

Celebrating the 19th Amendment

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment: the woman's right to vote! This was an amazing accomplishment, but it didn't happen overnight. Organizing for the vote started back in 1848 at the first women's rights convention. The convention was advertised as an opportunity "to discuss the social, civil and religious condition and rights of women." Those who supported the women's right to vote were called "suffragists" but the women who fought for the right to vote were known as "suffragettes."

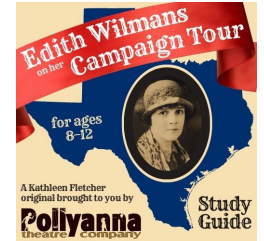
Suffragettes spent decades making their voices heard, petitioning, picketing, and protesting — songs and chants could be heard through the streets as the suffragettes held their signs high — even before the government acknowledged that they should have a voice. Gradually, individual states allowed women the right to vote — Texas became the first state in the South and the ninth state in the nation. It took 72 years for the national (also called federal) government to ratify the constitution and pass the 19th Amendment. Women winning the right to vote was only the first step. Next they would run for political office...



Austin women registering to vote in 1918

Then and Now: 1920s and 2020s

Although 100 years feels like a long time, there are many issues that are still around. Let's compare how it was then and how it is now.

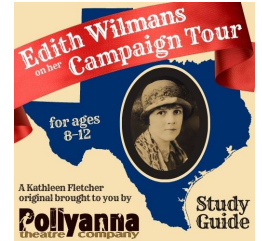


Issue	Then	Now
Immigration	People with different religions, languages, and foods were seen as “un-American.” New laws passed that significantly restricted the number of immigrants allowed into the country to try and preserve what was seen as “American.”	Immigrants and refugees continue to settle in America seeking safety and opportunity. Several Presidents try, and mostly fail, to change the immigration system to reflect their policies. Families, for nearly a decade, are illegally separated at the border by government agents.
Education	More money was needed for teachers and to create equality for all school districts. In many places, the law said children only needed to stay in school until age 12 or 14. High school was often something only wealthier students could do.	Education still receives unequal and limited funds, and schools don't all have access to the same resources. Concerns include keeping students, teachers, and school staff safe from gun violence and COVID-19, as well as adapting classes to make them virtual — expanding accessibility, technology and security.
Environment	The increased use of oil and business (also factory) waste and sewage threatened some fish with extinction. The effect was “a thick scum” which “caused serious damage to fish and sea life.” Anti-Pollution leagues formed to try and stop oil dumping.	Even though more people are aware of the climate crisis, awareness alone does little to control pollution or waste created by industry and consumers. Environmentalists pressure their lawmakers to stop some of the worst forms of pollution, but are opposed by different business groups and their lobbyists.
Transportation	As cars became more popular, there was a need for roads. Drivers were frustrated at having to drive on dirt roads between towns and cities — which was especially difficult during rainy or wintry weather, creating lots of mud.	As more people move to cities, the highways and roads become full of traffic. For people who work in a city but don't live in it, they have long commutes. Many cities have little or no public transportation, and what does exist can be outside of the budget of many working Americans.

Setting the Scene in the 1920s

The 1920s were a hundred years ago, but what was it like then? What was popular? Move over trains and horses...CARS allowed people to travel on their own schedule and get where they wanted to go faster! The roar of car engines wasn't the only sound: JAZZ MUSIC* became popular in the 1920s. Imagine horns and drums, singers and piano players creating a vibrant, upbeat sound that celebrated hope for the future. Jazz inspired lots of new or "modern" dances, and with modern dancing came modern FASHION. Women were able to vote and go to work, and their clothes allowed for more movement. No more corsets squeezing in their bellies and ribs! Dresses went from being below the ankle to almost as high as the knees. For men, they'd still wear overalls in country settings, but everywhere else more men were wearing tailored suits. Going to the MOVIES allowed a chance for audiences to imagine a way of living different than their own — everything from pirate adventures to falling in love. At the start of the decade, films were silent but the movie theaters often had a live band to provide music. By the end of the decade more movies were "talkies" which meant the actors could be heard speaking.

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zy5t7DF4uW4>



Common Jobs in the 1920s

Dairy farm/farm workers

Salesman/woman

Teacher

Typist/Stenographer

Service industry (bell boys, butlers, cooks, etc.)

Railroad workers

Factory worker (textile)

(See photographs at: <https://stacker.com/stories/3494/most-common-jobs-america-100-years-ago?page=5>.)

Now that you know the issues, the jobs, and the culture... LET'S GET INTO CHARACTER!

We're going to pretend to travel back in time to the year 1924. Imagine what it is like!

Think of what we'd wear! Maybe some hats, some vests, some dresses?

Does your character like going to the movies? Maybe they like dancing to music.

Do they drive a car, or do they travel by horse?

What kind of job does your character have? Does everyone in your family work?

Were you able to get a high school education?

Think about what issues are important to your character. Is this influenced by what job they have?

How they travel? What they enjoy?

Use pen, paper, cardboard to make posters.

