



DEMOCRACY

Evie: In Britain, we decide who is in charge of the country in an election, when all of the people over the age of eighteen have a vote on who they think should be in charge. This system is called *democracy*.

Daniel: And we've come to The Museum of London, to find out more about how people fought for the right to vote. One of the groups was the Suffragettes, led by Emmeline Pankhurst.

Evie: Hello.

Helen Pankhurst: Hi. My name is Helen Pankhurst and I'm Emmeline's great granddaughter.

Daniel: Who is Emmeline Pankhurst?

Helen: Emmeline Pankhurst was the founder of the WSPU - The Women's Social and Political Union - which most people know of now as the Suffragettes. Do you know who the Suffragettes were?

Evie: We think maybe they were the women who protested for women's rights.

Helen: That's right. They were a group of women who fought for women to have the vote. There's an exhibition of the Suffragettes here at the museum. Would you like to come and have a look?

Evie: Some women felt the only way they would be heard was to take more drastic action.

Daniel: Can I just ask what are these?

Helen: That was used to break windows. You can see a pane of glass over there, and that was because they wanted to get that message out there - to get it into the media and really demand the vote.

Evie: What's that poster over there?

Helen: That's referencing the hunger strikes that the Suffragettes started to do.

Evie: Is that banner the names of everybody who was in the Suffragettes?

Helen: It's everybody who went to prison. There were more than a thousand women who were in prison.

Daniel: Do you know what these are?

Helen: So that belt was used by the Suffragettes to chain themselves to a railing and by doing that it was much more difficult for the police to move them away from these public meetings and events.



Daniel: These are just some of the ways that the Suffragettes struggled to achieve democracy. And in 1918 some of the women did get the vote.

Helen: So how would you feel Daniel if you were allowed to make decisions and Evie you were not allowed?

Daniel: If I could make decisions I would be happy. But if other people couldn't then I'd feel a little bit sad.

Evie: I would feel like I was trapped and being controlled. Like somebody is telling you can't do something, which is not their place to do that. And everybody is equal.

Helen: So I think democracy is saying we believe that it's important that everybody should have a vote. Everybody should have a voice and everybody can therefore think about policies that affect everybody. And that starts at the school council for you, but it goes right up to Parliament and any decision in society.

Daniel: Because everyone's as important as everyone else.

Evie: With the votes you're sort of talking what you want. You're saying what you want on a piece of paper.

Helen: So what you're saying is we need people to vote. But then we need a government that will make some of the decisions based on the vote. And the other point I would say is we must never take our democracy for granted. Because it can go backwards. It's not always the case that every country has become more and more democratic over time. And we live in a world where your individual voice, the individual voice of citizens, can be amplified so much better now, through social media. So you can take up any cause that you think is important. So do you think we've got to democracy - have we achieved it?

Evie: A little bit, but I think we could work on it a lot more.

Daniel: Yeah, I agree.

Helen: Yeah, so do I. Democracy ultimately is about fairness; it's about having a voice and it's about being able to continue to make the world a better place, for everybody.