Carrie Chapman Catt Speech Excerpt

Directions: Carrie Chapman Catt delivered the speech below upon the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment. Read the excerpt and then respond to the prompt below.

This handout is to be placed in your Community Project portfolio. You may include extra paper as needed in order to evaluate your project implementation. Just be sure to mark each page with the appropriate Handout label.

The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America, the guarantee of your liberty. That vote of yours has cost millions of dollars and the lives of thousands of women. Money to carry on this work has been given usually as a sacrifice, and thousands of women have gone without things they wanted and could have had in order that they might help get the vote for you. Women have suffered agony of soul which you can never comprehend, that you and your daughters might inherit political freedom. That vote has been costly. Prize it!

The vote is a power, a weapon of offense and defense, a prayer. Understand what it means and what it can do for your country. Use it intelligently, conscientiously, prayerfully. No soldier in the great suffrage army has labored and suffered to get a “place” for you. Their motive has been the hope that women would aim higher than their own selfish ambitions, that they would serve the common good.

The vote is won. Seventy-two years the battle for this privilege has been waged, but human affairs with their eternal change move on without pause. Progress is calling to you to make no pause. Act!

Reflection and Analysis Questions

1. Catt ended her remarks with an exhortation to “Act!” What civic actions would most effectively honor the suffragists’ work and carry on their effort to serve the common good?

2. The men and women working to win the vote for women made great sacrifices to pursue justice, equality, and liberty for women. What problems remain today that will require wisdom and diligence to solve? Activities in this lesson will help you create ways to make your own contribution to the common good in your community.

3. On the back of this page or on your own paper, begin brainstorming to identify a project through which you can serve the common good in your own community by demonstrating civic virtue in hands-on service.