Minnesota Communities
Red Wing

***Teacher Key***

## **Beyond the Sources** • *Julia B. Nelson*



**Using the information you gather on the web site, answer the following questions about the unit.**

**1.** Nelson argued for municipal suffrage for women in her “Points on Municipal Suffrage” flyer. Often the arguments in favor of something tell us a great deal about the arguments against something. What can Nelson’s arguments for suffrage teach us about the arguments used against women’s suffrage?

***She suggests that arguments have been made about men and women meeting at the polls; that other states have had concerns about the same issue; and that women should not be allowed to vote because they could not be in the military.***

How can that information help us as historians to focus our research about a controversial issue?

***By reading a source like this one, we are given clues to other sources that might have opposing viewpoints and what those viewpoints might be. For example, we could look for materials against suffrage and find the arguments for why men and women shouldn’t’ meet at the polls and compare the two viewpoints.***

**2.** One of the articles about Nelson appeared in the “Local News” section of the newspaper. This section was designed to have short descriptions of local events or activities by people in the community. What might we be able to learn about a community from reading one of these sections of the newspaper?

***By reading this section of the paper in a number of copies, we might be able to get an idea about who the “socialites” in a town happened to be (there information might appear more frequently) and what kinds of events were considered newsworthy for the town.***

How do you think information may have been gathered for these articles?

***In many towns, this information was (and still is) gathered by a single person who is informed of local happenings and keeps in touch with a large number of the townspeople. Often the townspeople themselves contact the reporter with information for this section of the paper.***

How reliable does that make the section as research tool and why?

***This source can be a reliable way to learn about social life in the area, but since the method of gathering the information tends to be less than even-handed, some people will appear more often than others, which could make it an unreliable source for determining the most active or socially important members of a community.***

**3.** When high school seniors have their photographs taken today, it is often with items that have some significance in their lives at the time: a special pet, sports jersey, or musical instrument. Julia Nelson’s photograph on this site shows her with a newspaper and a white ribbon on her lapel. From what you know about Nelson, what other items do you think could have been included in the photograph to tell

us more about her interests and her priorities?

***Students may suggest that Nelson could have a pen in her hand (for her writing), a copy of a speech or a poster from one of her speeches, or a book or chalkboard (because she was a teacher of the freedmen). They might also suggest that she could have a ballot box or ballot in her photograph since she worked for woman's suffrage.***

As a researcher, how is our research made easier when photographs contain items of significance to the person photographed?

***Being able to see important items in a person's photograph often can quickly direct us to other sources for more information (we may not have known ahead of time that Nelson was involved with the Minnesota White Ribbon newspaper). It can also confirm some information we might already have about the person or their interests.***

How can we tell that an item is important to the person and not just a prop used by the photographer?

***Most of the time, the only way to tell for sure is to know more about the person and their interests. Without knowing that Nelson was involved in the newspaper, we might have just assumed that the photographer thought the paper would look good in the photograph and given it to her as a prop for the photo.***

**4.** We know that Julia Nelson did a great deal of work for certain causes because we have references to her speeches and her writings about those causes. What information might we be able to find about someone else's civic work if we are researching them?

***We may be able to find their name in a list of organization members or a newspaper article about some of the civic work that they have done. If they won any awards for public service, those would probably be documented in the newspapers and also in the records of the group that presented the award, as well as in the personal papers of the person who received it.***

How could those items help us find more information about the person's life?

***Often the newspaper articles will provide a short sketch of the person's life, which can give us more options for our research. Speeches given at an awards ceremony would also profile the person's work. We may be able to find information in the minutes of organization meetings that would tell us if they were an officer in the organization or had been involved in a particular event. Minutes of the meetings might also mention such things as get-well cards sent to the person while they were ill, or information about a person moving to or from the area.***