

Susan B. Anthony

Pre-reading

Questions: Who is Susan B. Anthony? Where have you heard of her?

Definitions: Justice – honest and fair treatment according to the law



Library of Congress Photograph

Reading*

Susan B. Anthony spent nearly sixty years of her life devoted to the cause of social justice and equality for all. Her major contributions were focused on women's rights. Her primary achievement lay in her inspiration and influence of thousands of people promoting the right of women to vote.

Susan Brownell Anthony was born on February 15, 1820 in Adams, Massachusetts. She was born to a strong Quaker family. The Quakers preached simple living, peace and love. They were against slavery and for temperance. They encouraged education and hard work for all of their members, both male and female. They believed that women had the right to be heard, even in public.

Because Susan's father believed so strongly in Quaker ways, Susan had opportunities that were not had by many other young women. Her father treated all of his children equally. Both his sons and daughters attended school. His daughters prepared themselves to work and earn a living as teachers, even though they would possibly marry in the future. With this encouragement, Susan began teaching school at the age of 15.

Susan's father also encouraged his children to formulate and express their opinions, and to speak out for social causes. Two social causes that Susan felt strongly about were the temperance movement and slavery.

From 1848 to 1853 she became part of the temperance movement. At the age of 29, she gave her first public speech at a temperance meeting. It was at one such convention that she realized her desire to fight for women's rights. She was told that she could not participate in the convention because she was a woman. This began her dedication to the cause of women's **suffrage**.

In 1851 Susan met Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Together, the two were a driving force behind the advancement of women's rights. They sought to change many gender-related inequalities. During this time, women could not vote and once married, were considered their husband's property. Women also received far less wages than men for equal work. When Susan was teaching school, she earned \$2.50 per week, while a male teacher earned \$10.00 per week.

From 1854 to 1860 the two pioneers concentrated on reforming laws in their home state of New York. Susan organized groups of women throughout the state to **advocate** for legal reform. It was soon realized that the only way women would ever be effective in reform or change would be if they had the right to vote. This goal became the center of Susan's life work.

Susan and Elizabeth focused their efforts on raising citizens' awareness of the need for women to vote. After the Civil War, nationwide suffrage became their goal. In 1869, Susan and Elizabeth organized the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). This organization worked on a constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote.

In 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment (which Susan supported) passed. It allowed the newly freed slaves the right to vote, but it did not allow any women of any race voting privileges. In 1872 Susan B. Anthony went to the polls and voted. She was arrested and convicted. She was charged with voting illegally, but refused to pay the \$100 fine.

Susan B. Anthony died on March 13, 1906. The Nineteenth Amendment, which is often referred to as the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment," was **adopted** fourteen years later. This gave women the right to vote. On July 2, 1979, the U.S. Mint honored Susan's work by issuing the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin.

*Revised selection – original text authored by Hillary Stewart. Reprinted with permission by Deborah Byrnes, Ph.D., Utah State University.

Understanding

1. What does the word **suffrage** mean? _____

2. What is the Fifteenth Amendment? _____

3. Describe life for women in 1800's. _____

4. What does the word **adopt** mean in this reading? _____

5. Who partnered with Susan in her fight for women's rights? _____

6. List three of Susan's main causes. _____

7. What does the word **advocate** mean in this reading? _____

8. What gave women the right to vote? When did it happen? _____

9. Do you know any other woman on a U.S. coin? If so, who? _____

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Compare and contrast life for women of the 1800's to that of life for women today. Do you think more reform still needs to take place? Why or why not?
