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# SOJOURNER TRUTH

## MINI-UNIT

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**Famous Person:** Sojourner Truth

**Related Topics:** Women's Rights (Suffrage)

Civil Rights (Abolitionism)

Prejudice

**Grade Level:** 4th/5th

**Author:** Shelly Nielsen

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## [BACKGROUND INFORMATION](#)

On a spring day in 1851, a group gathered in a church in Akron, Ohio, for a Women's Rights Conference. They were particularly interested in women's suffrage. On the second day of the conference, many ministers were denying that women had equal rights, and saying that women weren't intelligent enough to vote. One woman stood out very prominently from the rest because she was very tall, attired in Quaker dress, seated obscurely in the front on the pulpit steps, and she was the only black person there. She hadn't said a word on the first day, but on the second day, after hearing so many demeaning remarks about women, she stood up to her full six foot frame, and Mrs. Frances Dana Gage, the white antislavery writer chairing the meeting, allowed her to come to the podium. This was where Sojourner Truth delivered her most famous speech, "A'rn't I a Woman?". (There are different accounts of this speech, two of which are written by Mrs. Gage and the Anti-Slavery Bugle). Below, I will give you the one quoted most often in our day:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm. I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man-when I could get it-and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (Hamilton 74).

Sojourner had a deep voice, and a very powerful presence. She was the first prominent African-American directly associated with the white women's suffrage movement. This speech was intended to demonstrate that both poor and black women should also be included under the title of "woman". Along with having a large impact on women's

rights, she became one of the most famous abolitionists, singing gospel songs and reciting speeches in churches and auditoriums to primarily white, middle-class audiences. She was a very sought-after orator on the antislavery and women's rights lecture circuits in the 1850s-1870s. She was well known among abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe (who wrote a book about her-The Libyan Sibyl), and Harriet Tubman. She persuaded many who had been passive towards slavery with her inspiring speeches. She began to wear a banner across her chest that said PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGH THE LAND UNTO ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF. She also gave a very witty speech for civil rights:

Children, I talk to God and God talks to me. I go and talk to God in the fields and woods. This morning I was walking out, and I got over the fence. I saw the wheat a-holding up its head, looking very big. I go up and take hold of it. You believe it? There was no wheat there. I say, "God, what is the matter with this wheat?" And He said to me, "Sojourner, there is a little weevil in it!"

Now I hear talk about the Constitution and the rights of man. I come up and I take hold of this constitution. It looks mighty big and I feel for my rights but there ain't any there.

Then I say, "God, what ails this Constitution?" He says to me, "Sojourner, there is a little weevil in it! (Hamilton 73).

Sojourner was born in 1797 to James and Betsey, slaves of Colonel Ardinburgh, a man of the Low Dutch class of people in Hurley, Ulster County, New York. Her birth name was Isabella Baumfree. The name, "Bomefree", (as she pronounced it) is low Dutch for tree, and came from her father who was very tall and straight. She was separated from her parents when she was nine years old. She was sold to John Nealy for one hundred dollars. The Nealy's could only speak English, and Isabella could only speak Dutch. She received a lot of beatings because she didn't understand their demands. One example of her trials in life follows. One morning she was told to go to the barn and there she was beaten by her master with a bundle of rods that had been in the fire. He tied her hands and beat her until her skin was lacerated and blood flowed from the wounds.

Isabella prayed to be relieved of this situation. A fisherman named Scriver soon came, and bought her for one hundred and five dollars. She lived with him and his family for about a year and a half carrying fish, hoeing corn, and bringing in roots and herbs to make the beer they served at their tavern. In 1810, she was sold to Mr. John J. Dumont. Isabella had a great desire to please Mr. Dumont. While under the ownership of Mr. Dumont, Isabella "married" a fellow bondsman named Thomas and had five children with him. This ceremony was performed by another slave and unrecognized by any civil law. She was a great example of honesty and hard work to her children. She was a field hand, milkmaid, cleaning woman, weaver, cook, and wet nurse (sometimes being required to nurse white babies while hers went hungry).

The State of New York passed a bill (the Emancipation Act of 1827) that stated blacks would be free on July 4, 1827, if they were born before July 4, 1799. Mr. Dumont told Isabella that she would be freed then. One of her hands was diseased, so he refused to free her at the appointed time, saying that her hand had diminished her usefulness. Isabella soon after took her infant, and escaped to Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Van Wagener's. Mr. Dumont was kind and liked Isabella very much. He came looking for her, but Isaac didn't support slavery and didn't want Isabella to be forced to leave, so he paid Mr. Dumont \$20 to hire her for one year. Isabella took on the surname, Van Wagener (as was customary for slaves).

Isabella found out that her son, Peter, had been sold South illegally, and she challenged this because she wanted her son very badly. Isabella was the first black woman to sue a white man and win. This is one of the many demonstrations of her courage and determination.

The economy was especially depressed in the late 1830s. Isabella felt that the rich were robbing the poor, and the poor were robbing each other, and she felt that she wasn't being as charitable to the needy as she ought to be. She felt that God had told her to take a new name and preach the truth. On June 1, 1843, she left New York with a new name, Sojourner Truth, ("sojourn" means to wander or travel) to preach what she felt was the truth.

Sojourner was a very courageous, hardworking, determined woman. Her mother had taught her that God lived in the sky and watched over all. If she was ever in trouble or needed help, she only needed to call on God. Her mother had a large impact on her religiously. Sojourner never learned to read and write, but was still an effective speaker. She had heard the Bible a lot, and often quoted from it. Sojourner constantly reminded her audiences that she was an ex-slave and had been raised in a poor, rural community. She experienced many trials in her life including having her

children taken from her, being spit on, stoned, beaten, and having her life threatened.

Sojourner dedicated her life to reform. She fought for equal rights as well as women's rights. In addition to this, she helped freed people find better homes after the Civil War. She encouraged the government to make land available to black Southerners. She realized that even after the Civil War (1861-1865) when slaves were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, blacks still dealt with persecution because of prejudice. This was a struggle for many blacks trying to adapt to newly found freedom in a white world. Sojourner died on November 26, 1883 in Battle Creek, Michigan. The largest crowd ever in attendance to a funeral at the Congregational Church attests to the effect Sojourner Truth had on the lives of so many.

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### REFERENCES

Hamilton, Virginia. (1993). Many Thousand Gone. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, pp.71-76.

Johnson, Paul E. and Sean Wilentz. (1994). The Kingdom of Matthias. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 178-179.

Washington, Margaret, ed. (1993). Narrative of Sojourner Truth. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 1-68.

Yellin, Jean Fagan and John C. Van Horne, ed. (1994). The Abolitionist Sisterhood. New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 139-158.

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### OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to describe contributions made by Sojourner Truth and identify freedoms they enjoy because of the efforts of people like her.
2. Students will be able to state reasons for the decisions they make.
3. Students will be able to define suffrage and abolition by experiencing it and by hearing an explanation of the definition.
4. Students will be able to make a time line of Sojourner Truth's life and the major events of that time.
5. Students will be able to answer questions about Sojourner Truth's life and character.
6. Students will be able to identify a problem in their school or community and take action, so they recognize that they can make a difference as an individual.

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### TIME ALLOTMENT

Approximately 6-8 class periods

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### RESOURCES NEEDED

Question cards (Appendix), dice, copies of background information, butcher paper, markers or crayons, Quaker attire (grey dress or robe, white material for turban).

