

# AIN'T I A WOMAN?

by Sojourner Truth

**Delivered 1851 at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio**

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the Negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about?

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 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?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or Negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

Obliged to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say.

## SOAPStone - Close Reading Activity

*Read the "Ain't I a Woman?" speech carefully. Annotate by circling interesting or unfamiliar words.*

**Subject:** What is the subject of the text (general topic)? How do you know this?

**Occasion:** What is the occasion (the time and place of the piece)?

**Audience:** Who is the audience? Does the speaker identify an audience? What assumptions exist about the intended audience?

**Purpose:** What is the purpose for the passage (the reason for its composition)? What is the speaker's purpose (the reason behind the text)? What is its intended effect?

**Speaker:** Who is the speaker? What assumptions can be made about the speaker?

**Tone:** If the author were to read aloud the passage, describe the likely tone of voice. What emotional sense pervades this piece?

Ain't I a Woman?

Key

Many student answers will vary, but this is a general guideline I use.

- 1) Subject - Women's rights. It was a women's rights convention and Sojourner spoke of women's rights.
- 2) Occasion – Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. 1851.
- 3) Audience – America, particularly white males in America in 1851. Yes, she addresses several members of the audience. One can assume that some are for women's rights, but she addresses several men who are not.
- 4) Purpose – to argue for women's rights. Sojourner wants to convince people that women should have more rights. The effect is to gain more rights for women or make life better for them.
- 5) Speaker – Sojourner Truth. One can assume that she is tough, fearless, and uneducated. She has worked hard, had a difficult life, and supports women gaining more rights. She was also a slave at one point in her life. She's an African American female.
- 6) Tone – answers might include angry, proud, bitter, or stubborn. Emotions could include anger, bitterness, spitefulness, or even hopeful.

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