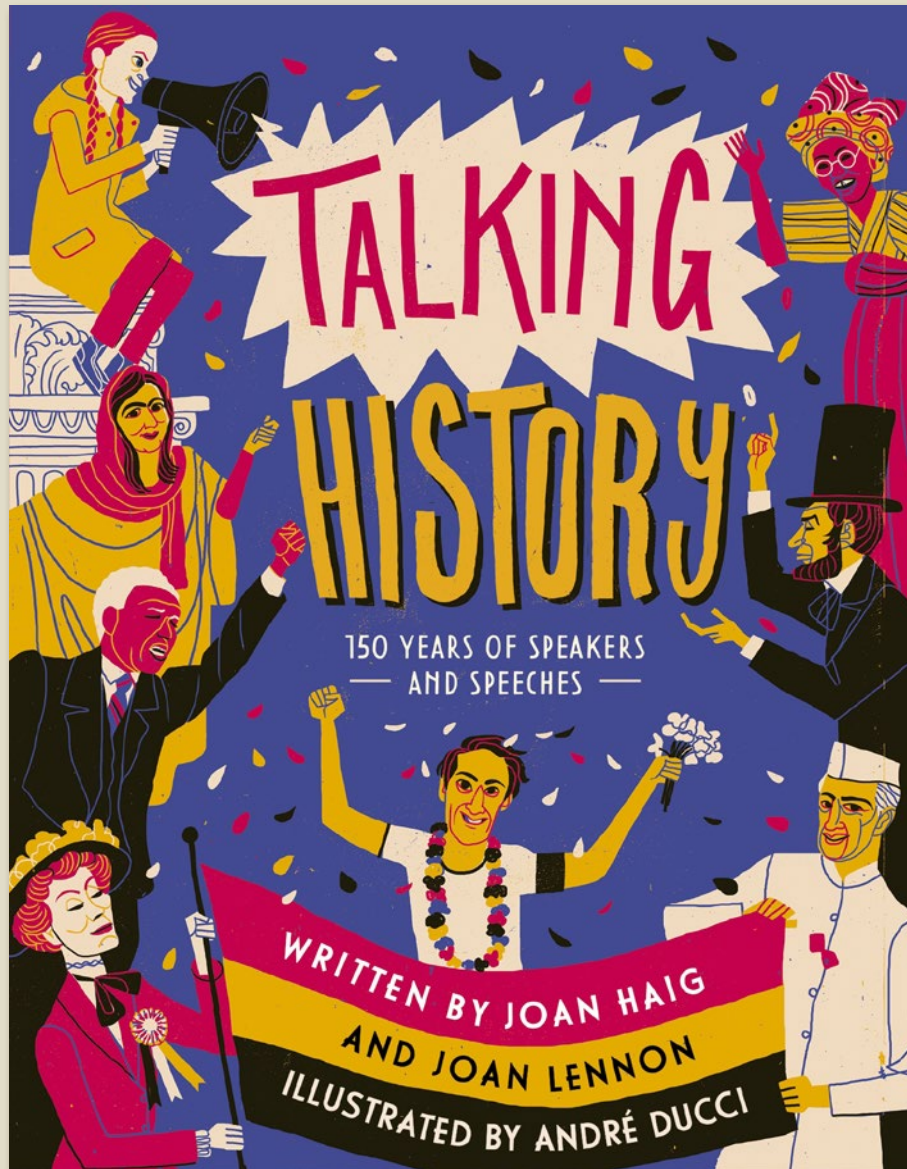


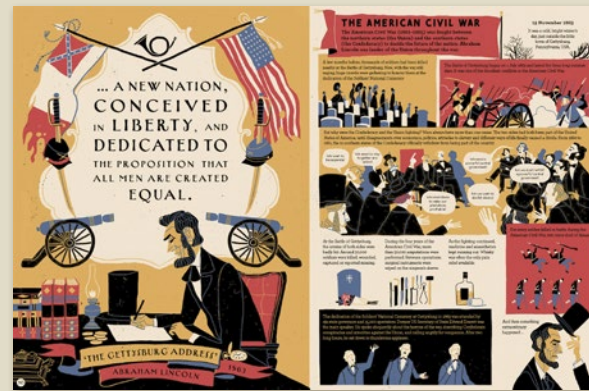
Talking History



150 years of world-changing speeches

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Talking History



In 1903, in the city of Manchester, UK, Emmeline Pankhurst and her eldest daughter Christabel founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). The organisation campaigned fearlessly for women's right to vote.

THE SUFFRAGETTE MOVEMENT

This wasn't the first time that women in Britain had fought for the vote. Since the mid-nineteenth century, female campaigners called 'suffragists' had tried to win rights for women in society through peaceful petitions and, later on, by refusing to pay their taxes.

But this campaign was slow with few results. After years of unsuccessful peaceful protest by the suffragists, the WSPU decided that it was time for action - 'Deeds Not Words', as their motto said. Members of the WSPU took part in 'civil disobedience' to literally fight for their cause. They chained themselves to railings, hacked politicians' names off buildings, and smashed windows in public places, constantly clashing with the authorities.

They were so determined to achieve their political aims that they deliberately took part in violence and vandalism to influence the public and the government.

Newspapers began referring to militant WSPU campaigners as 'suffragettes'. By 1910, the WSPU had branches all over the country.

THE CAT AND MOUSE ACT

Around 1,000 suffragettes were imprisoned for their 'substance' behaviour. While in jail, some continued to fight by going on hunger strikes, refusing to eat or drink. At first, they were released to prevent them from starving, but, by 1910, prison wardens began to force-feed them. Women were badly hurt, prompting public outrage at what was seen as government torture.

The government responded by passing the 1913 'Prisoners' (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act. Under this new law, when women on hunger strike became critically weak, they were sent home. As soon as they recovered, they were promptly returned to continue their sentence. It was dubbed the 'Cat and Mouse Act' because of the way a cat plays with its prey repeatedly letting it escape before catching it again.

Emmeline Pankhurst was imprisoned and released 16 times! It was in 1913, in between prison sentences, that she visited the United States to campaign for support and funding. She addressed a group of women at the Parsons Theatre in Hartford, Connecticut, in a powerful speech attempting to justify the use of militant tactics in the fight for women's rights.

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