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### PROCEDURES

1. Think-Pair-Share: Discuss freedoms we have. Individually have students think of what things they would miss most if their freedom were taken away. Have students share ideas in pairs. As a whole class, list some ideas that were generated. Have class vote on the four most precious or important things .

2. **Corners:** a) Write the four things on paper and place each in a corner of the room and ask students to decide on which one thing they think is most important, and have them go to that corner. b) In pairs, have them share reasons why they chose that corner. c) Share as a large group, breaking into smaller groups if necessary for more equal distribution. d) Ask a leader to explain group's reasoning. e) Afterwards, ask if anyone changed their view and why.
3. **Mini-Lecture:** Using background information above, talk about the life of Sojourner Truth and her influence in civil rights and women's suffrage. Define suffrage and abolitionism.
4. **Creative Dramatics/Role playing Day:** Ask students to choose one of the following three options: 1) Dress as Sojourner and deliver one of her speeches after practicing. 2) Be a "Slave for a Day". Somehow mark their cheek or clothing and have them sit on the floor in the back and do not give them any rights for the day. 3) Role play a woman without voting rights. Present things to be voted on throughout the day, and do not allow these people to vote. After these roles have been played have students write their feelings on paper, then discuss them as a class.
5. **Time line:** a) Have students count off by fours and assign a corner for each group. b) Supply a copy of the background information, butcher paper, and markers/crayons for each group. c) Ask students to make a time line of Sojourner's life and the major events talked about in their information paper (such as the Civil War, Emancipation Proclamation, and birth/death dates). They may add pictures if desired. d) Hang these around the room and discuss/compare.
6. **Turn-2-Think:** a) Pass out the set of question cards (see Appendix) to each group of four. b) Have each group count off 1 to 4, and start with person 1 selecting a question card to read aloud. c) All students think of their response, then that same person rolls a die to see who answers (roll again or have volunteers answer if a 5 or 6 is rolled). Continue until all questions are answered.
7. **Writing Activity:** Give each student paper and have them define suffrage and abolition in their own words. Also have them write one important thing that they learned about Sojourner Truth.
8. **Problem-Solving:** Have students work in cooperative groups of 4 or 5 to identify a problem in their school or community. Have them come up with a solution, clear it with the teacher, then carry it out. Have a group leader give a brief 1 or 2 minute oral presentation of results.

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### ASSESSMENT

1. Contributions to Think-Pair-Share and Corners will be assessed informally through observation.
2. Writing activity with definitions will be assessed for understanding.
3. Papers with responses to Role Playing Day will be assessed.
4. Contributions to time line development will be assessed anecdotally along with assessment of accuracy of time line.
5. Observations of responses to Turn-2-Think will be recorded anecdotally.
6. Relevancy of problem identification will be assessed along with an assessment of the oral report.

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### APPENDIX

Questions adapted by Shelly Nielsen from Kagan Cooperative Learning 1993 by Christa Chapman (Prewriting Questions: Biography/Autobiography).

You may want to type these questions on 3 x 3" cards and laminate them for more of a game like activity.

1. How can you best portray the highlight of Sojourner's life? (An item, a word, a slogan, etc.)

2. What descriptive words would you use to describe Sojourner's personality?
3. What do you consider to be Sojourner's greatest accomplishment? Explain.
4. What do you consider to be Sojourner's greatest strength and greatest weakness? Why?
5. Choose a symbol to represent Sojourner. Explain your choice.
6. Who do you think had the greatest impact on Sojourner? Why?
7. How is the physical description of Sojourner important to her life story?
8. How might our world be changed if Sojourner had never existed?
9. What do you think was your subject's biggest challenge?
10. Culture plays a big part in who we are. What part does the cultural background of Sojourner Truth play in her life?
11. For what single action will the subject be most remembered?
12. What do the actions of Sojourner Truth tell you about her morals and values?
13. If the subject had lived in a different country, what may have been different?
14. What slogan might you use to best advertise Sojourner's life story?
15. If Sojourner had not chosen to travel and give speeches, do you think she would have had as much impact on civil and women's rights? Why?

[RETURN TO TITLE PAGE FOR FAMOUS PEOPLE UNITS](#)



## Unit: Slavery

### **Lesson 2.1: *Only Passing Through: The Story of Sojourner Truth* by Anne Rockwell (Alfred A. Knopf, 2000)**

Aim: To learn about the life and accomplishments of Sojourner Truth.

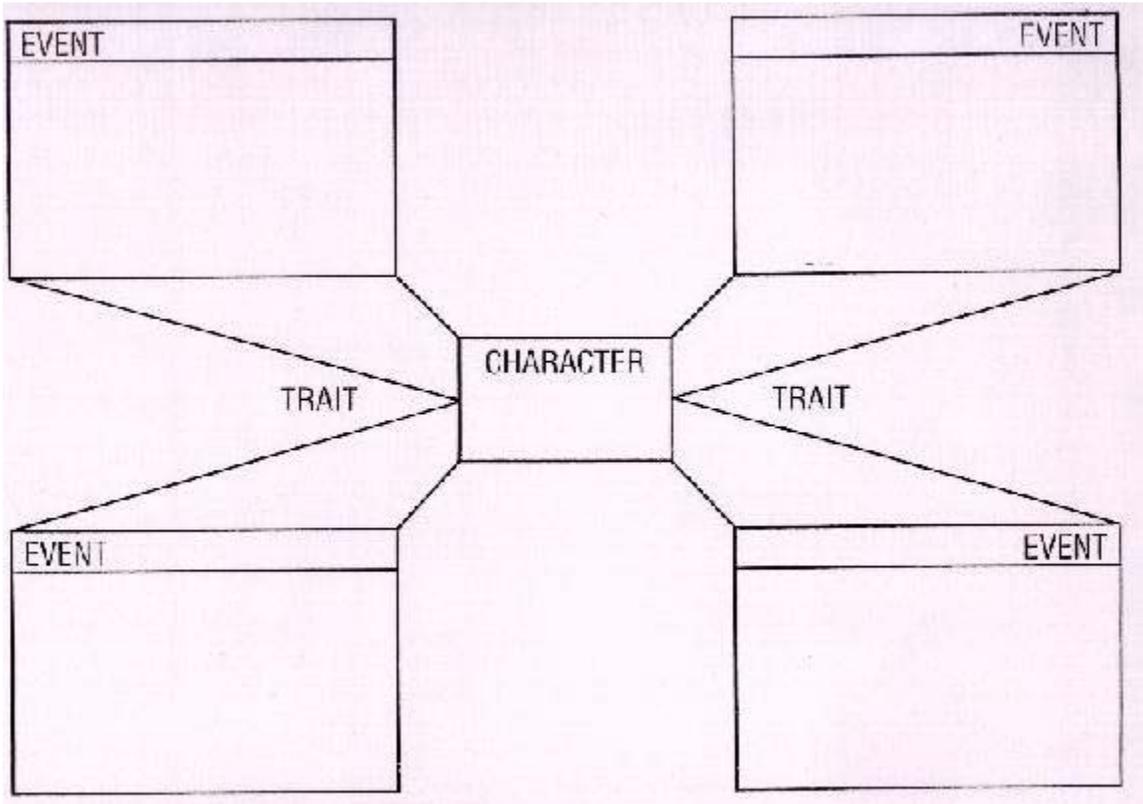
Objective: Students listen to Anne Rockwell's picture book biography of Sojourner Truth to learn about this famous abolitionist/feminist as well as slave life in New York.

