

**DEEDS NOT WORDS:
EMMELINE PANKHURST'S
LEADERSHIP IN THE
SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT**

Clara Bardot, Tyra Christopherson, and Paige Hopkins

Senior Division

Group Website

Words Count: 499 words

When reflecting upon history, most of the leaders that come to mind – Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi – are men. We wanted to focus on the other fifty percent of the world. Women’s suffrage was an obvious right to explore, but initially, we were unsure about doing our project on a suffragist, because the issue of suffrage as we thought we knew it seemed too simplistic. That was before we found Emmeline Pankhurst. As we learned about the militant side of suffrage that she led, we realized that the issue was full of complexities. Even though a similar figure in history existed in the United States – Alice Paul – we chose to study Pankhurst. She was, after all, the original, the first to effectively introduce militancy to the women’s suffrage movement, and the one who would inspire others, like Alice Paul, through her leadership, to fight for suffrage with deeds, not words.

We began our research by studying the women’s suffrage movement in England both from an encompassing perspective, in secondary books, and from Pankhurst’s perspective, in her autobiography, *My Own Story*. Newspapers gave us insight on the changing perspectives towards the Women’s Social and Political Union’s (WSPU’s) militancy. Another important part of our research was the legislation that Parliament passed, first to deal with militant women, and finally to grant women the vote. To truly understand Pankhurst’s leadership, we needed a variety of perspectives, so we read the statements of the suffragists, suffragettes, and Members of Parliament (MPs) that she influenced. We also conducted four interviews with historians and authors, which gave us an incredible amount of insight, as they spent decades studying the English suffrage movement, whereas we only spent several months.

The flexibility and interactivity of the website format appealed to us most. With a website, we are able to incorporate many different mediums – photographs, articles, quotes, videos, and interactive features – to create a more comprehensive project. Websites immerse the

viewers and allow them more freedom to interact with the project, giving them a deeper understanding of the topic. A website also allowed us to try our hand at coding; for example, we coded the website's color scheme to match the colors of the WSPU. We organized our project thematically instead of chronologically to emphasize the complex impact of her leadership.

Pankhurst's leadership is a perfect example of *Leadership and Legacy*. Her independence and willingness to move in new directions opened a new chapter in women's suffrage when she founded the WSPU, determining its course of action for the entirety of its duration. Her moving speeches and selfless actions during hunger strikes captured the attention that the women's suffrage movement desperately needed. She woke up England, and the rest of the world, to the issue of women's suffrage. Her leadership paved the way for women to win this essential right. Pankhurst's work continues to influence women who advocate for equal rights today because it is the vote that enables women to fight politically for other rights.