

The changing role and status of women in Britain since 1900

1. How useful is source A as evidence about attitudes to suffragettes in 1908?

I believe that source A is not very useful in giving evidence about people's attitudes towards the suffragettes. The source has some strengths and also many weaknesses. The picture shows Emmeline Pankhurst addressing a large crowd; this shows us that suffragettes did have support from large amounts of people, meaning a number of people had a very positive attitude towards the suffragettes and their cause. Although you cannot tell whether or not the crowd are supporters or opponents of the suffragettes it does show that many people were willing to listen to their ideas, may mean that many people were undecided on the suffragettes and their ideas. The other strength of the source is the fact it is primary evidence, meaning that nothing about this picture could have been changed down the years, however the fact that it is a picture limits the usefulness of the photo greatly. However there are also many weaknesses you can find from looking at source A. No exact date is given in the caption above the source, a lot happened to the suffragette campaign during 1908 so it is impossible to give any idea on what the speech may have been about. So the people in the crowd could either be supporters or opponents of the suffragettes, the source is unclear in telling us which one. Also source A is only a photograph, and different people can portray photos in very different ways so it gives us no clear indication of what attitudes to the suffragettes were like in 1908. Although there is a large crowd which appear to be listening to Emmeline Pankhurst they could instead be opponents who are giving her a hard time about her policies and the suffragettes in general. A photograph is incredibly hard to read correctly, as you cannot tell what is being said at the time, and also it only gives you a brief perception of what is going on at the time, although everything appears calm in this picture. A minute later Emmeline Pankhurst's speech could have led to huge riots, it is impossible to tell. The source fails to show the fact that in 1908 women still did not have the vote, meaning that overall there was probably still quite a negative attitude towards them. That is why source A is not very useful as evidence about attitudes to suffragettes as it doesn't give clear enough evidence.

2. Sources D and E are both from 1910, yet they give very different views about the campaign to gain women the vote. Which is the more reliable source for investigating people's attitudes in 1910 towards this campaign?

Both source D and E both have good and bad points. However I believe source E is more reliable for investigating people's attitudes in 1910

towards the campaign. By 1910 many people in Britain were beginning to change their minds on the changing role of women.

Source E is reliable in some ways in telling us how many people felt towards the suffragettes in 1910. Source E shows us the views and attitudes that millions of women and many men across the country would have had towards the suffragettes. However there is likely to be a certain amount of bias in the source as it is a suffragette postcard, so they are likely to try and portray themselves in the most positive way possible. This source only gives us the attitudes of most of the female gender and some males, so is not fully representative of the attitudes across Britain. In 1910 two general elections were held, had the conservatives come into power in either of these elections then things may have been very different. ▲At the start of 1910 suffragettes had great hope of obtaining the, however the failure to pass the bill throw parliament made the Suffragettes extremely disappointed and the postcard shows just how much they believed women now deserved the vote.

Source D is an article about a suffragist demonstration. The Daily Sketch is a tabloid like newspaper, much like the news of the world and the sun nowadays. Many lower and working class citizens would be regular readers of the paper. So the people with similar views and attitudes to the daily sketch are likely to be lower and working class and more specifically men. ▲Although the daily sketch gives us an idea of the attitudes of people round the country, it only gives us the view of a small class division.

Both sources are primary evidence which means their content is likely to be fairly accurate and not twisted greatly. The report in the daily sketch mentions how the suffragists marched on the House of Commons using violence. However the suffragists were known to use more peaceful methods of protest unlike the suffragettes. This shows that parts of source D are unreliable and other parts of the story may have been changed to in order to keep its readers happy and to put its opponents in a bad light.

I believe that source E is more reliable in showing us people's attitudes towards women getting the vote in 1910 as its reflects a wider range of people's attitudes, also you can sense there maybe some unreliable facts used in source D, which in turn makes source E more reliable.

3. "Without the first world war British women would not have gained the right to vote in 1918" Do you agree or disagree with this interpretation?

