

Y8 History

Britain's journey to democracy



Summary

Britain became more democratic throughout the period 1832-1928. The Great Reform Act of 1832 was an important start in making Britain more democratic, but more parliamentary reform was needed as this law only extended suffrage to middle-class men. Working-class people and women still had to fight for suffrage. The Chartists, the Suffragists and the Suffragettes used various methods in their fight for parliamentary reform, including peaceful and more violent forms of protest. Thanks to these pressure groups changing political attitudes, as well as involvement in the First World War from working-class men and women from all classes, Britain became a democracy in 1928.

Key Figures

Earl Grey	A member of the Whig party who became Prime Minister in 1830, having promised to carry out par-
Henry Hunt	A popular public speaker at Peterloo, who was jailed after the massacre.
Millicent Fawcett	Fought for women's suffrage by legal change and led Britain's largest peaceful protest group.
Emmeline	Fought for women's suffrage and was a key leader of the Suffragettes.

Other Resources

[Why did Britain become more democratic? | BBC Bitesize](#)



Key Vocabulary

Democracy	A country where the people choose their government by voting.
Government	Responsible for how the country is run e.g., decides what to spend public tax money on.
Suffrage	The right to vote in elections to choose which political party should run the country.
Great Reform Act	Extended suffrage to middle-class men. Before this new law, only wealthy upper-class men could vote.
Whigs	A political party who support reform (change). This party passed the Great Reform Act.
Chartists	A large group of working-class people who fought for suffrage.
Peterloo	15 people died when cavalry charged into a crowd of 60,000 people who gathered to demand suffrage.
Suffragists	A group who fought for female suffrage, using peaceful forms of protest.
Suffragettes	A group who fought for female suffrage, using violent forms of protest.

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Challenge

Does the Great Reform Act deserve to be remembered as 'great'?

Did deeds or words win women the vote?

