the strainer (which should collect the tea leaves). Add sugar and cream to taste.

Enjoy tea and snacks in your stylish hats. Have the kids re-pour tea as needed.





MATH: COUNT THE HATS

Esther opened another hat shop.


Esther was a serial entrepreneur. She opened up her first hat shop, to the shock of her fellow citizens, in Oswego, New York. She opened her second one after she moved to Illinois, and she opened her final millinery in South Pass City, Wyoming.

To help re-engage your kids in the story after a reading or two, ask them to count how many hats are on each page. At the end, ask them which page had the most hats? Which page had the most interesting hats? Which hat is their favorite? Why did one woman faint and another cover the eyes of her daughter when Esther opened her first shop?

ART: MOTIF

Esther strained the tea into cups, one for her mother, one for herself.

An artistic motif is an element or theme that is repeated throughout a story, art, or music. In *I Could Do That!* the author, Linda Arms White, begins the story with Esther learning to make and serve tea. Much later in the story Esther hosts a dramatic tea party where she first proposes that women in Wyoming should be able to vote.

A stylized illustration in the bottom right corner of the page. It shows a hand holding a silver hairbrush with a yellow and orange hair tuft. The background features colorful stars in shades of pink, purple, and blue.



The illustrator, Nancy Carpenter, brings her own artistic flair to this motif. Ask your kids to describe the pattern painted on the teapot and teacups in the early pages. Notice how it is reinforced in the first four pages, culminating in the two-page illustration on the death of Esther's mother? Then ask them if there is any place else in the story where the flowered teapot and teacups are used? Show them how the author and illustrator work together, combining their words and pictures, to create a powerful motif that comes together at a crucial point of the story.

LANGUAGE ARTS: VOCABULARY

They worked in the mines by day, drank in the saloons by night.

The author uses words about different kinds of stores and places with which the young reader might not be familiar: millinery, saloon, polling place. In addition, there are words associated with politics that may be unfamiliar: abolitionist, proclamation, legislature, polling place, and suffrage. It's always good to see how much your child(ren) can pick up from the context of the story before asking them if they know what the words mean.

- **Millinery:** a shop that sells hats
- **Abolitionist:** a person who tried to end slavery
- **Saloon:** a place for the sale and drinking of alcoholic drinks
- **Proclamation:** a public and official announcement
- **Legislature:** the branch of government with the power to make or change laws
- **Polling Place:** where voters cast their votes in an election
- **Suffrage:** the right to vote in public, political elections

