

To Tell the Truth Plays*

Biographies in U.S. History

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About the author

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Purpose

Need a change-of-pace activity for a Friday or a treat before a vacation break? Want a fun activity to incorporate into a unit of study or as a review? These biographical plays are perfect for students in grades 4–9.

Each biographical play has a basic premise: to show students that famous people were young people once, having to deal with many of the same issues that students face every day. As the saying goes, “An expert in anything, was once a beginner.” Maybe they had difficulty getting along with siblings, or had trouble being successful in school. Maybe they were teased by classmates. Maybe they were mischievous. Did they have parents that supported and encouraged them? Did they have to overcome other obstacles in their lives? Each play shows students that reaching goals comes about from hard work, perseverance, and commitment to something they feel strongly about.



Overview

The plays in this volume are based on a television game show that originated in the mid-1950s, Mark Goodson's *To Tell the Truth*. Three guests would each claim to be the real guest, a person known for an interesting ability or accomplishment—perhaps the developer of the Slinky, or the youngest person to sail around the world. The panelists would ask questions of each guest, and from their responses would try to determine which of the guests was the real celebrity. The guests, of which only the real celebrity had to respond truthfully, tried to stump the panel.

These biographical plays use this basic format to learn about people famous for having made contributions to American history. Each play includes information about their childhood and early schooling. The plays share how the person made the contribution for which they are remembered, as well as include interesting trivia.

Fun and informative, the plays also require the students to use critical thinking skills to distinguish the impostors from the real guest. Listening skills and comprehension skills are stressed as well. The plays encourage students to develop their speaking skills as well as give a chance to show off their acting abilities.

You will find many opportunities to use the biographical plays in social studies, science, and reading and language arts curricula.



Setup Directions

Before starting the play, review with the students any prior knowledge they might have about the historical guest. Select one student to be the host and then up to ten others for the different roles in the play. Make sure all students have a copy of the play so they can follow along. Set up three chairs in the front of the room for the guests and one chair/podium for the host. The panelists can remain at their seats and ask their questions when their part is reached in the play. Alternatively, set up a row of chairs to the side for the panelists.

Before beginning the play, remind the students that only the “real” historical guest must always tell the truth; the two impostors do not have to do so. Explain that throughout the play, all with a speaking role should act the part, using different voices should they like to do so.

Tell the students to follow the play carefully. You may wish to stop occasionally, encouraging the students to share their reasoning as to which historical guest they think might be the real one. At the end of the play, the host asks the students to vote for who they think was the real guest, which should be evident by the end of the reading.

Time

Each biographical play, along with a short culminating comprehension and discussion period, can be completed in one class period.



Standards

The biographical plays meet National Social Studies Standards, including

- Time, continuity and change (NCSS-2)
- Culture and cultural diversity (NCSS-1)
- Physical and human characteristics of place (NGS-4)

Additionally, the biographical plays meet NCTE standards (from <http://www.ncte.org/standards>), including:

- Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
- Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound–letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.



Susan B. Anthony

Directions

Reading the play

As students read the play, consider pausing between one or more of the panelists' questions to review the information students have heard. Invite opinions about which guest may be the *real* Susan B. Anthony, encouraging students to share their reasoning along with their responses. Remind the class that only the real guest must always tell the truth.

Additional information

- The first state to give women the right to vote was Wyoming in 1890.
- The first woman to run for president was Victoria Woodhull in 1872.
- A sculpture of Stanton, Anthony, and Mott was made by Adelaide Johnson in 1921. The day after it was dedicated, it was placed in the basement of the Capitol Building. It was only in 1997, that the statue was finally put in the Rotunda of the Capitol; no other statues of women were in the Rotunda until this statue.

Time for the *real* Susan B. Anthony to please stand up!

Once all the votes have been cast, establish that **Anthony 3** is the real Susan B. Anthony. Then review the play, making sure that students are aware of these facts from each section:

- **Panelists 1 and 2:** All responses are correct.
- **Panelist 3:** Many people think that Anthony attended the Seneca Falls Convention, though this was not the case. CNN did not exist during the time that Anthony lived. Anthony was very self-conscious about being photographed and only posed for pictures with her good side showing.
- **Panelist 4:** Although it is true that woman make up the majority of citizens in the United States, Anthony never ran for president. Victoria Woodhull did, in 1872. Anthony was not allowed to speak at her trial—do you think she should have paid the fine?
- **Panelist 5:** Anthony never went into space because the space program didn't exist during her lifetime. The first American woman to go into space was Sally Ride. The first women to ever go into space was a Russian by the name of Valentina Tereshkova, in 1963.

