

# How did the struggle for women's equality happen on a local level?

## OVERVIEW

American History, 1945-2000  
(Grades 9-12)

**Length of Time:** Minimum of three 50-minute class periods.

**Applicable State Standard(s):**

**K-12 History:** Students will develop and apply historical knowledge and skills to research, analyze, and understand key concepts of past, current and potential issues and events at the local, state, national, and international levels.

**K-12 Civics:** Students will develop and apply the skills of civic responsibility to make informed decisions based upon knowledge of government at local, state, national and international levels.

**Framing Question:** How did the struggle for women's equality happen on a local level?

**Essential Understanding:**

The women's liberation movement in Nebraska reflected the national struggle for women's equality.

**Objective:** Students will be able to relate local activism to the national women's liberation movement in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Key Terms, People, and Places within the lesson:**

National Organization for Women (NOW)  
Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)  
Civil Rights Act of 1964  
second wave feminism  
women's liberation movement  
affirmative action  
Title IX of the Higher Education Act

## LESSON PROCEDURES

**Overview:** Social Studies textbooks often focus on a national perspective, but students need also to know that history happens in their own communities. In this lesson, students examine the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s by gathering contextual information through the examination of primary and secondary sources. Using a documentary entitled "Miles to Go," created by the Women's Foundation of Lincoln and Lancaster County, students compare local actions with the national struggle for women's equality. At the end of the lesson, students have the opportunity to participate in a civic action project, encouraging informed action related to women's equality.

**Day 1:** Students will be introduced to the women's liberation movement through examination of a visual primary source and a short background reading with a timeline. Students will begin a list of goals of the movement.

1. Display the image from "Document A" to students and give students two sticky notes. Without providing any background information, ask students to record a response to each of the following questions on one of the sticky notes:
  - What do you think this image is referencing?
  - What do you think "ERA" stands for?

As a **formative assessment**, ask students to place their sticky notes in a designated location in the classroom (perhaps on a piece of butcher block paper with the question written at the top.) It is likely the image and text will invoke responses related to slavery. Discuss responses with students, and ask several students to explain reasons for their conclusions.

2. Tell students Document A is the cover of a brochure published in 1976 by the National Organization for Women (NOW). Tell students ERA stands for Equal Rights Amendment and was initially written by activist Alice Paul in 1923. Section I of the ERA states "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." With this background information, ask students to respond to the following:
  - Why do you think women would choose an image and slogan like this to represent their movement?

**Materials:**

- *Document A – NOW Brochure (B)*
- *Student Background Information/Timeline (B)*
- *Graphic Organizer – Women’s Liberation Movement (C)*
- *Document B – NOW Statement of Purpose (B)*
- *Documentary: Miles to Go (film)*
- *Venn Diagram – Women’s Liberation Movement (C)*

**Formative Assessment****Process:**

- Preview Document A with sticky notes
- Discussion of primary and secondary sources
- 3-2-1 activity
- Response to framing question
- Venn Diagram

**Summative Assessment:**

- Response to framing question
- Nebraska brochure cover
- Civic Action Project

**Miles to Go Documentary Created By:**

Women’s Foundation of Lincoln and Lancaster County  
[www.lincolnwomen.org](http://www.lincolnwomen.org)

**Lesson Created By:**

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3. Hand out “Document A” to students to provide more contextual information to better understand the image. Read the italicized information as a class. With this added contextual information, students should be able to understand why NOW chose to use these images to promote the women’s liberation movement. You may also want to share this additional information with students to conclude discussion of Document A:

*Ultimately, the ERA brochure is evidence of a new generation of women using techniques popularized by the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s to advance their own agenda. They connected with the population using economic appeals, which worked especially well in the weak economy of the 1970s. Although an ERA amendment would eventually pass through Congress, state ratification led to its rejection in 1982.*

4. Ask students to respond to the following questions. As a **formative assessment**, and to connect to previously learned information, discuss questions with the class:
  - What social changes in the postwar years allowed for increased activism for women’s rights?
  - What other social movements happening before or during this time likely influenced the women’s liberation movement?
  - Why would legislation like the New Deal and events like World War II help to push the women’s movement forward?
5. Hand out “Student Background Information/Timeline” to students. This will help set adequate context for the remainder of the lesson, and it is advised students keep a copy of the document at their desks. Ask students to read through the document and highlight or underline anything that relates to a goal of the women’s liberation movement in both the background information and timeline. As a **formative assessment**, ask students to share what they highlighted with a partner, and together, come up with a list of goals of the movement.
6. Discuss lists of goals as a class to come up with a class list. Hand out “Graphic Organizer – Women’s Liberation Movement” to students and ask them to record the class list in the *Goals* column of the graphic organizer. Tell students to record information from the background information and timeline to support the list of goals in the *Evidence at the National Level* column.
7. Have students complete an exit ticket as a **formative assessment** in the form of a 3-2-1 activity. On a scratch piece of paper, ask students to list 3 goals of the women’s liberation movement, 2 influences on the women’s liberation movement, and 1 question they still have about the movement.

