

# Wallace Women Discovery Kit

## What Difference Did It Make?

Best for Grades 9-12

**Goal: to reflect on the legacy of suffrage by examining voter rates from recent elections**

Zerelda Wallace and others spent their lives working for suffrage, a cause they believed in deeply. How did their hard work affect us? Do people take advantage of the privilege of voting? Do they fulfill their obligation as citizens to vote?

Needed supplies: copies of voter rate tables (following pages), pencil and paper for notetaking, Zerelda's biography, 45 minutes

- 1) Teacher divides students into four groups and passes out copies of the voter rate information for the last two presidential elections (2016 and 2020). Teacher assigns each group one aspect to focus on: total voter rates, sex/gender, 18-24 year age range, and reasons for not voting. Students fill in the student table with the appropriate information to compare between years. (15 minutes)
- 2) The first three groups of students briefly describe whether their demographic increased or decreased voting rates between elections. (10 minutes)
- 3) The last group of students presents their findings on the reasons people gave for not voting. Individually, students rank them in the order they think they are acceptable (for time constraints, teacher may choose to focus on the top five reasons). (10 minutes)
- 4) Teacher reads Zerelda's biography to the class (if it has not been done previously). Which reasons for not voting would she accept? (5 minutes)

### Adaptations and Extensions

- Students write a creative essay from Zerelda's (or another suffragist's) perspective as a reply to one of the excuses for not voting in a presidential election.
- Students create a short advertisement for voting using art supplies, writing, or drama, including why voting is important and why common excuses do not apply.
- Teacher polls students on what issues matter most to them and what they would like to see discussed in election campaigns
- Teacher polls students: if the presidential election was tomorrow and each of them was registered to vote, how many would? Does the class reflect the national averages?
- Students predict what they think the rate for the different demographics will be in the next presidential election.

### English/Language Arts Standards

- **2. Reading Comprehension**
- **7. Listening and Speaking Skills, Strategies, and Applications**

### Social Studies Standards

- **1. History:** Historical knowledge; Chronological thinking, comprehension, analysis, and interpretation; Research
- **2. Civics and Government:** Functions of government; Roles of citizens
- **5. Individuals, Society and Culture**
- **8. The Contemporary United States:** 1980 to the present

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## Reported Voting and Registration by Selected Characteristics: November 2016

Characteristic	Total population	Total citizen					Registered
		Total citizen	Registered		Voted		Percent reported voted
			Number	%	Number	%	
Total 18 years and over	245,502,000	224,059,000	157,596,000	70.3	137,537,000	61.4	87.3
Total Men 18+	118,488,000	107,554,000	73,761,000	68.6	63,801,000	59.3	86.5
Total Women 18+	127,013,000	116,505,000	83,835,000	72.0	73,735,000	63.3	88.0
Women 18 to 24 years	14,498,000	13,382,000	7,706,000	57.6	6,150,000	46.0	79.8
Women 25 to 34 years	22,090,000	19,545,000	13,235,000	67.7	11,109,000	56.8	83.9
Women 35 to 44 years	20,345,000	17,634,000	12,676,000	71.9	11,103,000	63.0	87.6
Women 45 to 54 years	21,599,000	19,665,000	14,692,000	74.7	13,202,000	67.1	89.9
Women 55 to 64 years	21,558,000	20,363,000	15,473,000	76.0	14,102,000	69.3	91.1
Women 65 to 74 years	15,404,000	14,821,000	11,663,000	78.7	10,746,000	72.5	92.1
Women 75 years +	11,519,000	11,095,000	8,390,000	75.6	7,324,000	66.0	87.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2016

## Reasons Given for Not Voting: November 2016

Reason	Percent of registered non-voters
Bad Weather	-
Transportation Problems	2.6
Inconvenient	2.1
Forgot	3.0
Registration Problems	4.4
Refused, don't know	2.7
Didn't like candidates	24.8
Other reason	11.1
Out of town	7.9
Not interested	15.4
Illness or disability	11.7
Too busy	14.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2016

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## Reported Voting and Registration by Selected Characteristics: November 2020

