

## Why did women get the vote in 1918?

### Introduction

In 1916 the government was thinking about changing the law so that soldiers fighting in the war would be able to vote in the General Election after the war. Under the old law, voters had to live in the same place for 12 months, which would mean that many soldiers would have lost their right to vote. Women's groups decided to try to persuade the government to include them at the same time. This time they did succeed. In 1918 parliament finally passed a law which gave all women over the age of thirty the right to vote.

### Questions

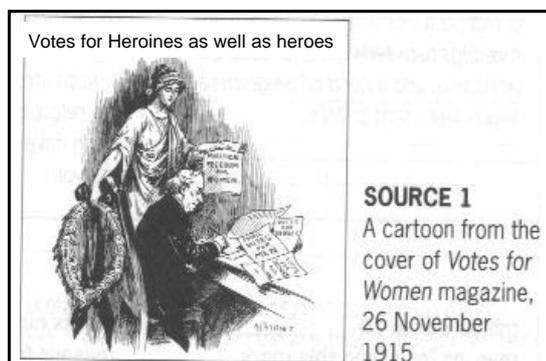
- 1) Why did the government need to change the law about voting rights?
- 2) Were women successful in changing the law? Give evidence to support your answer.

### Task

Look at the following sources. Each source gives you a reason why women got the vote in 1918.

- a) **Read** each source carefully
- b) Explain, **in your own words** what the reason was.
- c) **Give each source a mark** out of 5:  
1 = a completely unimportant reason why women got the vote.  
5 = a really important reason why women got the vote.
- d) Explain, **with a reason** why you gave each mark

**For example**, Source 1 argues that women deserve to get the vote because they have been heroines in the war, just as men have been heroes. I would give this source 2 out of 5, because there are more important reasons than just being a heroine, such as women should be treated as equals to men.



**Source 2** ES Montague, Minister of Munitions (weapons), 1916

Women have proved themselves able to do work that before the war was seen as only the work of men ... Where is the man now who would deny to women the rights which she

**Source 3** A school textbook, written in 1996

In 1916 and 1917 there were no demonstrations, but there were many meetings between women's leaders and politicians, and a flood of telegrams and letters were sent to

**Source 4** Sylvia Pankhurst, written in 1931

People's memory of militancy (attacks on property, hunger strikes), and the certainty that it would return if the claims of women were ignored, was a very strong factor in overcoming the reluctance of those who would again