True or false? If false, change the statement to make it true.

1. The temperance movement tried to make it legal for women to vote.
(False—tried to ban alcohol)
2. In 1872, Anthony was arrested and found guilty for trying to vote.
(True)
3. The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave women the right to vote. *(False—the 19th Amendment)*
4. Along with Frederick Douglass, Susan B Anthony worked to abolish slavery. *(True)*
5. Susan B. Anthony was the first woman to have her face on a U.S. postage stamp. *(False—a U.S. coin)*

Discussion questions

1. Describe being a woman during the time of Susan B. Anthony.
2. Do you think it was fair for Anthony to have to give half of her wages to her sister? Explain both sides.
3. What are some personal characteristics of Susan B. Anthony.
4. When did you first suspect that Anthonys 1 and 2 were impostors? What made you think so?
5. Would you like to have been a friend of Susan B. Anthony's? Why or why not?

Extension activities

1. Have students reenact Anthony's attempt to vote as well as her appearance in the courtroom at the subsequent trial.
2. Have students make demonstration posters giving reasons as to why women should be given the right to vote.
3. Have students work in groups to research and present information on famous women who have made major contributions to our lives.
4. Have students write a diary entry in which they pretend to be Susan B. Anthony explaining her feelings about an event in her life.
5. Create a multiple-response worksheet for students to show what information they have learned from the play.

Additional resources

- *Susan Anthony: Girl Who Dared*, by Helen Albee (Monsell, 1960)
- *The Story of Susan B. Anthony*, by Susan Clinton (Children's Press, 1986)
- *Susan B. Anthony*, by Ilene Cooper (Franklin Watts, 1984)
- *Susan B. Anthony: Fighter for Women's Rights*, by Pamela Levin (Chelsea House, 1993)
- *Susan B. Anthony: Daring to Vote*, by Barbara Parker (Millbrook Press, 1998)
- *Susan B. Anthony: Woman Suffragist*, by Barbara Weisberg (Chelsea House, 1988)
- About.com: <http://womenshistory.about.com/library/bio/blanthony.htm>
- Susan B. Anthony House:
<http://www.susanbanthonyhouse.org/biography.shtml>
- Overview of Anthony: <http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/sba/first.htm>



Important!

Always check Web sites before having students visit them.



To Tell the Truth With Susan B. Anthony

Host: Our guest today is Susan B. Anthony. However, only one of the three women before you is the real Ms. Anthony. The other two are impostors. Your job is to listen carefully to the information presented and decide which of the three guests is the *real* Susan B. Anthony. Let's begin by meeting our guests. What is your name, please?

Susan B. Anthony 1: My name is Susan B. Anthony.

Susan B. Anthony 2: My name is Susan B. Anthony.

Susan B. Anthony 3: My name is Susan B. Anthony.

Host: Allow me to read this brief statement by Ms. Anthony: "I, Susan Brownell Anthony, was born on February 15, 1820, in Adams, Massachusetts. My family were Quakers, and I was fortunate that my father felt both boys *and* girls should get an education, in a time when most girls received little education. I saw alcohol as a cause of much suffering, especially for woman and children, and worked for the temperance movement [to make alcohol illegal]. I was also involved in the antislavery movement and lived when the country was torn apart over the issue of slavery: the Civil War. Eventually I dedicated my life to working for equity for all and women's suffrage [the right to vote]. In 1872, I was arrested for breaking the law. My crime was trying to vote in a presidential election. I was found guilty and ordered to pay a \$100 fine. The fight for women's rights and suffrage was long and difficult. Some called me the "Moses of Her Sex" for all my efforts. My response to such comments? "What I ask is not praise but justice." Sadly, I didn't live to see the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution passed in 1920, which gave women the right to vote. I died in 1906 at the age of 86. Signed, Susan B. Anthony." Let's begin the questioning with Panelist 1.

Panelist 1: You learned to read at the young age of three. You went to a school where only boys could learn long division and girls had to sit in the back of the classroom. Your father valued

schooling for both his sons and daughters and eventually home-schooled your family and neighbors' children. Tell us something you remember about your youth.