I agree with the interpretation given in some ways but not in others. ▲As the role of women in the First World War was not the only factor which led to women getting the vote in 1918. Combined with many other factors

women were able to finally gain the right to vote. I think that women may still have been able to gain the vote without the First World War, however it would have taken a lot longer for this to happen. The role that women played in the war was crucial as many people who had opposed suffragettes prior to the war became far more sympathetic and supportive after seeing how admirably they worked alongside men during the war.

The three main sources which support the point "Without the first world war British women would not have gained the right to vote in 1918" are source H and J. Source H shows men and women working together in search of a common goal, to help win the war. This helped prove too many opponents of women getting the vote that in fact women do deserve the chance to have a say in the choice of government. Prior to the war many men said that until women didn't deserve to get equal treatment in terms of voting until they were able to work in many of the same job areas which traditionally were male jobs. The war proved this to many British men. This source is likely to be reliable as it is a primary source printed in 1917. This source is useful in supporting the statement given in the question as it proves how important the role of women in the war was.

Source J is a speech made by Herbert Asquith in 1917, so therefore it is a primary source so is likely to portray the truth of what was going on at the time. Also Herbert Asquith made no hiding in the fact that he was against women getting the vote between 1908 and 1915 however by 1917 his views had totally changed, this was totally down to the role of women in the war. Herbert Asquith says "how could we have carried on the war without women?" coming from a man who had opposed the idea of women getting the vote for a very long time this is very high praise for the women. This would also have been the view of many more up and down the country. He finishes by saying "I will find it impossible to withhold from women the power and the right of making their voices heard" he is basically saying that women have now proved that they deserve the right to vote. This source is extremely useful as it gives us an idea of how a typical male view changed by the end of the war. This source supports the statement "Without the first world war British women would not have gained the right to vote in 1918" very well.

Both source F and I are strongly against women getting the vote. Source I tells us how many men still felt negatively towards the idea of working alongside women. The men that still had this view are very unlikely to have wanted women to vote. The source says how some men were willing to work alongside women, however the way in which the source is worded

makes it sound like it was a minority who had this view. The source comes from a book wrote in 1991 making it a secondary source, which often effects the reliability of a source. Source I totally disagrees with the statement "Without the first world war British women would not have gained the right to vote in 1918" as it tells us how many people's views were left unchanged by the war.

Source F is a more controversial statement as it says "Women do not have the experience to be able to vote" I believe that the only reason women don't have the experience is because they have never actually been given the chance to vote. The source is from a 1912 by Lord Curzon. He finishes the speech by saying " the first whiz of the bullet, the first boom of the cannon and where is the equality of the sexes then ?" However the First World War was the first war in which women proved they could help greatly in a successful war effort. Despite this the source still gives a negative outlook on women getting the vote it was wrote before WWI, so therefore fails to take this into consideration. Maybe even Lord Curzon views were changed by the crucial role that women played in the war. Prior to World War 1 many people (mainly men) believed that women did not deserve the vote for numerous reasons. People believed that some women didn't have the strength of mind to choose the right leader for Britain.

Both the suffragettes and suffragists campaigned endlessly over the years. The suffragettes used more violent and controversial methods, they often smashed shop windows and chained themselves to railings surrounding important buildings. Although the suffragette methods were very extreme they often proved successful in making people think and proving just how much women wanted the vote. The famous example of this was Emily Davison, she tried to attach a suffragette banner to the king's horse, but she was hit by another horse and killed. Many people said she was a martyr and it was big new across Britain.

The suffragists often used more peaceful methods but they were often just as effective. They often tried to start petitions as well as making big speeches, although their methods often weren't as big news as the suffragette methods they played a big part in gaining the vote for women.

During the war women were often employed in jobs traditionally done by men, such as manufacturing and engineering once they had done the necessary training. The women were often as good if not better than the men in their new roles, the way in which women worked helped change many people's opinions and ultimately led to them getting the vote.

Overall I think that the First World War was crucial in gaining the vote for women in 1918 as they were able to prove themselves to many people. However the statement "Without the first world war British women would not have gained the right to vote in 1918" is not totally true as other factors such as the endless campaigning was also crucial in obtaining the vote. I believe without the war women would have gained the vote, just not in 1918. So therefore I disagree with the statement but the war was absolutely crucial.