**Votes for women:**

**Pardoning suffragettes 'complicated'**

1. **Home Secretary Amber Rudd has said: ‘Giving pardons to women who were jailed while fighting for the right to vote would be complicated’.** But she said she would "take a look", 100 years on from some women getting the vote in the UK.
2. **Jeremy Corbyn** said a Labour government would apologise to suffragettes and have criminal records overturned.
3. **Helen Pankhurst**, great-granddaughter of suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, said the women had been pardoned by society. But she said the suffragettes would be urging women to "continue the fight" rather than "dwell" on their personal sacrifice. "It was not them breaking the laws that were the problem, it was the laws that were constraining our democracy," she told BBC Radio 5live. The women were rebels, knew what they were risking and didn’t care about their reputation
4. **Equality campaign group the Fawcett Society** and some relatives of the suffragettes are among those who called on the home secretary to overturn the convictions of women who were imprisoned while fighting for the vote.

**Alternative views:** To wipe away these convictions is to wipe clean any sign of what was done to these women and how disproportionately and violently they were punished for disorderly conduct, setting small fires and breaking some windows – after many years of patiently, reasonably, nicely arguing for women’s inclusion in the political system, and being ignored.

The women who broke the law in the battle — and it was a battle — for female suffrage did so knowingly. They were not unwitting victims. They were not acting on compulsion. They were sending a very public message: while you don’t allow us a voice in making them, we won’t respect your laws. Law-breaking for the suffragettes was not a bug. It was a feature.

And they celebrated their war-wounded. Women who had been imprisoned received a badge in the shape of prison gates; one badge per imprisonment. Women who had gone on hunger strike and endured the body and soul violating torture of force-feeding were awarded medals. These women were never seen by their sisters as criminals. They were seen as warriors. The suffragettes broke the law to make a point. Arrests, court appearances and jail sentences were all part of their publicity strategy.

**Resource 3.1.b**