

MINI-LESSON: ACTIVISM THROUGH POETRY

*Alice at a
Glance
Curriculum
Packet*



**ALICE PAUL
INSTITUTE**

Education. Empowerment. Equality.

Mini-Lesson: Activism through Poetry

Grades: 6-12

Duration: approximately 20 minutes

OBJECTIVE:

Students will analyze poetry from the woman's suffrage movement and discuss it in light of Alice at a Glance.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

State standards may include the following strands/topics:

America in the World; Active Citizenship in the 21st Century; Civics, Government, and Human Rights; History, Culture, and Perspectives; Literacy in Humanities/Social Studies

MATERIALS:

This lesson includes three poems by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Depending on student population, grade level, and ability, the lesson will work with any one of these poems.

- "She Walketh Veiled and Sleeping"
 - "Locked Inside"
 - "The Anti-Suffragists"
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PROCEDURE:

1. Using an overhead projector or SmartBoard, project one of Gilman's poems for the class to see. Give students time to read through it independently before reading through it aloud as a class.
 - Charlotte Perkins Gilman lived from 1860-1935. She was a sociologist, social reformer, and writer. These poems were published in 1898 and 1911.

2. As a class, analyze the poems, annotating them as you go. Discussion points for each of the poems include:
 - “She Walketh Veiled and Sleeping”:
 - What does Gilman mean when she says women are “veiled and sleeping”?
 - What is happening at this point in history? What does Gilman mean when she refers to “this hour”?
 - “Locked Inside”
 - Discuss this poem as a metaphor for women’s position in the late 1800s.
 - According to this poem, who has the power or responsibility to liberate women?
 - “The Anti-Suffragists”
 - According to Gilman, who were the anti-suffragists? Why did they not feel the need for activism for women’s rights?
 - Based on this poem, what methods does Gilman endorse for working towards suffrage?
 3. Alice at a Glance can be viewed before or after this activity.
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EVALUATION:

Students’ understanding will be assessed through class discussion and their annotations of the poems studied.

ADAPTATION:

If more in-depth analysis is desired, consider pairing students off and assigning each pair one of the first two poems: “She Walketh Veiled and Sleeping” or “Locked Inside.” Have students analyze and annotate the poem with the partner. Afterwards, have students share what they discussed. Then move on and have each pair analyze and annotate “The Anti-Suffragists.” When students have finished, compare and contrast the three poems in class conversation.

*This extended activity is most appropriate for high school students and may require a full class period.

NOTES & ASSESSMENT:

Modifications or notes to remember when using this lesson again:

She Walketh Veiled and Sleeping

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1898

She walketh veiled and sleeping,
For she knoweth not her power;
She obeyeth but the pleading
Of her heart, and the high leading
Of her soul, unto this hour.
Slow advancing, halting, creeping,
Comes the Woman to the hour!—
She walketh veiled and sleeping,
For she knoweth not her power.

Locked Inside

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1911

She beats upon her bolted door,
With faint weak hands;
Drearly walks the narrow floor;
Sullenly sits, blank walls before;
Despairing stands.
Life calls her, Duty, Pleasure, Gain—
Her dreams respond;
But the blank daylight wax and wane,
Dull peace, sharp agony, slow pain—
No hope beyond.

Till she comes a thought! She lifts her head,
The world grows wide!
A voice—as if clear words were said—
"Your door, O long imprisoned,
Is locked inside!"



Woman Devotes Her Time to Gossip and Clothes Because She Has Nothing Else to Talk About. Give Her Broader Interests and She Will Cease to Be Vain and Frivolous.



The Anti-Suffragists

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1898

Fashionable women in luxurious homes,
With men to feed them, clothe them, pay their bills,
Bow, doff the hat, and fetch the handkerchief;
Hostess or guest; and always so supplied
With graceful deference and courtesy;
Surrounded by their horses, servants, dogs –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

Successful women who have won their way
Alone, with strength of their unaided arm,
Or helped by friends, or softly climbing up
By the sweet aid of "woman's influence";
Successful any way, and caring naught
For any other woman's unsuccess –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

Religious women of the feeblers sort –
Not the religion of a righteous world,
A free, enlightened, upward-reaching world,
But the religion that considers life
As something to back out of! – whose ideal
Is to renounce, submit, and sacrifice.
Counting on being patted on the head
And given a high chair when they get to heaven –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

Ignorant women – college bred sometimes,
But ignorant of life's realities
And principles of righteous government,
And how the privileges they enjoy
Were won with blood and tears by those before –
Those they condemn, whose ways they now
oppose;

Saying, "Why not let well enough alone?"
Our world is very pleasant as it is" –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

And selfish women – pigs in petticoats –
Rich, poor, wise, unwise, top or bottom round,
But all sublimely innocent of thought,
And guiltless of ambition, save the one
Deep, voiceless aspiration – to be fed!
These have no use for rights or duties more.
Duties today are more than they can meet,
And law insures their right to clothes and food –
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

And, more's the pity, some good women too;
Good, conscientious women with ideas;
Who think – or think they think – that woman's cause
Is best advanced by letting it alone;
That she somehow is not a human thing,

And not to be helped on by human means,
Just added to humanity – an "L" –
A wing, a branch, an extra, not mankind – I
These tell us they have all the rights they want.

And out of these has come a monstrous thing,
A strange, down-sucking whirlpool of disgrace,
Women uniting against womanhood,
And using that great name to hide their sin!
Vain are their words as that old king's command
Who set his will against the rising tide.
But who shall measure the historic shame
Of these poor traitors – traitors are they all –
To great Democracy and Womanhood!