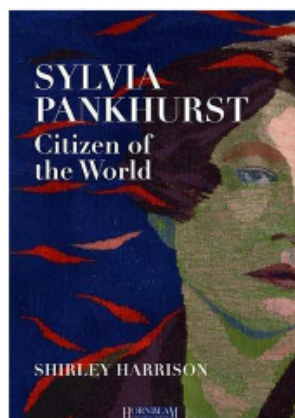
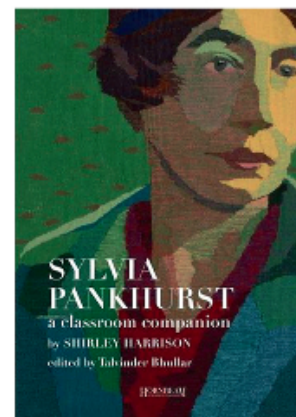


Sue Johnson welcomes Sylvia Pankhurst into the classroom and beyond



Sylvia Pankhurst: Citizen of the World by Shirley Harrison (Hornbeam, 2009) rrp £6.95 and
Sylvia Pankhurst: A Classroom Companion by Shirley Harrison, edited by Talvinder Bhuller (Hornbeam, 2009) rrp £8.95



Shirley Harrison's *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Maverick Life 1882 - 1960* was first published in 2003 and she has now adapted her research to produce two new books, including one for use in the secondary school classroom with the 11 – 14 age range at Key Stage 3.

Sylvia Pankhurst: Citizen of the World takes its title from Pankhurst's own words of how she would like to be remembered '... as a Citizen of the World'. It is an informative and delightfully illustrated text which could also be used as support material in delivering both History and Citizenship at KS3. *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Classroom Companion* contains almost identical material but is specially geared to helping KS3 pupils assess historical significance through a variety of interesting tasks.

In both these books Sylvia Pankhurst is brought to life, not just as a campaigner for the vote but as a fully-rounded activist who had many concerns in her life. Suffragettes were often referred to as hysterical women and thought to be unbalanced and not fit to vote. If Pankhurst's life is taken as an example however it can be seen that these campaigners were committed to a range of causes, held educated political beliefs and were intelligent, talented and skilled women with acute business acumen and marketing skills. They were also rebels who refused to be constrained by the contemporary restrictive views of women's roles. Pankhurst is established as a forceful character determined to conduct

her own life regardless of social conventions. She is presented as a talented artist, a campaigner for a variety of causes including the vote and work for women, as a journalist, as a proponent of political ideologies, and as a 'citizen of the world' who fought for people's rights regardless of their gender or colour. She was also an unmarried mother. All of these were somewhat shocking at the time— particularly the latter. Sylvia constantly sought to create a fairer society for all with no thought for her own reputation.

Sylvia Pankhurst is an excellent example of the 'half hidden from history' category. As her name is synonymous with suffrage her other achievements are overlooked. These two books reveal the whole person and she is an excellent character on which to undertake a depth study for assessing the concept of historical significance. Christine Counsell offers a similar approach via Josephine Butler (see *Teaching History*, 114). A study of Sylvia Pankhurst's life will reveal contemporary beliefs and attitudes not only regarding the fight for women's rights but also about work practices, the peace movement and political thought and beliefs.

The Classroom Companion encourages pupils to consider 'the bigger picture'. Each chapter prompts reflective thought with two or three suggestive questions all working towards the issue of Pankhurst's historical significance. Tasks throughout the book encourage pupils to enquire more closely into people's lives in order to understand why they behaved

as they did and so promote a deeper historical understanding.

Chapter Two 'Women and the Vote' is not perhaps as succinct as it could be. Sylvia does need a suffrage context but the section on Emily Wilding Davison is not explicitly linked to Sylvia. Also to describe her as 'famous' in 1907 (p24) is rather pre-emptive. Despite this the book offers a good resource to be used at KS3. It is clearly written with useful yet essential definitions and explanations of key people, concepts and words in the margins. The illustrations are very good with drawings and photographs and the extracts from Sylvia's letters bring history very close.

Sylvia Pankhurst is a fascinating character as both these books suggest. She will capture the imagination of the reader with her complexity, her daring and courage, her energy, her ideas and her talents. Her life provides an interesting window into social and political life in the late-nineteenth to mid- twentieth century. Readers will no doubt find it intriguing that an African Emperor ensured she was buried with honour as a major heroine in Ethiopia yet she was viewed by the authorities in her own country as a troublemaker. As the author suggests it is time to re-examine Sylvia Pankhurst's place in history and not only has she done that rather well but she has offered a purposeful template for the exploration of the many other remarkable women in history.

Sue Johnson