

## Emmeline Pankhurst

1858 – 1928 (70 years old)

<https://www.lottie.com/blogs/strong-women/31253379-emmeline-pankhurst-biography-for-kids>

### Who was Emmeline Pankhurst ?

Emmeline Pankhurst was a British political activist and the leader of the suffragette movement in England that helped women win the right to vote.

She lived through a time where the role of women in society changed quickly. Her passionate belief that **women deserved equal rights** never changed.

For many people, **Emmeline Pankhurst is a symbol of the fight for women's rights at the start of the 20th century.**



### Emmeline's childhood and teenage.

Emmeline was born on 15th July 1858 in Manchester, England. Her family had a tradition of political action.

Emmeline was the oldest of her nine brothers and sisters and a very clever child who learned to speak at the age of three. She learned to be socially conscious at an early age, thanks to her parents, who were both strong supporters of the antislavery movement and women's rights.

At only 14 years old, Emmeline went to her first suffrage meeting with her mother and was inspired by the speeches she had heard.

She was a shy girl who was afraid to talk in public but she was not timid about telling her parent that she felt they treated her unfairly in comparison to her brothers, whose education they favoured.

At the time, girls attended a local boarding school that taught social skills that would enable them to become good wives.

Emmeline convinced her parents to send her to a modern women's school in Paris. When she returned five years later at the age of 20, she had become fluent in French and had learned not only sewing, cooking and embroidery, but chemistry and bookkeeping as well.

### A family of activists

In 1889, Emmeline and her husband Richard founded the Women's Franchise League (WFL), fighting for married women to be able to vote in the local elections. However, the League was not a success and it ended in 1893.

Having failed to achieve their goals in London and with some money troubles, the Pankhursts returned to Manchester in 1892. Joining the newly-formed Labor Party in 1894, they worked with the Party to help feed the poor and unemployed people in Manchester.

### The Suffragettes

In October 1903, Emmeline's daughter Christabel persuaded her mother to form a more aggressive group, and so **Emmeline founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU)** - an organization that gained a lot of fame for their work, and shocked society. The members of this union were named the 'suffragettes'. Like many suffragettes, Emmeline was **arrested six times** over the next few years and even went on a hunger strike. But it was not an easy fight.

In 1913, many others started to go on hunger strikes\*, and the government started what became known as the '**Cat and Mouse**' Act. The prisoners that were striking were released until they grew strong again, and then re-arrested.



## The War



The fight came to an end suddenly when World War One broke out in 1914 and Emmeline turned all her energy to **supporting the war effort and encouraged all women to do what they could.**

Women had the **opportunity to prove themselves because of the war**, doing jobs that the men used to do.

By 1916, the attitudes towards women had changed; they were now considered as more **deserving of the vote after they had served their country so admirably.**

In 1918, the Representation of the People Act gave voting rights to women over 30.

Ten years later, in 1928, **women were granted equal voting rights with men (at the age of 21).**

Emmeline died on 14 June 1928 in Hampstead, shortly after the victory of her cause.

### Emmeline Pankhurst said:

« **Men make the moral code and they expect women to accept it.**

**They have decided that it is entirely right and proper for men to fight for their liberties and their rights, but that it is not right and proper for women to fight for theirs. »**



### Five Facts about Emmeline Pankhurst

• Emmeline Pankhurst was born in Manchester in 1858. She attended school in Paris and married a barrister more than 20 years older than her, who helped her fight for women's rights.

• Emmeline Pankhurst was a leader of the suffragette movement and a political activist. She has been described as being one of the most influential people of the 20th century.

• The suffragettes wanted to secure women's rights, especially the right to vote. As well as campaigning, they often broke the law or chained themselves to railings to protest.

• In 1886 Pankhurst was involved with the strike\* of girls working in the Bryant and May match factory. The girls worked 14 hours a day and were fined for dropping matches on the floor.

• She was also concerned with the conditions in workhouses in Manchester. She organized meetings in the local park, which were soon declared to be illegal.

(\*strike = grève / \*hunger strike = grève de la faim)