Characteristic	Total population	Total Citizens					Registered
		Total citizen population	Reported registered		Reported voted		Percent reported voted
			Number	%	Number	%	
Total 18 years and over	252,274,000	231,593,000	168,308,000	72.7	154,628,000	66.8	91.9
Men 18 years and over	121,870,000	111,485,000	79,340,000	71.2	72,474,000	65.0	91.3
Women 18 years and over	130,404,000	120,108,000	88,968,000	74.1	82,154,000	68.4	92.3
Women 18 to 24 years	14,277,000	13,284,000	8,114,000	61.1	7,161,000	53.9	88.3
Women 25 to 34 years	22,466,000	20,079,000	14,324,000	71.3	12,672,000	63.1	88.5
Women 35 to 44 years	21,092,000	18,333,000	13,650,000	74.5	12,507,000	68.2	91.6
Women 45 to 54 years	20,316,000	18,501,000	13,924,000	75.3	12,995,000	70.2	93.3
Women 55 to 64 years	21,837,000	20,545,000	16,032,000	78.0	15,229,000	74.1	95.0
Women 65 to 74 years	17,553,000	16,890,000	13,347,000	79.0	12,781,000	75.7	95.8
Women 75 years+	12,864,000	12,476,000	9,576,000	76.8	8,810,000	70.6	92.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2020

## Reasons Given for Not Voting: November 2020

Reason	Percent of registered non-voters
Bad Weather	0.1
Transportation Problems	2.4
Inconvenient	2.6
Forgot	3.7
Registration Problems	4.9
Refused, don't know	3.2
Didn't like candidates	14.5
Other reason	14.5
Out of town	6.1
Not interested	17.6
Illness or disability	13.0
Concerns about COVID-19	4.3
Too busy	13.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, November 2020

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## Student Table

Fill in the table with the information you gathered from the 2016 and 2020 tables to compare the years. What do you think the turnout will be in the next presidential election?

Characteristic: \_\_\_\_\_

Year	Total population	Total Citizens				
		Total citizen population	Reported registered		Reported voted	
			Number	%	Number	%
2024 prediction						

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## Biography for Zerelda Sanders Wallace

### Name Origin: Teutonic, "Battle-armored maiden"

Zerelda Gray Sanders benefited from being the first born of five daughters as she often accompanied her father, a frontier physician, on his rounds and gained an extensive education in medicine. This "apprenticeship" led to a life of independent learning whether it was schooling from a "cultured Baptist clergyman" or alongside her stepsons as they readied for law careers. Born in 1817, Zerelda was described a curious child who wore her hair short so that she could groom herself quickly and spend more time reading. Her family moved to Indianapolis from Kentucky in 1830 and became charter members of the Central Christian Church, the inspiration for her future temperance and suffrage work.

Married to Indiana's Lt. Governor, David Wallace, at age nineteen, Zerelda quickly changed the landscape of her life as she raised three stepchildren and became the First Lady of Indiana the next year when David became Indiana's sixth governor. Having six more children and later raising four grandchildren, she was a model mother who was the inspiration for Lew Wallace's depiction of Ben-Hur's mother. When he asked Zerelda for her opinion of the book, she replied, "O, my son, it is a nonesuch of a story, but how did you ever invent that magnificent character, the Mother?" Answering with a kiss, "Why, you dear, simple heart, how could you fail to know that the original of that picture is your own blessed self?"

In the second half of her life, Zerelda used her considerable intelligence, faith, and societal skills to become a leader for reform. A fervent supporter of temperance, Zerelda was elected as the first president of the Indiana chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and persuaded her own church, the first to do so, to offer un-fermented grape juice for communion. It was during one of her appearances before the Indiana State Senate that her activism began to change course. Zerelda presented 10,000 women's signatures in support of temperance reform, and was met with "open contempt" by the assembled male legislators. One senator told her that her petition "might as well have been signed by 10,000 mice" and denied these women as constituents. Not comprehending how she was not considered a constituent, "a light broke over" Zerelda and she thanked the senator for making her a suffragist. At age 56, Zerelda embarked on this new crusade, traveled around the nation, worked alongside Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and spoke publicly and passionately about her views. A proponent of working the government system to get results rather than more radical tactics such as public demonstrations, her efforts were marked with many milestones, namely appearing before the U.S. Congress in 1880 stating that "the ballot is the most potent means of all moral and social reforms." Zerelda died in 1901 without casting her first vote as a recognized constituent, but helped launch the women's rights movement which forever changed opportunities for American women.