

# Standing TALL

**WOMEN RISK ALL  
TO GET THE RIGHT  
TO VOTE IN EARLY-  
1900s AMERICA**



**SUPPORT** In 1915, a woman puts up a poster supporting women's right to vote.

## Prologue

**NARRATOR 1:** It is 1913, and the fight is on for women in the United States to be granted the right to vote. Women are allowed to vote only in some states or territories.

**NARRATOR 2:** Two women, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, are leading suffragists (SUH-frah-jists). They want the U.S. Constitution to be amended to give all U.S. women the right to vote.

**NARRATOR 3:** This play is a dramatization of their efforts. On March 3, 1913, they decide to have a Women's Suffrage Parade through the streets of Washington, D.C.

## Words to Know

**suffrage:** (suhf-rij) *noun*. The right to vote

**ratify:** (rat-uh-fye) *verb*. To agree to or approve officially

## Scene 1

**NARRATOR 1:** It is a few days before the parade. Rose Wolcott, 11, has accompanied her mother, Mildred, to a women's rights meeting at Lucy Burns's home.

**LUCY BURNS** (*to the women and girls at the meeting*): We need to get the word out about the parade. In these envelopes are fliers.

**MILDRED WOLCOTT:** These envelopes look like tea-party invitations.

**LUCY BURNS** (*handing out stacks of envelopes to the people at the meeting*): I know. Isn't it clever? In this way, people who are against our cause will not know what is really inside. Rose, take these envelopes. Give them to any woman you see.

**ROSE WOLCOTT:** I will do my best. I want this parade to be a success!

**LUCY BURNS:** If this parade is a success, everyone will talk. Then, our proposed Amendment to the U.S. Constitution can become a reality.

## Characters

**NARRATOR 1**

**NARRATOR 2**

**NARRATOR 3**

\* **LUCY BURNS**, a leader of the women's suffrage movement

\* **ALICE PAUL**, a leader of the women's suffrage movement

**ROSE WOLCOTT**, a girl involved in the suffrage movement

\* **WOODROW WILSON**, President of the United States

**POLICE OFFICER**

**CROWD OF WOMEN** (to be voiced by at least 3 people)

**ANGRY MAN 1**

**ANGRY MAN 2**

**JOHN WOLCOTT**, Rose's father

**MILDRED WOLCOTT**, Rose's mother

\* **HARRY BURN**, a Tennessee lawmaker

**A FELLOW TENNESSEE LAWMAKER**

\* Indicates the name of a real person in history





**PROTEST** Women from all over the country march in the Women's Suffrage Parade in Washington, D.C., on March 3, 1913.

**ROSE:** How would this Amendment become a reality?

**MILDRED:** First, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives must approve it. Then, it must be **ratified** by the state Legislatures.

**LUCY BURNS:** We can make it happen!

## Scene 2

**NARRATOR 2:** It is March 3, 1913. The Women's Suffrage Parade is off to a grand start. Some 5,000 women march down Pennsylvania Avenue.

**NARRATOR 3:** There are marching bands, women on horseback and some riding in floats. About 500,000 spectators turn out. Alice Paul and Lucy Burns lead the parade.

**ALICE PAUL (shouting):** What do we want?

**CROWD OF WOMEN (shouting):** The right to vote!

**LUCY BURNS (shouting):** When do we want it?

**CROWD OF WOMEN (shouting):** Now!  
**NARRATOR 1:** Some men in the crowd begin to heckle the women.

**ANGRY MAN 1:** A woman's place is in the home!

**ANGRY MAN 2:** Women are too emotional to vote!

**NARRATOR 2:** Many police officers on the scene do nothing, and the crowd becomes violent. The marchers are pushed and shoved. It takes hours for order to be restored.

## Scene 3

**NARRATOR 3:** It is the day after the march. The parade is big news. Newspapers criticize the way in which the police

handled the hecklers. Women's suffrage has gotten a lot of attention.

**NARRATOR 1:** At the Wolcott home, Rose's father, John, has the newspaper. He is not pleased.

**JOHN WOLCOTT:** Have you seen

today's paper?

**MILDRED (smiling):** Yes, I did. The violence was shameful, but what a wonderful turnout for women's suffrage.

**ROSE:** Yes, the parade was a success!

**JOHN (looking grim):** All this fuss is not good for our family name.

**ROSE:** Father, you do not understand because you have always had the right to vote. All women should have that right. I want to vote when I grow up.