#### Materials:

1. *Only Passing Through: The Story of Sojourner Truth* by Anne Rockwell (Alfred A. Knopf, 2000)
2. Character maps for each student

#### Procedure:

1. Explain to students that you are about to read a picture book biography about a New York slave named Isabella and how she came to be known as Sojourner Truth.
2. Share the front and back covers and encourage students to make predictions about the story.
3. Note the endpapers, featuring some of Sojourner's powerful questions.
4. Distribute character maps (see below) and explain that students will be recording specific events from Sojourner's life which changed her.
5. While reading, teacher may pause to discuss the following questions as they arise:
  - If Isabella was 9 years old in 1806, in what year was she born?
  - On every page, have students study Christie's striking artwork. What is striking about Isabella's appearance? What do the characters' faces tell us? Why does Isabella appear to have no legs at times? Why does she appear so tall at other times?
6. Students can draw their own portraits or illustrate one of the events they included on their character maps.



## Suggested 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Sojourner Truth Curricula Package

The included materials in this packet are for an approximate grade 3 reading level. Although there is a primary book for reading, additional books on Sojourner Truth are also available and included in the selected bibliography.

The curricula are framed around the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Curriculum Frameworks for Social Studies that suggest a unit on Massachusetts and its cities and towns: Geography and History. Additionally, the study of Sojourner Truth can be considered a part of famous people and events in Massachusetts history.

English Language Arts standards also can be applied for these curricula in a variety of ways.

### **Materials Included:**

- Only Passing Through, Anne Rockwell's picture-book biography of the legendary and powerful messenger of civil rights—Sojourner Truth
- Only Passing Through audio (cassette + CD) narrated by Renee Joshua-Porter
- 2 sample lesson plans
- 2 sample Unit plans (I mini-unit)
- Suggested annotated bibliography of other Sojourner Truth books for elementary grades
- List of books about Sojourner Truth available at Lilly and Forbes libraries

### **Additional Lessons on Internet:**

<http://radicalequality.emergingamerica.org/teachers/lessons-gallery/lesson-1-grades-3-7/>

lesson developed by Collaborative for Education Services about Sojourner Truth 1842-46 during the time of the Northampton Association for Industry and Education (NAIE)

<http://www.edsiteмент.neh.gov/lesson-plan/portrait-hero#sect-preparation>

“Portrait of a Hero” lesson, grades K-2; scroll down page to Sojourner Truth

<http://www.cstone.net/~bcp/4/4DHistory.htm>

Lesson 220The Reformers, grade 4

<http://www.sojournertruth.org/Tests/LessonPlans/3rd-grade-01.htm>

developed for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade standards in Michigan; good detailed timeline of her life

### **Teacher References:**

Carleton Mabee + Susan Mabee, “Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend”. Newhouse (New York, New York University Press, 1995). A basic biography

Nell Irvin Painter, “Sojourner Truth, A Life, A Symbol”. New York, N.Y., W.W. Norton & Co. 1996

## Additional Reference Suggestions:

- 100 African Americans Who Shaped America
- McAdow's New England Timeline
- Any or all of the following timelines
  - black history timeline
  - slavery timeline
  - womens' rights timeline
  - Massachusetts history timelines

## Teacher Resources:

<http://www.answers.com/topic/sojourner-truth>

whole section of Sojourner Truth including external links and resources

<http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/5S00001604.shtml?prnfriently>

famous people: Sojourner Truth

<http://www.esperstamps.org/t1.htm>

a short page on the naming of the Mars Rover "Sojourner Truth:

<http://www.sojournertruth.org/>

Battle Creek Michigan site information of Sojourner's life in that area

[www.sojournertruthmemorial.org](http://www.sojournertruthmemorial.org)

website of local Sojourner Truth committee; history of Sojourner Truth's time in Florence

[www.daavidrugglescenter.org](http://www.daavidrugglescenter.org)

David Ruggles, a free black man who lived in Florence at the same time as Sojourner and a very important conductor on the underground railroad

[http://www.newpaltz.edu/sojourner\\_truth/](http://www.newpaltz.edu/sojourner_truth/)

New Paltz, New York information from Sojourner's life in that area

[http://massmoments.org/print\\_moment.cfm?mid=287](http://massmoments.org/print_moment.cfm?mid=287)

Oct. 2, 2002: Northampton Dedicates Sojourner Truth Statue

<http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0768462.html>

Women on Pedestals—Sojourner at Florence site in front page

<http://memorialhall.mass.edu/turns/view.jsp?itemid=13158&subthemeid=14>

Memorial Hall Museum (Deerfield, MA) "American Centuries" online exhibit of Sojourner Truth portrait

Children's books about Sojourner Truth in Forbes & Lilly libraries

Lilly Library

Adler, David, A Picture Book of Sojourner Truth, 1994

Brezina, Corona, Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?"

Speech: a primary source investigation. 2005

Butler, Mary, Sojourner Truth: from slave to activist for

Freedom. 2003

Clafin, Edward B. Sojourner Truth & Struggle for

Freedom. 1987

Ferris, Jeri, Walking the Road to Freedom: a story about

Sojourner Truth. 1988

Kudlinski, Kathleen, Sojourner Truth: Voice for Freedom.

2003

McKissack, Pat, Sojourner Truth: a voice for freedom.

1992

Rockwell, Anne, Only Passing Through. 2000

Forbes Library

Bernard, Jacqueline, Journey Toward Freedom: the story

Sojourner Truth. 1967

Ferris, Jeri (see Lilly library list)

Krass, Peter, Sojourner Truth. 1988

Ortiz, Victoria, Sojourner Truth, a self-made woman

Rockwell, Anne (see Lilly library list)

Swain, Gwentyth, Sojourner Truth. 2005

Waxman, Laura Hamilton, Sojourner Truth. 2008



On behalf of Splash! Publications, we would like to welcome you to *Famous Abolitionists*, one of six lessons in our *Slavery in America Unit*. This lesson was designed by teachers with you and your students in mind.

## THE FORMAT

Our goal is a lesson that you can use immediately. No comprehension questions to write, activities to create, or vocabulary words to define. Simply make copies of the lesson for your students and start teaching.

## THE VOCABULARY

Our lessons feature words in bold type. We have included a Glossary to help students pronounce and define the words. Unlike a dictionary, the definitions in the Glossary are concise and written in context. Remember, we're teachers! Students will be exposed to these vocabulary words in the comprehension activities. They will also be tested on the vocabulary words at the end of the lesson.

Students will be responsible for filling out and studying their vocabulary cards. You may want to have students bring in a small box for storing their vocabulary cards. We don't have to tell you that incorporating these words into your Reading and Spelling programs will save time and make the words more meaningful for students.

