LEONORA COHEN

Leonara Cohen was a womens rights actvist born in 1873 in Hunslet, Leeds. She later moved to 2 Clarendon Villas, near Woodhouse Square, where you can now find her blue plaque. Cohen campaigned for a womens rights to vote and was known as 'Tower Suffragette' due to her smashing a display case in the Tower of London using an iron bar, with a note attached including the words 'Deeds Not Words. Votes for Women.' Cohen was arrested multiple times and went on hunger strike at Armley Prison. She even went on thirst strike too. Suffragettes often went on hunger strike in prison as it meant they legally had to be released temporarily to regain their health, incase they died. This was called the 'Cat and Mouse Act'. Cohen went on to become one of the first female magistrates in the 1920s. A magistrate is someone who listens to criminal cases in a court of law and helps to make decisions about the sentence that a criminal might receive. Cohen worked as a magistrate for over 30 years and received an OBE for her services. Cohen lived for an impressive 105 years and saw a second wave of feminism in the 1970s. She was a dedicated hardworking person who helped change the rights of women in the UK through her committed activism.

This is a dress worn by Leonora Cohen to a Leeds Arts Club ball in 1914. She decorated the dress with womens rights symbols to make a statement. The woman featured on the front of the dress is Joan of Arc.

- Image courtesy of Leeds Museums and Galleries

Can you design your own womens rights badge?

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What is an activist?

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An activist is somebody who is unhappy about things that are happening in society and makes an effort to change them by protesting. You can protest in many different ways such as creating art, music, or writing books. You can also protest by organising public marches or by disrupting order. Leonora Cohen did this by smashing a glass case in The Tower of London. There are different ways to spread an activist message successfully.

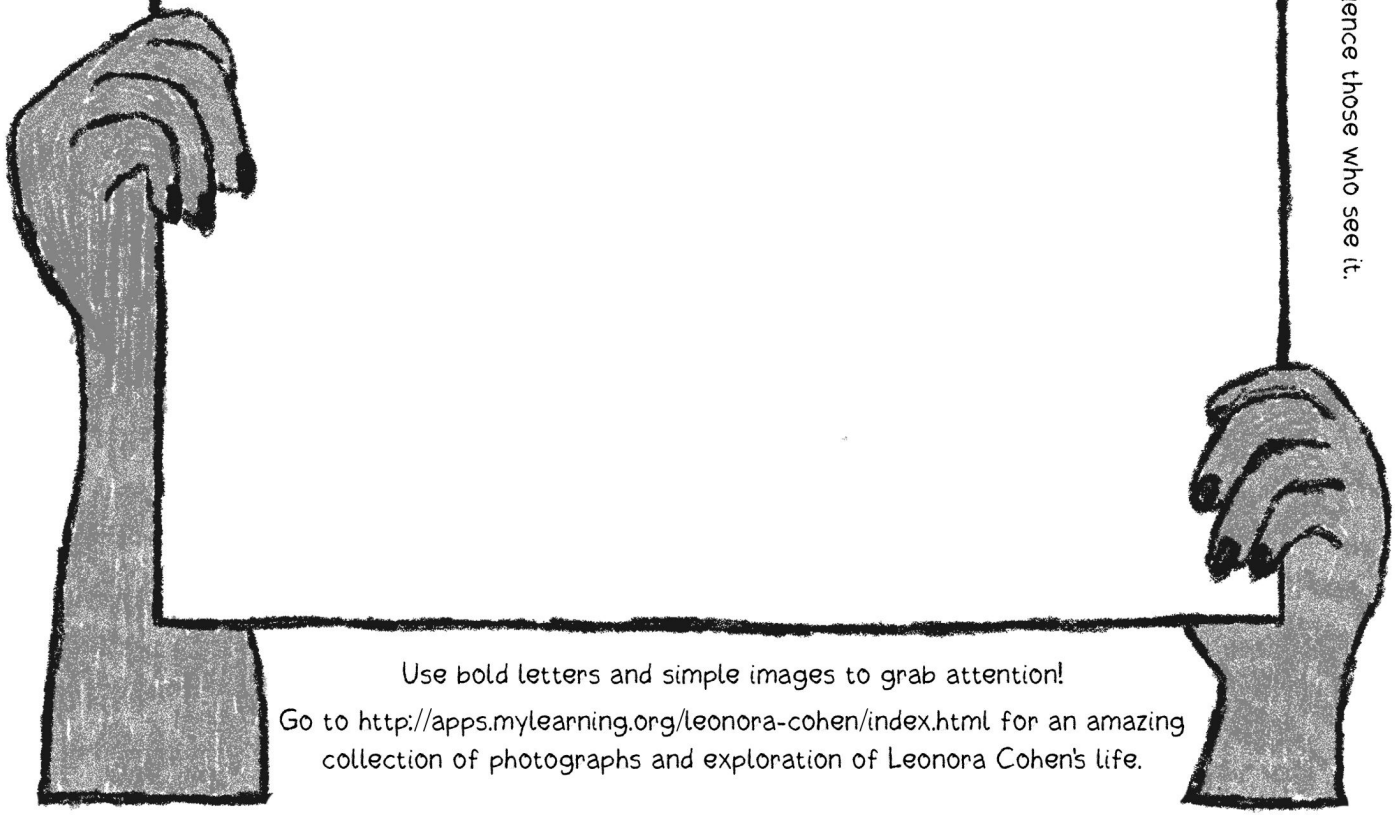
Are there things happening around you that you are unhappy about? Examples could be:

- The negative treatment of BAME * people in the UK
- The negative treatment of LGBTQ+ ** people in the UK
- The negative treatment of the environment in the UK

Think about how you can use activism to create a kinder place for everyone to live in.

* BAME stands for black, asian, minority ethnic
** LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer

Can you design your own protest poster?



Use bold letters and simple images to grab attention!

Go to http://apps.mylearning.org/leonora-cohen/index.html for an amazing collection of photographs and exploration of Leonora Cohen's life.

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