**MILDRED:** Rose is right. Women must follow the laws and pay taxes, but we have no say about those decisions.

**ROSE:** We have to get lawmakers to care.

## Scene 4

**NARRATOR 2:** Four years pass. It is 1917. Woodrow Wilson has been re-elected President. Women still do not have the right to vote. Lucy Burns and Alice Paul picket in front of the White House daily. Rose now 15, and her mother, Mildred, are with them.

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**BUTTONS** Showing support for suffrage

COVER PHOTO BY BETTMANN/CORBIS; PAGES 4-6: ILLUSTRATION COLLECTION CORBIS; VOTES FOR WOMEN: BETTMANN/CORBIS (PROTEST); NATIONAL WOMAN'S PARTY RECORDS VIA LOC; (1913 SUFFRAGETTE MARCH & BUTTONS); BETTMANN/CORBIS (ALICE PAUL); BURNS NEWS SERVICE VIA LOC (LUCY BURNS)





**LEADERS** Alice Paul (l.) raises a glass of grape juice to cheer ratification of the 19th Amendment, a change she fought for with Lucy Burns (r.).

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**ROSE** (to Alice and Lucy): How much longer must we stand here? My feet hurt so badly.

**ALICE PAUL:** Until the President tires of seeing us.

**NARRATOR 3:** Five months pass. The women continue to picket. Each day, Alice Paul holds a banner with wording in support of the cause.

**POLICE OFFICER:** Ma'am, you need to take that banner down.

**ALICE PAUL:** With all due respect, Officer, I refuse.

**POLICE OFFICER:** Then, I am taking you to jail. (Alice is led away.)

**NARRATOR 1:** Alice Paul refuses to eat in jail. Rose visits.

**ROSE:** Alice, you do not look well. You must eat a little.

**ALICE:** If only you knew the treatment I have suffered here. They force-feed me, and it is very painful. But I will not eat while I am wrongly jailed for speaking up for a woman's right to vote.

**ROSE:** My mother says that a person must stand up for what she believes. I admire you, Alice.

## Scene 5

**NARRATOR 2:** It is January 8, 1918. President Wilson speaks with his aides about the women's vote. Alice Paul and other suffragists have been in jail for months. Support for suffrage has grown the longer they have been kept in jail.

**WOODROW WILSON** (to his aides): We cannot let the women's suffrage debate go on any longer. Tomorrow,

I intend to publicly support the cause. I hope that the House of Representatives and the Senate will agree with me and pass an Amendment to the Constitution giving women the right to vote.

## Scene 6

**NARRATOR 3:** In May 1919, the House of Representatives approves a bill for a constitutional Amendment giving women the vote. The U.S. Senate approves the bill one month later.

**NARRATOR 1:** Now, 36 states must ratify the bill. It is August 18, 1920, and Tennessee is the last state needed for passage. Tennessee lawmakers are debating the issue.

**HARRY BURN, A TENNESSEE LAWMAKER:** I am not sure that I entirely agree with women's suffrage.

**A FELLOW TENNESSEE LAWMAKER:** I feel the same way, Harry. I wonder if America is ready for this.

**HARRY:** It is such a complex issue. But I received a letter from my mother just the other day. She says I should vote for suffrage.

**FELLOW LAWMAKER:** We can pass this bill and change so many lives. I say that we vote for it, even if it is to make your mother proud, Harry.

**HARRY:** I will. I will vote for it. It is our job as lawmakers to fight for all citizens, men and women alike.

## Scene 7

**NARRATOR 2:** Tennessee ratifies the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Now, it is August 26, 1920.

Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, Rose and Mildred Wolcott, and other members of the women's suffrage committee are gathered at their offices. The women are celebrating. All women in the United States finally have the right to vote!

**MILDRED:** I thought I would never see this day. Lucy, Alice, I cannot thank you enough for all you've done.

**ALICE PAUL:** We all have something to be proud of.

**LUCY BURNS:** That's right. It took a long time, but we worked together and found success.

**ROSE:** Just imagine! There will soon come a time when girls and women will not be able to remember when voting was not possible.

—Rebekah C. Linga



## What's the Big Idea?

How well do you understand what you've just read? Test yourself with these reading-comprehension questions!

- 1 Why do you think Rose Wolcott aids Alice Paul and Lucy Burns?
- 2 How did Alice Paul and Lucy Burns help the cause of women's suffrage?
- 3 What character traits best describe Alice Paul?
- 4 How would you feel if you knew that you would never be allowed to vote?



## Back to You

Students often have the chance to vote—whether it's for class president or about what prize they should compete for in a school competition. How does voting make you feel?