## THE LESSON PLAN

Before reading *Famous Abolitionists*, students will:

- complete Vocabulary Cards for ***abolitionists, antislavery, autobiography, branded, Civil War, conductors, convention, convinced, defend, delegates, economy, fugitive, harsh, hostilities, immigrants, liberty, prevent, profits, Quakers, Revolutionary War, societies, Underground Railroad, Union Army, unite.***

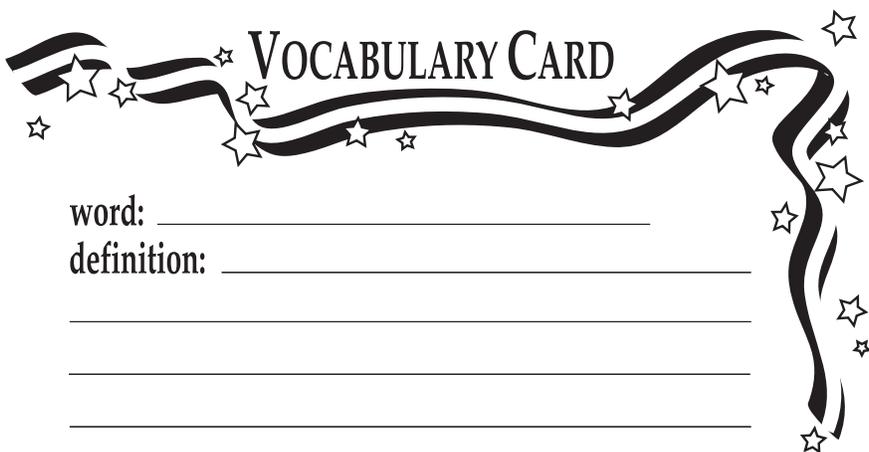
After reading *Famous Abolitionists*, students will:

- answer *Famous Abolitionists* Reading Comprehension Questions.
- complete *Famous Abolitionists* Discussion Questions.
- read about Sojourner Truth and answer discussion questions.
- use various sources to research a famous abolitionist and create the game Find the Fib.  
**NOTE: You will need to make four copies of the Find the Fib cards on pages 13, 14, 15, or 16 for each student.**
- take a Vocabulary Quiz for Famous Abolitionists.

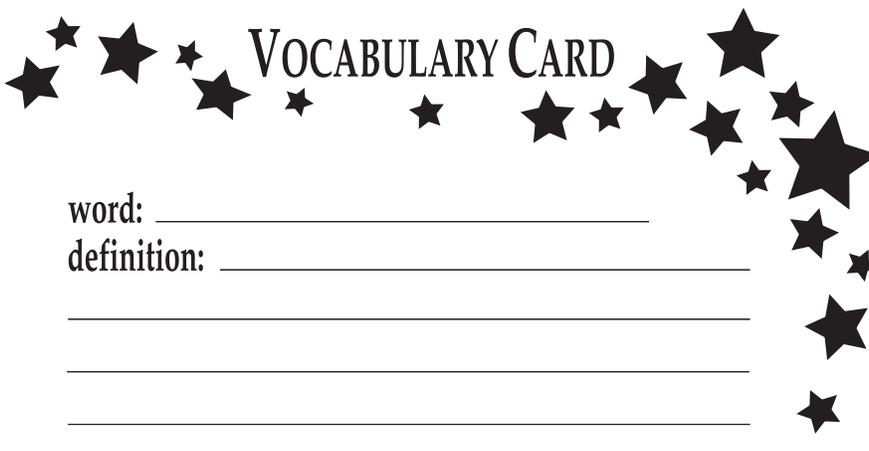
**NOTE:** The answers to all activities and quizzes are at the end of the lesson.

## OUR OTHER SLAVERY IN AMERICA LESSONS

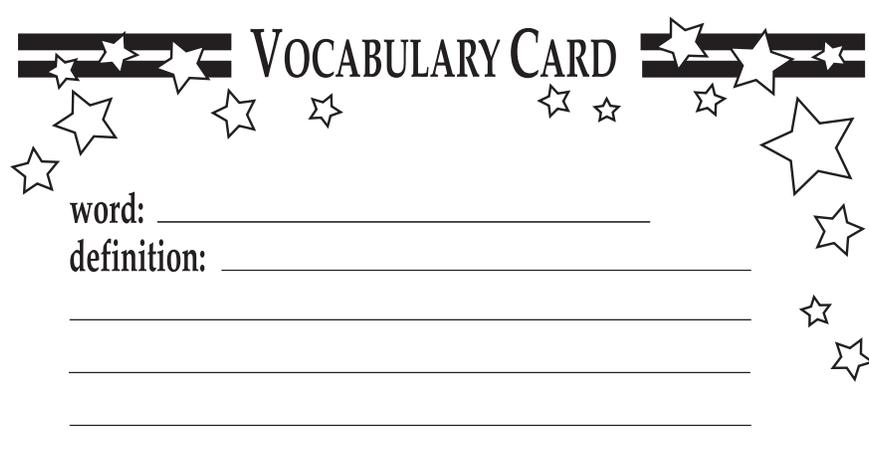
*Slavery's Beginnings, A Slave's Life, Slavery in the United States, Slave Rebellions, The Underground Railroad.*

**VOCABULARY CARD**

word: \_\_\_\_\_  
definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**VOCABULARY CARD**

word: \_\_\_\_\_  
definition: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**VOCABULARY CARD**

word: \_\_\_\_\_  
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# FAMOUS ABOLITIONISTS

History proves there was no shortage of brave men and women willing to risk their lives to bring attention to the cruelty of slavery or to help slaves escape to freedom. You may have already read about Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner.

Some of the most famous **abolitionists** were white Northerners who believed it was wrong to own another human being. Others, like Prosser, Vesey, and Turner, were black men and women who had been born into a life of slavery themselves.

## HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

In 1811, Harriet Beecher was born in Connecticut. Her father, Lyman Beecher, was a preacher and a leader in the **antislavery** movement. Through her father's teachings in church and at home, Harriet learned to hate slavery.

In 1836, Harriet married Calvin Stowe. He was a professor who was also against slavery. They often gave shelter to runaway slaves who escaped North to freedom along the **Underground Railroad**.

Though Calvin and Harriet were white, they knew the pain that a black woman felt when she lost her child. Four of their own seven children died of illness or disease.

## UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

Harriet began writing at the age of 13. At the age of 41, she wrote her most famous book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This book followed the lives of slaves as they were sold into slavery, beaten to death, or separated from their families at slave auctions.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the most powerful attack on slavery written in the 1850s. It sold 3,000 copies on the first day it was published. More copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were sold than any other book except the Bible.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* was read by so many people that it scared slave owners. They feared that people would feel sorry for the slaves and refuse to return runaway slaves to their masters. That is exactly what happened.

After Harriet Beecher Stowe's book was published, more people helped slaves escape North to freedom. When President Abraham Lincoln met Harriet Beecher Stowe he said, "So you're the little lady who started the **Civil War!**"



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

## HARRIET TUBMAN

Harriet Tubman was one of the most famous **conductors** on the Underground Railroad. Harriet Ross had been born in Maryland in 1820. Since her parents were slaves, Harriet was also a slave.

Even as a very young child, Harriet spoke out against slavery. At the age of 13, Harriet tried to save another slave from punishment. For her efforts, Harriet's master beat her over the head with a piece of metal. She suffered from headaches and blackouts for the rest of her life.

In 1844, Harriet married freed slave John Tubman. Five years later, Harriet herself escaped from a life of slavery on the Underground Railroad.

Harriet and John settled in Philadelphia. During the 1850s, Harriet made 19 trips back to Maryland and helped more than 300 slaves escape to freedom.

In 1857, Harriet Tubman even led her parents to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Harriet Tubman never lost a slave on any of her rescue trips. She carried a gun and promised to kill any of the slaves who tried to turn back.

Slave owners offered a \$40,000 reward for Harriet's capture, but she was never caught. When asked about her reason for escaping, Harriet said, "There was one of two things I had a right to, **liberty** or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other."



HARRIET TUBMAN

### FAST FACTS

- ★ Slaves didn't have last names. Harriet's mother's first name was Harriet and her father's first name was Ross. This is how Harriet received the name Harriet Ross.
- ★ During the Civil War, Harriet served as a nurse and even a spy for the **Union Army**. After the war, she helped raise money for black schools. She established the Harriet Tubman Home for needy blacks.

## FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Frederick Douglass was another famous abolitionist who helped black slaves find freedom. He was born in Maryland in 1818, two years before Harriet Tubman. Like Harriet, Frederick was born into a life of slavery. He was separated from his mother right after he was born. At the age of six, Frederick was also taken from his grandmother.

When Frederick was about 12 years old, the wife of his owner broke the rules and taught him to read and write. Frederick later taught other slaves how to read the Bible during Sunday church classes.

At the age of 16, Frederick Douglass was sent to work for Edward Covey, a poor farmer who was known as a “slave breaker.” Slave breakers like Covey were especially cruel to slaves. Douglass was whipped regularly. During one **harsh** beating, Frederick fought back. Edward Covey never whipped Frederick Douglass again.

## DOUGLASS’S ESCAPE TO FREEDOM

In 1838, Frederick Douglass escaped to freedom by pretending to be a sailor. He made it all the way to New York. He finally settled in Massachusetts, where he joined a black church and began attending abolitionist meetings. Frederick was encouraged to tell his story to others.

In 1845, Frederick Douglass’s **autobiography**, *Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, was published. He wrote other books and published newspapers where he wrote that education was the key for African Americans to make their lives better.

By the time the Civil War broke out, Frederick Douglass was one of the most famous black men in the country. Before his death in 1895, Douglass had not only become an abolitionist, he had also helped black men earn the freedom to vote. Throughout his life, Frederick Douglass fought for equal treatment of all people including blacks, women, Native Americans, and **immigrants**. He was known for saying, “I would **unite** with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong.”



FREDERICK DOUGLASS

## FUGITIVE SLAVE LAWS

Slave owners passed strict laws to keep slaves like Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass from running away on the Underground Railroad. In 1850, the **Fugitive Slave Law** stated that runaway slaves in the North could still be captured and returned to their masters. Also, anyone who helped a slave escape could be fined \$1,000 or sent to prison for six months.

Many people who worked on the Underground Railroad paid a high price for helping slaves escape. Calvin Fairbanks spent 16 years in a Kentucky prison for helping slaves escape to Canada.

Charles Turner Torrey was thrown in a Maryland prison for helping more than 400 slaves escape to freedom.

Jonathan Walker, a sea captain, was caught taking slaves from Florida to safety in the Bahamas. The slaves were returned to their masters and Walker had “SS” **branded** on his hand. “SS” stood for “Slave Stealer.” Walker also spent eight months in jail.

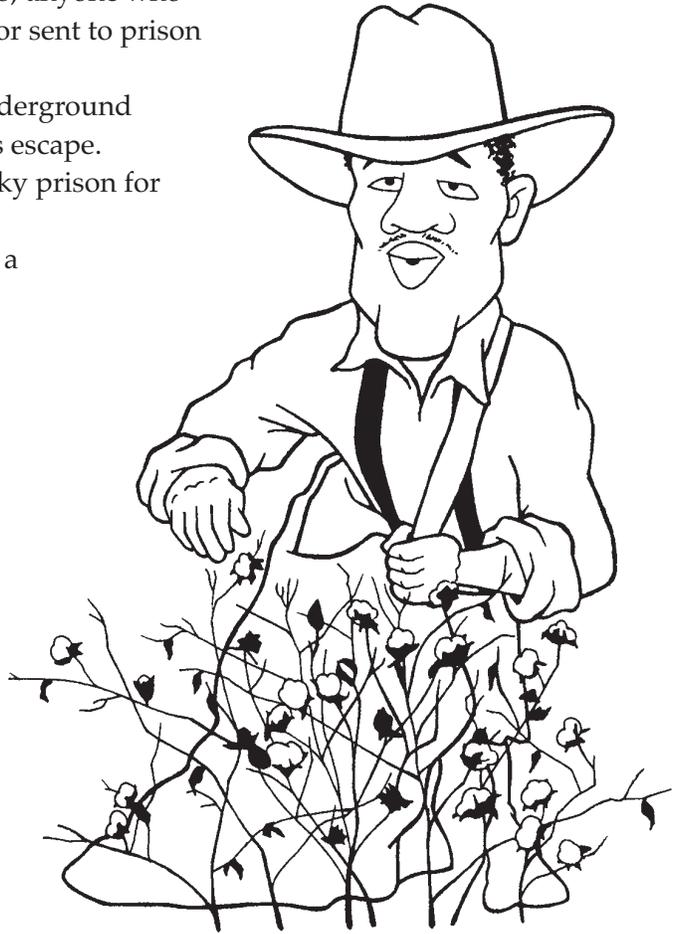
## ANTISLAVERY SOCIETIES

For many Americans, just helping runaway slaves was not enough. Many Northerners wanted to **prevent** the spread of slavery into new states and end slavery completely.

By the 1840s, there were more than 2,000 antislavery **societies** in the North. Most of the 250,000 members were **Quakers**.

Quakers had been trying to put an end to slavery since the **Revolutionary War**. Quakers believed that all men were created equal. They gave speeches and wrote newspaper articles calling for an end to slavery.

Southern states were not willing to give up their cheap slave labor. Southerners were willing to do whatever was needed to protect their **economy** and their **profits**. By the end of the 1850s, **hostilities** between the North and South made it clear that the issue of slavery might tear the United States apart.



SLAVE PICKING COTTON

# ★ ★ ★ FAMOUS ABOLITIONISTS ★ ★ ★

**Directions:** Read each question carefully. Darken the circle for the correct answer.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1</b> After reading about Harriet Beecher Stowe, you learn that –</p> <p>A she was born a slave</p> <p>B she was in favor of slavery</p> <p>C she was white</p> <p>D she never had any children of her own</p> <p><b>2</b> Why were slave owners so afraid of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s book, <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>?</p> <p>F They were afraid it would make people feel sorry for slaves.</p> <p>G They were concerned that nobody would read the book that Harriet Beecher Stowe had worked so long to write.</p> <p>H They were afraid that more people would want to own slaves and there wouldn’t be enough slaves for everyone.</p> <p>J They were afraid that their slaves might read the book.</p> <p><b>3</b> Harriet Tubman was born in 1820 and led her parents to freedom in 1857. How old was Harriet when she led her parents to freedom?</p> <p>A 37</p> <p>B 27</p> <p>C 63</p> <p>D 33</p> <p><b>4</b> Which of these statements about Harriet Tubman is <u>true</u>?</p> <p>F Her husband was never a slave.</p> <p>G She only lost four slaves on her rescue trips.</p> <p>H She was born in Maryland.</p> <p>J She was caught and sent to prison.</p> | <p><b>5</b> Which of the following is an example of a <u>secondary source</u>?</p> <p>A The gun that Harriet Tubman carried.</p> <p>B Harriet and John’s certificate of marriage.</p> <p>C Harriet Tubman’s diary written while helping slaves escape on the Underground Railroad.</p> <p>D Harriet Tubman’s biography.</p> <p><b>6</b> What did Frederick Douglass do to keep from being beaten by his master?</p> <p>F He begged his master not to hurt him again.</p> <p>G He fought back.</p> <p>H He ran away whenever his master came near him.</p> <p>J He killed his master.</p> <p><b>7</b> The purpose of Fugitive Slave Laws was to –</p> <p>A punish white plantation owners for buying and selling slaves</p> <p>B help runaway slaves arrive safely in the North</p> <p>C prevent slaves from escaping on the Underground Railroad and punish those who helped them</p> <p>D help abolitionists get out of prison</p> |
|--|---|

READING

## Answers

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 (A) (B) (C) (D) | 5 (A) (B) (C) (D) |
| 2 (F) (G) (H) (J) | 6 (F) (G) (H) (J) |
| 3 (A) (B) (C) (D) | 7 (A) (B) (C) (D) |
| 4 (F) (G) (H) (J) |                   |



## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

### FAMOUS ABOLITIONISTS

Abolitionists were brave Americans who stood up against slavery. Read the questions below about famous abolitionists. Write your answers on the lines provided. Attach a separate piece of paper if you need more room. Be ready to discuss some of your answers.

