

Sojourner Truth's Famous Speech

by ReadWorks



a photo of Sojourner Truth

In the Broadway musical *The Civil War*, actress Cheryl Freeman gave a powerful monologue. The speech shocked the audience. It left them in tears. This monologue was taken from the words of Sojourner Truth. Sojourner Truth was an African American female abolitionist. She became one of the most famous abolitionists of her time.

Sojourner Truth traveled across the country and gave important speeches. She worked towards the freeing of enslaved African people in the United States.

Sojourner Truth was born into slavery in upstate New York. However, she escaped to freedom in 1826. She had to leave some of her own children behind.

After her freedom, Sojourner Truth worked hard to fight against slavery. She inspired

thousands, including President Abraham Lincoln. She even met with him at the White House.

By 1850, Sojourner Truth also worked hard to fight for women's rights. At the 1851 Women's Rights Convention, she gave a speech in support of abolition and women's rights. Today, no one knows exactly what she said. Sojourner Truth didn't write down her speech, and there was no way to record video or sound. It had not been invented yet! Later, two people published versions of Sojourner Truth's speech.

One version of the speech was published 12 years later. This version was written by Frances Gage, an abolitionist and the president of the 1851 Women's Rights Convention. When people think of Sojourner Truth's speech, they often think of Gage's version. Gage's version was even the one used for the monologue in *The Civil War* musical. But many experts agree that Gage's version has some big problems. One problem is that Gage wrote her version many, many years later. In addition, some of the details of Sojourner Truth's life were wrong. Gage also used words and phrases that Sojourner Truth wouldn't have used!

Another version of Sojourner Truth's speech was written by one of her friends, Marius Robinson. He was at the convention and heard the speech. Soon after, he wrote down what he remembered. His version was published just one month after Sojourner Truth gave her speech. Here's a part of Robinson's version of Sojourner Truth's speech:

I am a woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?

I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the text, what did Sojourner Truth work towards?
 - A. getting to meet Abraham Lincoln
 - B. writing a Broadway play about her life
 - C. freeing enslaved African people in the United States
 - D. rescuing her children from slavery

2. What does the author describe in the beginning of the text?
 - A. how Sojourner Truth escaped from slavery
 - B. Sojourner Truth's travels across the United States
 - C. how Sojourner Truth inspired Abraham Lincoln
 - D. a monologue that shocked Broadway audiences

3. Sojourner Truth's speeches were moving and inspirational. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?
 - A. During a play, Cheryl Freeman gave a monologue based on Sojourner Truth's words.
 - B. A speech based on Sojourner Truth's words moved an audience to tears.
 - C. Sojourner Truth traveled across the country and gave speeches.
 - D. Sojourner Truth left her children behind when she escaped from slavery.

4. Based on the text, why did President Lincoln probably meet with Sojourner Truth?
 - A. because they were both born into slavery
 - B. because he wanted to learn how she escaped slavery
 - C. because she had important things to say about slavery
 - D. because he needed her help with making speeches

5. What is this text mostly about?
 - A. Broadway shows based on famous people
 - B. how Sojourner Truth and Abraham Lincoln became friends
 - C. why Sojourner Truth was good at public speaking
 - D. Sojourner Truth's speeches, especially a speech in 1851