



LADIES IN THE HOUSE
PODCAST SERIES

MOAD

Museum of Australian Democracy
at Old Parliament House



LADIES IN THE HOUSE EPISODE 7: DOROTHY TANGNEY

Lesson Plan

Learning Intention:

Understand the journey of the first female Australian Senator.

Success Criteria:

Decide on a significant Australian woman that should be made into a statue, create a design and write a persuasive proposal.

Before Listening:

Activity One:

Pre-Listening
Vocabulary

Write up or project the
following words on the board:

- scholarship
- malnutrition
- candidate
- advocate
- Social Security



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Activity

One:

Pre-Listening Vocabulary

In groups ask the students if they can put the words into one of the 4 categories.

- Don't know it at all
- Have seen or heard, but don't know the meaning
- I think I know the meaning
- I know the meaning and can explain it

If any of the students are in the 3rd or 4th category, see if they can explain it to the people in your group or to the class.

Share the following definitions for the vocabulary.

Definitions:

- **Scholarship** - If you get a scholarship to a school or university, your studies are paid for by the school or university or by some other organization.
- **Malnutrition** - If someone is suffering from malnutrition, they are physically weak and extremely thin because they have not eaten enough food.
- **Candidate** - A candidate is someone who is being considered for a position, for example someone who is running in an election or applying for a job.
- **Advocate** - If you advocate a particular action or plan, you recommend it publicly.



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Activity One:

Pre-Listening
Vocabulary

- **Social Security** - Social security is a system under which a government pays money regularly to certain groups of people, for example people who are sick, are unemployed, or those who have no other income.

Activity Two:

Before listening
discussion
questions

1. How many Australian politicians (past or present) can you name? (Make a list on the board or in your books.)
2. How many of those politicians are women?

After Listening:

Activity Three:

After listening
reflection
questions

1. What events in her life inspired Dorothy Tangney to become involved in politics?
2. What career did Dorothy Tangney have before she became a politician?
3. Explain your understanding of the process of preselection.
4. What groups of the population did she advocate for when she was in office?



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Activity Four:

Pitch an idea for
a statue.

At the end of the episode, the host mentioned that only 4% of statues in Australia are made up of women. There are now statues of Dorothy Tangney and Enid Lyons near the Old Parliament House building in Canberra.

You can visit the Statues for Equality website to see the statues that in Melbourne.

<https://statuesforequality.com/pages/melbourne>

Your job is to decide on an Australian woman that you think could have a statue made of them. It could be someone who has contributed to Australia in the field of Arts, Science, Education, Sport, Entertainment, Politics, Medicine, Law etc.



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Activity

Four:

Pitch an idea for a statue.

Step 1: Decide on a significant Australian woman

Step 2: Research a little about this woman's life to find out significant things that they have done

Step 3: Decide on the statue design. How will she be represented. What pose will she have? Will they have props that represent her significant contributions? What materials will be used? How big will the statue be? Where will the statue be placed?

Step 4: Write a proposal to the local council persuading them to give you funding to build your statue.

Your proposal will need:

- A catchy introduction
- Information about your chosen woman
- A list of significant achievements
- An argument as to why they should be immortalised
- A brief outline of the type of statue
- A call to action for the council to fund your project.



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Episode Transcript:

Hi, this is Kelly Chase and you are listening to Season 3 of a Museum of Australian Democracy and History Detective Collaboration: Ladies in the House. In this 4-part series we are going to celebrate the lives of four incredible women and how they contributed to Australian democracy.

Today I would like to introduce you to Dame Dorothy Tangney, who was the first woman elected into the Senate in 1943 and remained a senator for the next 25 years. On the same day that she was sworn into the Senate, Enid Lyons became the first female to be sworn into the House of Representatives. So, although there had been women elected in to state parliaments, they were the first women in the federal parliament. There is another episode in this season of Ladies in the House that will tell you all about Enid Lyon's story.

Dorothy had a tough start to life, she was born in 1907, which means she was around 9 to 14 years old when the First World War was happening. Her family were not a wealthy family, but due to her hard work and intelligence, she won a scholarship to a Convent School in Western Australia.

In 1929, when she was in her early 20s, Australia was plunged into the Great Depression—an economic crisis—and not only did she witness her father lose his job, but she witnessed many unemployed men begging for food. This moved her to become involved in the community.

Dorothy began her working career studying at university to become a teacher and she supported herself by working as an assistant in a school. Here she saw many disadvantaged children suffering from poverty and malnutrition and she would take underprivileged students on holiday and health camps. Also, if any of the children ended up in children's court, she would be there providing assistance. She cared deeply about improving her community also founded and was president of a number of clubs and organisations that helped to support disadvantaged members of the community.

Dorothy was aiming for a career in politics, she was involved in the Labor party and attended many conferences, but in the political climate of the 1930s, it was difficult for a woman to even get preselected. Preselection is the part before an election where a candidate is chosen by the political party to run for the election. Often, the only reason that parties would choose a woman for preselection, was if they definitely knew that they could not win. In 1936, when she was still in her 20s, she ran for the seat of Nedlands in the State election, but unfortunately, she lost. Then she ran again in 1939 and lost again.



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In 1940, she decided to run for the Senate and lost again. But this gave her valuable experience in running in a campaign. And if there was one thing that Dorothy Tangney had, it was resilience and in 1943 she found herself running again and this time she made history and became Australia's first female senator. She was 36, she was single and she was ready to blaze a trail through Australian politics. Now just to assure you that this win was no fluke, she was enormously popular and she maintained this winning streak keeping her position in the Senate for the next 25 years.

Because of her experiences as a young teacher working with underprivileged children, she was an advocate of the Federal government providing improved social services, housing and education. In her maiden speech- which is the first speech a politician makes to parliament- she proclaimed, "Social security is the right of every Australian". She fought to increase pensions for deserted wives and widows and child support for struggling families. Another issue that she rallied for was a better national health system, including improving hospitals, providing medical benefits to all and pensions for people who were blind. In her words, "We must have a healthy community and prevention is better than cure."

She also strongly supported equal pay and equal opportunities for women. Speaking of equality, did you know that only about 4% of statues in Australia are made up of historical women? Well, the good news is, that even after her death, Dorothy Tangney is contributing to equality. Currently, there are plans to build a commemorative sculpture of both Dorothy Tangney and Enid Lyons. It is going to be located in the gardens near the Old Parliament House building.

Dorothy Tangney had grit. She knew she wanted to be a politician but it took a number of failed attempts before she finally won. What I would like you to think about today is a time in your life where you did not succeed. What could you learn from hearing Dorothy's story of resilience and tenacity? And how could this help you when you make mistakes in the future.

This is Kelly Chase, on the case.
See you next time!