- **Many people were willing to risk their lives to end slavery.**

If you could have been born as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Tubman, or Frederick Douglass, which would you choose? Explain why.

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- **Fugitive Slave Laws were passed to punish slaves and the people who helped them escape.**

If you knew that you were going to be thrown in jail, would you have helped someone escape from a life of slavery? Explain why or why not.

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Instead of running away, what are some things you can do to help someone who is in trouble or being treated unfairly? Do you think these things would have worked during the time of slavery?

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## FAMOUS PEOPLE

### ★ SOJOURNER TRUTH ★

In 1797, a baby girl was born to slave parents in New York. They named her Isabella. Because Isabella's parents were slaves, she was also a slave. Isabella spent the first few years of her life sleeping on the wet, muddy floor of her master's basement. She watched helplessly as her brothers and sisters were sold one by one to other slave owners. Isabella herself was sold three times by the age of 13. One of her masters tied her hands in front of her and beat her bare back with hot iron rods.

### RUNNING AWAY

In 1826, at the age of 29, Isabella finally ran away from her life of slavery. She left behind her husband and three children. She took her youngest daughter, Sophie, and found freedom with a family in New York that did not believe in slavery. Isabella soon learned that her son Peter had been sold to a slave owner in another state. In New York, it was against the law to sell slaves outside of the state.

### FIGHTING BACK

A group of Quakers offered to help Isabella get her son back. They encouraged her to go to the courthouse and file a legal complaint against the man who sold her son. The Quakers helped Isabella raise enough money to pay a lawyer to **defend** her rights. With their help, Isabella got her son back. She also became the first black woman in the United States to ever win a court case.

### SOJOURNER TRUTH

With her son and daughter safely by her side, Isabella began attending church. During a time of prayer, Isabella received directions from God to go East. She changed her name to Sojourner, which means "one who travels," and started walking toward Massachusetts.

In Massachusetts, Sojourner met black and white abolitionists and other runaway slaves. She also spoke with leaders of the women's rights movement. Like black women, white women were not allowed to vote, own property, or even hold the same jobs as white men. The courage of these men and women **convinced** Sojourner that she could also make a difference. Olive Gilbert, a leader for women's rights, encouraged Sojourner to write about her life. Sojourner was unable to read or write, so she told her story to Olive Gilbert.



SOJOURNER TRUTH

## SOJOURNER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In 1850, Sojourner's life story, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* was published. Unfortunately, no book stores would sell her book. Store owners were afraid that the book would anger too many people who were in favor of slavery. For the next ten years, Sojourner Truth traveled hundreds of miles selling her books and talking to people about women's rights and the cruelty of slavery.

## THE CIVIL WAR

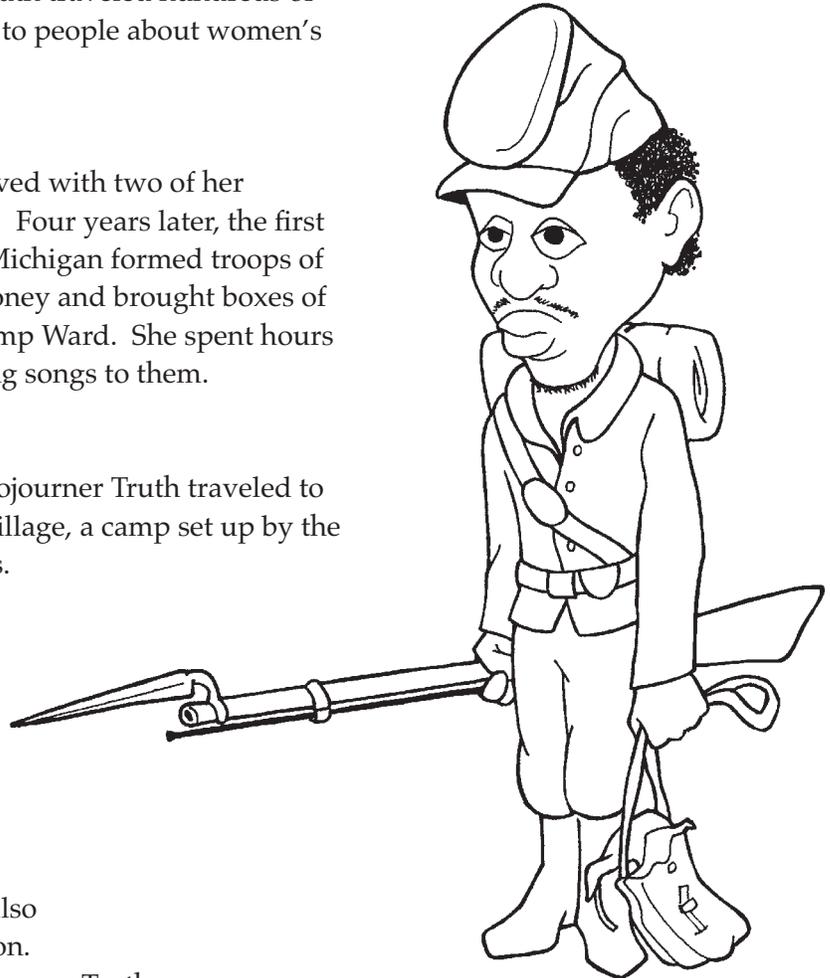
In 1857, Sojourner Truth moved with two of her daughters to Battlecreek, Michigan. Four years later, the first shots of the Civil War were fired. Michigan formed troops of black soldiers. Sojourner raised money and brought boxes of supplies to the black soldiers at Camp Ward. She spent hours talking with the soldiers and singing songs to them.

## FREEDMAN'S VILLAGE

After the Civil War ended, Sojourner Truth traveled to Virginia. She visited Freedman's Village, a camp set up by the United States Army for freed slaves.

Black women had only been trained for work in the fields. Some of them didn't know how to sew, clean house, do laundry, or even care for their children. Sojourner and her grandson spent a year in the village teaching the black women basic skills. She also encouraged them to get an education.

For the next three years, Sojourner Truth concentrated her efforts on finding jobs and homes for freed slaves. She tried unsuccessfully to convince the United States government to give land in the West to freed slaves. Sojourner traveled through Michigan and spoke out about violence against blacks. At the age of 81, she was one of the **delegates** to the Women's Rights **Convention** in Michigan. On November 26, 1883, Sojourner Truth died. More than 1,000 people attended her funeral. White men carried her coffin.



BLACK CIVIL WAR SOLDIER

# FAMOUS PEOPLE



**Directions:** Use the selection about Sojourner Truth to answer these questions. Circle the answers to questions 1 and 2. Write your answers on the lines provided for questions 3-6.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1</b> After reading about the Quakers in this selection, you get the idea that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A they were against slavery</li><li>B they didn't care about anyone but themselves</li><li>C they were rich</li><li>D they thought people had the right to own slaves</li></ul> | <p><b>2</b> What does the name Sojourner mean?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A follower of God</li><li>B one who travels</li><li>C child of truth</li><li>D leader of women</li></ul> |
|--|---|

**3** Describe how the first paragraph of the selection makes you feel.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4** Give three examples of positive contributions that Sojourner Truth made in her life.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

**5** Why do you think Sojourner Truth spent all of that time and energy helping other people?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**6** If Sojourner Truth was alive today, do you think she would be proud of the way black and white Americans treat each other? Give reasons for your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# FIND THE FIB

## GAME

Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth were four of history's most famous abolitionists.

