

Angelina and Sarah Grimke



Sisters of Social Reform

Did you know that in the early history of the United States many African Americans were kidnapped and brought to be sold as personal slaves of wealthy landowners in the United States? These people had very few rights and were often used and abused by their owners. Their struggle for freedom was aided by two very unlikely women in the early 1830s.

Angelina and Sarah Grimke grew up in a wealthy South Carolina family who owned land and slaves. Instead of taking the slaves for granted, they viewed them as equal playmates and friends. Sarah even taught many how to read and write. She could not bear to see them physically punished or abused and spoke out against it whenever she could.

As the two sisters grew older, they knew that they had to do something to stop the abuse of slaves. Women during those days could not vote or speak in public in many towns along the Eastern seaboard. Their task would be a difficult one. They risked everything, including their lives, to travel north to launch a campaign to educate people about the injustice of slavery.

On one occasion Angelina addressed a group of men and women gathered in Boston before a State Legislative Committee. Her topic was “Abolition,” the elimination of slavery. People became so angry at her words about equality and the dignity of every human being that they burned down the building in which she gave her speech.

A few years later, Sarah, frustrated with the violent discrimination her sister had experienced when she spoke against slavery, wrote a book advocating equality for women. *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and Other Essays* argued for equal rights for women under the law. Without her landmark effort perhaps it would have taken even many more years for women to gain the right to vote that they finally won in 1920. Both of these women were early pioneers in social reform that continues in our country today.

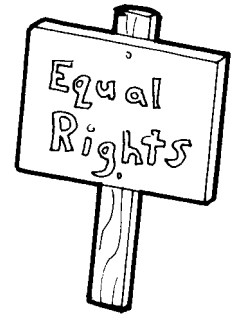
Suggested Activities

1. Discussion Questions

- *Knowledge:* What did Angelina and Sarah do to inform people about the injustices of slavery?
- *Comprehension:* Was slavery abolished because of the efforts of these two sisters?
- *Creative Thinking:* While slavery was outlawed during the the Civil War, some people claim that they are still treated like slaves. Can society or another person enslave others today?
- *Application:* How can you stop discrimination?
- *Analysis:* Can people today do anything to help others succeed when they are treated unfairly because of their sex or race?
- *Synthesis:* Why did this biographical sketch deal with both sex and race?
- *Evaluation:* Have you ever experienced discrimination? How did you feel? Were the Grimke sisters justified in breaking laws in order to help others?
- *Affective:* Would you risk everything in your life so that someone else might gain something? Would you dedicate your life to helping others? Why?

2. Skills Focus

- *Language and Communication Skills:* Write two sentences describing why all people in the United States should be equal.
- *Independent Study Skills:* Are there others who have worked for equality in your lifetime? Go to the library and investigate terms such as “Equal Rights,” “Voting Rights Acts,” “Title Nine,” and “Civil Rights Legislation.”
- *Manipulative Skills:* Write and illustrate a story to read aloud to a younger student in your school. Read the story to the student. Then help the student read the story you have written.



3. Social Science

Cotton Gin: The cotton that was separated from the seeds was made into thread. Take some cotton, such as you might find in a first-aid kit or in a cotton ball. Try “carding” it by combing it into long untwisted fibers. Now try twisting the fibers into thread. How do factories speed up this process today?

4. Journalism – Advertising

Come One, Come All!: Prepare a poster inviting the community to go to hear a lecture by the Grimke sisters about the opposition of slavery. Be sure to give the time and place. How would you make the reader want to go to the speech through the poster alone?

Recommended Reading

Teacher Reference

- Grimke, Sarah. *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and Other Essays*. Yale, 1988.
Lerner, Gerder. *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina*. Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

Student Reading

- Johnson, Ann Donegan. *The Story of Harriet Tubman*. Value Communications, 1979.
Meltzer, Milton. *All Times, All Peoples*. Harper and Row, 1980.

Goals and Ambitions

Angelina and Sarah set as their ambition to help eliminate of slavery. They worked hard to achieve this goal. Though they did not always feel successful, they did not give up.

You, too, must set goals for your life. What is your ambition? What do you dream about doing? No goal is too high and no dream is too big for you to achieve!

Think about your plans. In the space below, write five of your own goals. Explain these goals in the space provided, and then tell how you will achieve these dreams. If classmates choose to share their goals with you, you can help them get ahead by encouraging them. Remind them that they, too, can succeed. They should remind you of your goals and encourage you to succeed also. By working together, we can all succeed!

Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How I plan to achieve these goals:
