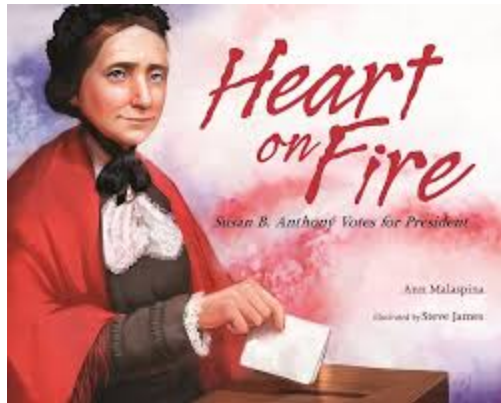


Heart on Fire: Susan B. Anthony Votes for President

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Essential Questions for Consideration:

- *Is democracy possible without equality?*
- *How does Susan B. Anthony relate to contemporary debates over voting rights, elections, and democracy?*
- *When faced with an unjust law, what is the responsibility of citizens in a democratic society?*

Overview:

In this lesson, participants analyze a daring challenge to the legal and social order of the time: Susan B. Anthony's casting of an illegal ballot in the 1872 presidential election. Anthony was ultimately put on trial, convicted, and fined \$100 for her "crime." In this lesson, participants close read an excerpt from Anthony's speech [Is It a Crime for Women to Vote?](#) in which Anthony defended her actions. The speech, written prior to Anthony's trial in 1873, contains many themes that resonate with contemporary debates about membership in American society.

Materials:

1. **Reading:** [Is It a Crime for Women to Vote?](#) (See below lesson plan)
2. **Paper and pen**

Activities:

1. Take an Initial Stand on Civil Disobedience

1. Begin the lesson by asking participants to take a few minutes to reflect in their journals on the following prompt:
Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? – “It is always wrong to break the law.”
2. Ask volunteers to explain their thinking. Tell participants that they will be returning to this question at the end of the lesson.

2. First Read

1. While participants do not need any prior knowledge to complete this lesson, it is still helpful to give them some historical context for the text they are about to read. Tell them that they will be reading a speech from Susan B. Anthony, a nineteenth-century women’s rights advocate, that will help them develop their thinking on the meaning of civil disobedience. Explain that Anthony gave this speech after she was arrested for voting in the 1872 presidential election, at a time when women were not allowed to vote.
2. Either you or a fluent student-reader can read aloud the speech, [Is It a Crime for Women to Vote?](#) Ask participants to circle unfamiliar words as they listen. After the read-aloud, ask participants to share these words with the class. Decide which words to define immediately to limit confusion and which definitions you want students to uncover through careful reading.

3. Close-Read and Analysis

In small groups, have participants read the speech again, stopping between paragraphs to answer the questions below. You might write the questions on the board or copy them on a handout.

Advanced Activity
Modified from Facing History and Ourselves

First Paragraph

1. *While reading the first paragraph, what two things did you learn about Susan B. Anthony?*

Second and Third Paragraphs

2. *What importance does the first line of the preamble to the United States Constitution have for Anthony's argument?*

Fourth Paragraph

3. *What other types of inequality in American society does Anthony mention in this paragraph?*
4. *How does she view the importance of women's struggle for equality in comparison to the struggles of other groups? What might this tell us about the limitations of her belief in equality?*

Fifth Paragraph

5. *Explain how, following Anthony's logic, the "only question left to be settled" is "Are women persons?"*
6. *Explain how Anthony justifies breaking the law that prohibited her from voting. Do you agree with her argument?*

Return to the Question of Civil Disobedience

- 1.) Regroup as a class and ask volunteers to share their answers to the questions in Activity 3, encouraging students to justify their answers with direct support from the text.
- 2.) Then, expand on the theme of civil disobedience using the following questions to launch a whole class discussion:
 1. What did Anthony do when faced with an unjust law? What other choices might someone in her position have made? Which would have been most effective?

Advanced Activity
Modified from Facing History and Ourselves

2. How does Anthony's speech relate to contemporary political debates over voting rights, elections, and democracy? How was the debate she was engaged in different?
3. When faced with an unjust law, what is the role or responsibility of citizens in a democratic society?

3.) To close the lesson, ask participants to collect their ideas by completing an exit card, responding to the prompt below from the whole class discussion.

Students should use evidence from the discussion, their class notes, and/or the text to support their position:

When faced with an unjust law, what is the responsibility of citizens in a democratic society?

Is it a Crime for Women to Vote?

Susan B. Anthony voted in the 1872 presidential election. Because women did not have the right to vote, she was arrested, put on trial, convicted, and fined \$100. The following is an excerpt from a speech she delivered in 1873, prior to her trial.

Friends and Fellow-citizens: I stand before you to-night under indictment for the alleged crime of having voted at the last Presidential election, without having a lawful right to vote. It shall be my work this evening to prove to you that in thus voting, I not only committed no crime, but, instead, simply exercised my citizen's right, guaranteed to me and all United States citizens by the National Constitution, beyond the power of any State to deny . . .

The preamble of the federal constitution says: "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America."

It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed this Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people— women as well as men. And it is downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government—the ballot . . .

Advanced Activity
Modified from Facing History and Ourselves

To [women], this government has no just powers derived from the consent of the governed. To them this government is not a democracy. It is not a republic. It is an odious aristocracy; a hateful oligarchy of sex. The most hateful aristocracy ever established on the face of the globe. An oligarchy of wealth, where the rich govern the poor; an oligarchy of learning, where the educated govern the ignorant; or even an oligarchy of race, where the Saxon rules the African, might be endured; but this oligarchy of sex, which makes father, brothers, husband, sons, the oligarchs over the mother and sisters, the wife and daughters of every household; which ordains all men sovereigns, all women subjects, carries dissension, discord, and rebellion into every home of the nation . . .

The only question left to be settled, now, is: Are women persons? And I hardly believe any of our opponents will have the hardihood to say they are not. Being persons, then, women are citizens, and no state has a right to make any law, or to enforce any old law, that shall abridge their privileges or immunities. Hence, every discrimination against women in the constitutions and laws of the several states, is to-day null and void, precisely as is every one against negroes . .