In this activity, you will collect facts about one of these famous abolitionists to make a game called "Find the Fib."

**Directions:**

1. Choose either Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, or Sojourner Truth to make the game "Find the Fib."
2. Use your scissors to cut apart the "Find the Fib" cards given to you by your teacher. You will need 20 cards.
3. Neatly color the pictures of your famous abolitionist on each card.
4. Use the general information about the famous abolitionist you've chosen, encyclopedias, books in the library, the Internet, and other sources to find 15 true facts about the abolitionist you have chosen.
5. Write each fact on a separate card. Try to fit the whole fact on one side of the card.
6. Make up 5 false facts, or "fibs" about your chosen abolitionist. Make the fib as believable as possible so that it can't be easily seen as a fib.
7. Write each fib on a separate card, just like you did with the true facts. Again, try to fit the whole fib on one side of the card.
8. Mix and shuffle all of the cards together, so the true facts and fibs are mixed together.
9. Number the cards 1-20.
10. Make an answer key for yourself so you will know which cards are the true facts and which cards are the fibs.
11. Give your cards to 2 or 3 other people in the class to see if they can find the true facts and the fibs.

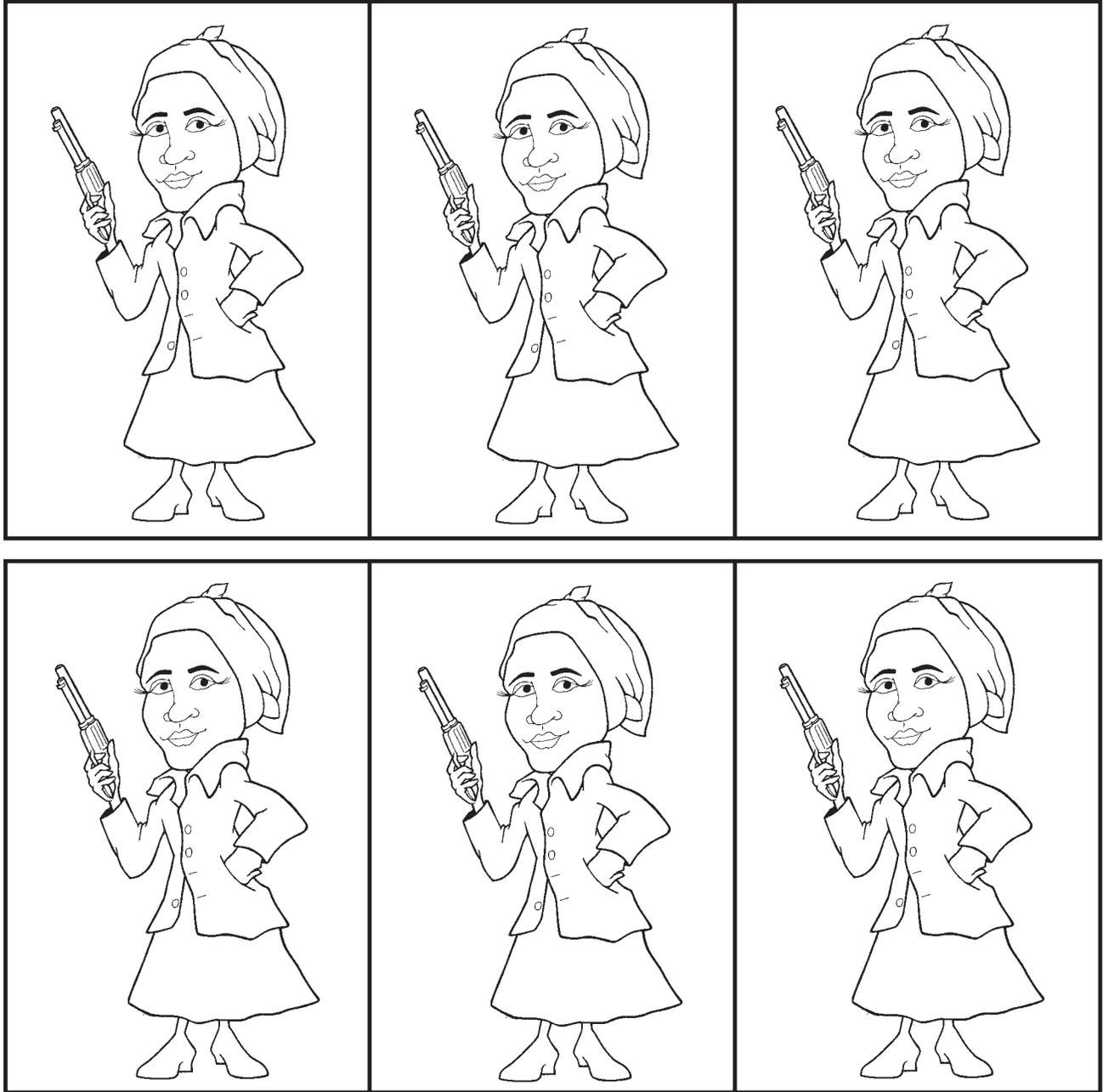
**SAMPLE CARD**

FRONT	BACK
<div style="text-align: right; margin-bottom: 10px;">1</div> <p style="text-align: center;">In 1818, Frederick Douglass was born into a life of slavery.</p>	