Activities for After the Show

1965 Voting Rights

Even though women technically got the right to vote 100 years ago, that didn't mean all women were able to vote. The 15th Amendment gave African American men the right to vote and the 19th Amendment gave women the vote, but white supremacists created obstacles to voting like poll taxes and literacy tests in order to deny people of color the ability to vote. Not only were there restrictions, but there were also people who threatened, harmed, and even killed African Americans when they tried to register or vote. People of color organized and protested to gain a political voice, using many of the same tactics suffragists and suffragettes used when helping to get women the right to vote in 1920. Leaders including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke about ending segregation and ensuring everyone's equal right to justice under the law. Nearly 100 years after the 15th Amendment passed, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the 1965 Voting Rights Act into law. This legislation made discrimination based on race illegal. But it didn't stop in 1965. Today there are still people who are denied the right to vote. Current limitations include a decreased number of polling places and reduced times polls are open. Just as in the past, there are still people who are trying to make sure everyone can have an equal voice. Explore this document from the LBJ Library to find 3 facts about the Voting Rights Act of 1965:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/goh356g95iobx5t/AADSxbguSZdnRO9VLv42c7Usa/Appendix%20Documents?dl=0&preview=Background-Voting+Rights+and+Selma.pdf&subfolder_nav_tracking=1

Postcard Activity

Remember the postcards that Margaret shared during the show? Those postcards used drawings to try and convince people that women voting was bad. There are lots of ways images or drawings can communicate a message. Think about what issues you brought up when talking to Edith, choose one and brainstorm a way to show it in a picture. How can you make it so people know your point of view? Draw a picture and see if people can tell what the issue is and how you feel about it.

Letter Template

There are lots of ways to be active for social and political issues. You can have thoughtful conversations with your friends and family; you can go to a peaceful protest carrying signs and chanting. Edith didn't know which issues were important to you until you told her. You can help contemporary politicians by letting them know those issues. One way to do that is to write them a letter or email. You can write your own, or use the model below:

To Representative (fill in their last name)

My name is (fill in your first name). I live in (fill in your district or city) and am in the (fill in your school grade).

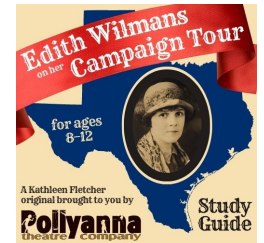
I am writing to you because (fill in an issue that is important to you). In my (choose: neighborhood, school, family, community), I noticed that (share observation or experience that connects with the issue you mentioned before).

I am concerned that (what would be a problem if it's not taken care of). One suggestion would be to (give a suggestion on how to solve the problem). What will you do to support this issue?

Sincerely,

(Your name)

Find your local representative (all politics are local) here: <https://house.texas.gov/members/find-your-representative/>. If you're not based in Texas, you can also find your state representatives here: <https://www.house.gov/representatives>.



3rd, 4th & 5th Grade TEKS Standards addressed in this study guide:



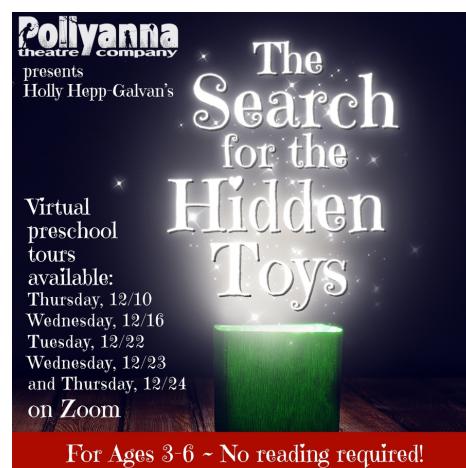
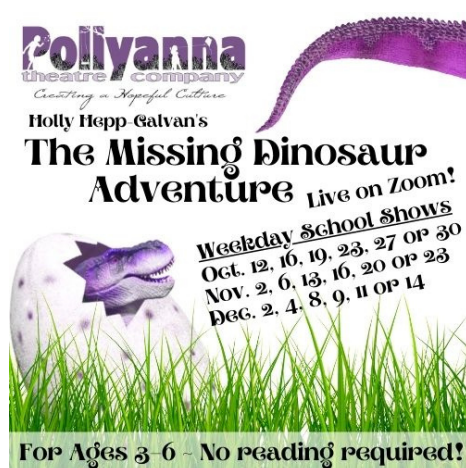
4th & 5th grade ~ Citizenship: Civic engagement (letter writing, importance of being informed & voting, explain how to contact elected & appointed leaders in state & local government)

4th & 5th grade ~ Social Studies: Primary source exploration (use primary & secondary sources to acquire information about Texas & the United States; identify different points of view about an issue, topic, historical event, or current event)

3rd grade ~ History: Past & present (comparing past issues in historical context in comparison to contemporary issues; examine how individuals, events, & ideas have changed communities)

5th grade ~ History: Important issues, events & individuals in the United States during the 20th century (identify the accomplishments & contributions of individuals & groups in the areas of civil rights, women's rights, & politics)

See PollyannaTheatreCompany.org for our Zooming Fall 2020 season



Thank you to our sponsors & partners!

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