

Seneca Falls Declaration

Author(s)

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Date created/enacted

- Written between July 16-19, 1848
- Read to on July 19, 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention in Seneca Falls, New York.

Background

In the summer of 1848, local New York women organized a convention around the arrival of influential speaker Lucretia Mott. The meeting was intended to be a forum for discussion about women's rights, including suffrage. At this time in America, women were prohibited from inheriting property, signing contracts, serving on juries, and voting.

Content summary

The Declaration is cleverly modeled on the Declaration of Independence, with an introduction and list of grievances. In the first few paragraphs, Stanton maintains that women enjoy the same rights as men, and that the role of government is to protect those rights. She goes on to list 15 specific grievances, each an example of women's rights being disregarded or deliberately voided. In place of King George III, Stanton uses the all-encompassing "He" as the perpetrator of these sins.

100 (mostly women) out of the 300 convention attendees signed the Declaration. Of those 100, only one—Charlotte Woodward—was alive to see the 1920 ratification of the 19th Amendment. Sadly, she was too ill to exercise her right to vote.

Teacher's Activities

The following are some activities or questions that might be helpful in teaching the Seneca Falls Declaration.

1. What are our current rules on voting rights? Who enjoys suffrage in this country? Who does not have the vote? Why or why not?
2. What was the justification of our forefathers for restricting suffrage to men only?
3. Discuss the accomplishments and contributions of women throughout the history of the United States.