**Day 2:** Students will corroborate a statement of purpose from a national organization with local actions through the viewing of the documentary, “Miles to Go.”

8. Discuss the 3-2-1 activity from the previous day and have students pose their questions and discuss with a small group potential answers to these questions, or where they might look for more information.
9. Tell students one place to look for more information would be to view primary sources related to the women’s liberation movement. Tell students they will first examine a national level document and eventually will look at how local actions supported national ones.
10. Hand out “Document B” to students. Ask students to number each paragraph of the primary source from 1-8. To close read the document, ask students to complete a first read of NOW’s statement of purpose. Again, ask students to highlight anything in the document that indicates a goal of the women’s liberation movement. Discuss what students underlined with the class as a **formative assessment**, and have students articulate the number of the paragraph when referencing evidence from the document.
11. Discuss the following questions with students to push them to think critically about Document B. Encourage students to use evidence from the text to support their answers.
  - Who is the audience for the National Organization for Women? How can you tell?
  - This document is called a “Statement of Purpose.” Based on what you read, what was its purpose?
  - In paragraph 3, the document states, “Enormous changes taking place in our society make it possible and urgently necessary...” What is meant by this statement?
12. Ask students to complete a second read of Document B with a partner in order to add to the list of goals on their graphic organizers. Students should record evidence from Document B to support existing goals listed on their graphic organizer, and also add any new goals they notice from Document B with evidence.
13. Show the chapter titled, “Politics” from “Miles to Go” to students. While viewing the story, ask students to add to their graphic organizers in the column titled *Evidence at the Local Level*. Encourage students to not only add evidence for existing goals, but to list additional goals articulated in the documentary as well. This chapter is 15-minutes long and addresses the ERA, discusses diversity within the women’s rights movements, and gives examples of many local women who were involved in politics.
14. Give students a note card and, as a **formative assessment**, ask them to respond to the framing question, “How did the struggle for women’s equality happen on a local level?”

**Day 3:** Students will continue to view the documentary “Miles to Go” and revise their answers to the framing question, “How did the struggle for women’s equality play out on a local level?”

15. Ask students to share their responses to the framing question with a partner. Encourage students to make additions or changes to their own responses as a result of the discussion.

16. Show the following chapters from “Miles to Go” to students:

- “Changes in the Workplace” (8 minutes)
- “School” (8 minutes)

Have students repeat the process from the previous day and record new information on their graphic organizers. If time allows, you might choose to show additional chapters in the documentary. “Changes at Home” is 6-minutes long and “Domestic Violence and the Future” is 12-minutes long.

17. Hand out “Venn Diagram – Women’s Liberation Movement” to students and have them complete the diagram with a small group. The information they collect here will be a **formative assessment** to help them write a final answer to the framing question.

18. Ask students to answer the framing question, “How did the struggle for women’s equality happen on a local level?” There is a space to do this at the bottom of their graphic organizers. Answers should include evidence from all sources used over the last three days. Student responses may be used as a **summative assessment**.

19. As a possible enrichment activity, and as an alternative **summative assessment**, ask students to create the cover to a brochure in Nebraska representing the women’s liberation movement at the local level. Asks students to use contextual information from the national level, and specific people or organizations from the “Miles to Go” documentary and add visuals and a slogan to the their brochure cover. You may want students to write a short description explaining their cover and how it connects to the women’s liberation movement at both the national and local level. (Note: If students complete both summative assessment possibilities, you may choose to assign one as homework, or provide an additional day to work.)

**Civic Action Project (Day 4+)**: Students will take knowledge from this lesson and apply it to civic action. Depending on how much time you have, you can develop the following ideas to best meet the needs of your class.

**Option 1:** Using the “Miles to Go” documentary as inspiration, interview a woman in your community about the local struggle for women’s equality today. You may want to record the woman’s story in some form (video, essay, etc.) as an exercise in preserving oral histories in your community.

**Option 2:** Research organizations in Lincoln (the Women’s Foundation would be an excellent place to begin) that address women’s issues today. After corroborating the goals of several organizations, answer the questions: What changes do you feel must still be made for equality for women? What challenges or barriers exist to accomplishing these changes?