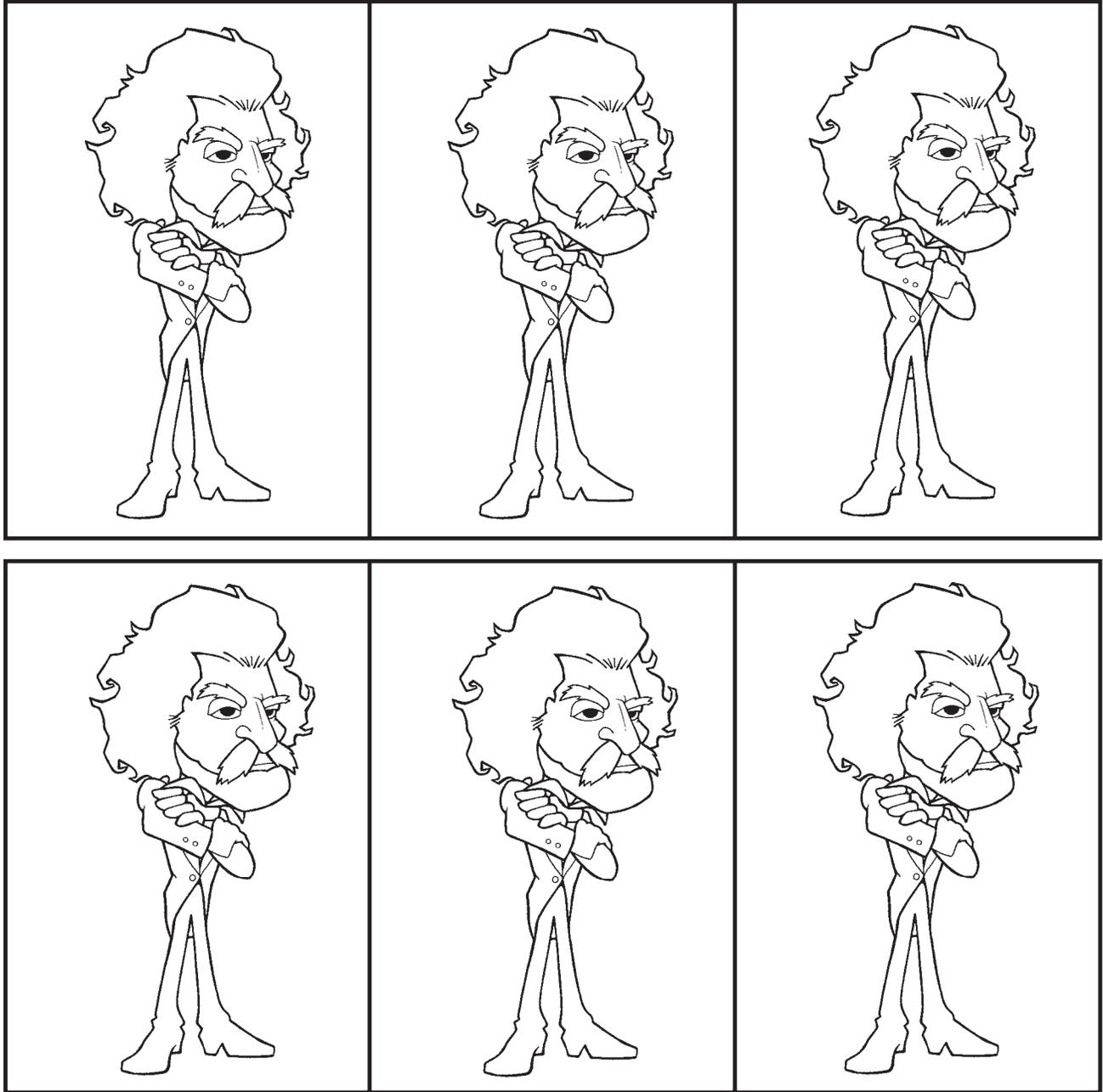
# HARRIET BEECHER STOWE FIND THE FIB CARDS



# HARRIET TUBMAN FIND THE FIB CARDS



# FREDERICK DOUGLASS FIND THE FIB CARDS



# SOJOURNER TRUTH FIND THE FIB CARDS



☆ ★ ☆ ★ ★ **VOCABULARY QUIZ** ☆ ★ ☆ ★ ★  
**FAMOUS ABOLITIONISTS**

**Directions:** Match the vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right. Put the letter for the definition on the blank next to the vocabulary word it matches. Use each word and definition only once.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Revolutionary War
2. \_\_\_\_\_ liberty
3. \_\_\_\_\_ unite
4. \_\_\_\_\_ economy
5. \_\_\_\_\_ societies
6. \_\_\_\_\_ abolitionists
7. \_\_\_\_\_ autobiography
8. \_\_\_\_\_ delegates
9. \_\_\_\_\_ antislavery
10. \_\_\_\_\_ immigrants
11. \_\_\_\_\_ fugitive
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Quakers
13. \_\_\_\_\_ convinced



- A. freedom to do as one pleases.
- B. members of a religious group that believed all men were created equal, refused to serve in the army or navy, and would not pay taxes used to support war.
- C. people in charge of a train, bus, or streetcar.
- D. the northern troops who fought against slavery during the Civil War.
- E. a system of homes throughout the North that hid slaves on their way to freedom.
- F. the story of your life written by you.
- G. amounts of money made after all expenses have been paid.
- H. people sent with power to represent others.
- I. against slavery.
- J. the way a city, state, or country makes money.
- K. a meeting where important topics are discussed.

- |                                |   |  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| 14. _____ hostilities          |    | L. talked someone into doing something your way.   |
| 15. _____ defend               |    | M. people who come to a new country to live permanently.                                       |
| 16. _____ prevent              |    | N. the war fought from 1861 to 1865 between the North and the South over the issue of slavery. |
| 17. _____ harsh                |    | O. battle for independence between the English colonists in America and Great Britain.         |
| 18. _____ conductors           |    | P. to keep from happening.   |
| 19. _____ convention           |    | Q. a law breaker who is trying to escape or run away.  |
| 20. _____ Civil War            |    | R. groups of people who come together for a common cause.                                      |
| 21. _____ Union Army           |    | S. built up anger.   |
| 22. _____ branded              |   | T. people who fought to end slavery.   |
| 23. _____ Underground Railroad |  | U. join together.  |
| 24. _____ profits              |  | V. very uncomfortable.   |
|                                |  | W. protect.  |
|                                |  | X. burned a mark into the skin of a person or animal.  |



# GLOSSARY

**a•bo•li•tion•ists** people who fought to end slavery.

**an•ti•slav•er•y** against slavery.

**au•to•bi•og•ra•phy** the story of your life written by you.

**brand•ed** burned a mark into the skin of a person or animal.

**Civ•il War** the war fought from 1861 to 1865 between the North and South over the issue of slavery.

**con•duc•tors** people in charge of a train, bus, or streetcar.

**con•ven•tion** a meeting where important topics are discussed.

**con•vinced** talked someone into doing something your way.

**de•fend** protect.

**del•e•gates** people sent with power to represent others.

**e•con•o•my** the way a city, state, or country makes money.

**fu•gi•tive** a law breaker who is trying to escape or run away.

**harsh** very uncomfortable.

**hos•til•i•ties** built up anger.

**im•mi•grants** people who come to a new country to live permanently.

**li•ber•ty** freedom to do as one pleases.

**pre•vent** to keep from happening.

**pro•fits** amounts of money made after all expenses have been paid.

**Qua•kers** members of a religious group that believed all men were created equal, refused to serve in the army or navy, and would not pay taxes used to support war.

**Rev•o•lu•tion•ar•y War** battle for independence between the English colonists in America and Great Britain.

**so•ci•e•ties** groups of people who come together for a common cause.

**Un•der•ground Rail•road** a system of homes throughout the North that hid slaves on their way to freedom.

**Un•ion Ar•my** the Northern troops who fought against slavery during the Civil War.

**u•nite** join together.

# ANSWERS

## ANSWERS TO COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. C
2. F
3. A
4. H
5. D
6. G
7. C

## FAMOUS PEOPLE: SOJOURNER TRUTH

1. A
2. B
3. Answers will vary.
4. First black woman in the United States to win a court case, wrote a book about her life, supplied black soldiers with food and comfort, taught freed slaves how to care for their homes and children, traveled through Michigan speaking out against violence towards blacks.
5. Answers will vary.
6. Answers will vary.

## ANSWERS TO VOCABULARY QUIZ

- |       |       |
|-------|-------|
| 1. O  | 13. L |
| 2. A  | 14. S |
| 3. U  | 15. W |
| 4. J  | 16. P |
| 5. R  | 17. V |
| 6. T  | 18. C |
| 7. F  | 19. K |
| 8. H  | 20. N |
| 9. I  | 21. D |
| 10. M | 22. X |
| 11. Q | 23. E |
| 12. B | 24. G |

### FIND THE FIB GRADING CHART

CRITERIA	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS EARNED
Fifteen True Facts	<b>60</b> (4 pts. each)	
Five False Facts	<b>20</b> (4 pts. each)	
Spelling/Grammar	<b>10</b>	
Neatness	<b>5</b>	
Answer Sheet	<b>5</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	