Anthony 1: I remember that first school, where I had to sit in the back of the room, away from the teacher's lessons and the warmth of the schoolroom stove. When the long-division lesson was given, I'd pretend I was cold and come up near the stove to get warm. But I brought my slate and would listen to the lesson and try the problems. I was so proud of myself when I showed my parents I could do long division. My teacher said that long division was something that I shouldn't worry my pretty little head about. Imagine your teacher today saying you didn't have to worry about learning geography or science.

Anthony 2: I had a very pretty new dress that my mother had made for me. But she would only let me wear it on Sunday. Unlike today, where children and adults have many different clothes to wear, we didn't have lots of outfits to wear every day. One day, a neighbor girl was in need of help, and I came up with an idea. I offered to give my old dress to her, thinking that I'd then have the *newer* Sunday dress to wear. But my plan didn't work. My mother gave the girl my new Sunday dress.

Anthony 3: I didn't think I was very attractive as a girl. In fact, my eyes were crossed. The doctor tried to correct the problem, but then my one eye stayed too far to the left. I tried to hide my eyes by wearing eyeglasses I really didn't have to wear. If you look at photographs of me, you will see that I always posed for side views and had them taken from the right.

Panelist 2: At 15 you had a job teaching school. You were paid \$2.50 a week. When you left to further your own education, you found out the young man who replaced you was paid \$10 a week. At a teaching convention that you attended, the women teachers were told to sit in the back and directed that they were not

to speak or contribute to the convention. You stood up and shocked people by stating your opinion of the poor treatment of the women. Tell us another time that made you aware of the unequal treatment of women.

Anthony 1: My mother loved to sing as a girl but never sang in the house. Quakers don't believe in singing. Since Mother wasn't a Quaker, I asked her why she didn't sing to my younger brother. She said she did what my father—who was a Quaker—wanted. Later, my sister explained that it was the law that wives must do what their husbands said. I thought that such a law should be changed.

Anthony 2: My father ran a textile mill, and when one of the workers got sick, he needed someone to help out for two weeks. My sister and I both wanted to take the woman's place, so we drew straws and I won. My mother said that I could work only if I gave half of my three dollars in earnings to my sister. While at the mill, I saw a woman passed over for a promotion for a man less qualified. I asked my father why the woman who knew more about the machines than the man, didn't get the promotion, and he said that women couldn't be supervisors over men. It just wasn't done. I thought this was a foolish idea.

Anthony 3: My father lost everything. He had to sell all he owned to pay his many bills. Mother's things were also sold, including her wedding gifts and her clothes. Even a pair of eyeglasses, which I think belonged to my brother, were sold to pay Father's bills. Mother was very sad but the law at the time stated that all property in a marriage belonged to the husband. I thought that I would one day work to change this unfair law too.

Panelist 3: The women's movement got its start with the 1848 Seneca Falls, New York, women's convention, that some nicknamed the "Petticoat Rebellion." It was organized by two women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. Three hundred people attended this meeting, where the Declaration of Women's Rights was drafted. This document called for women to be able to speak freely,

sue for divorce, own property, have equal opportunities in education and professional jobs, and have the right to vote. What was your involvement at this convention, as a woman who some would later call, "the Napoleon of the Women's Rights Movement"?

Anthony 1: I gave one of the major speeches at the convention, in which I said that if women did not get the right to vote, we'd leave the United States and move to Greenland. Then, I asked, who'd cook the meals, clean the houses, and take care of the children?

Anthony 2: As Number 1 just stated, I did speak at the convention. I told of all the inequalities women suffered and declared that women were equal to men and should be treated as such. CNN covered my speech on live television and I had to remember to point my head sideways so the camera couldn't see my funny eye.

Anthony 3: I didn't attend the convention. At the time, I was very involved in the temperance movement and was busy elsewhere. After the convention in Seneca Falls, another meeting took place in Rochester, NY. My family attended it and told me about Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her efforts in women's rights. A short time later, I got to meet Stanton and we began a 50-year partnership, trying to get equality for all and women's suffrage.

Panelist 4: You worked for the abolition of slavery and Frederick Douglass was a frequent visitor to your home. The Civil War put women's rights on the back burner temporarily, and after the war you were disappointed that the abolitionists didn't include women in their efforts to guarantee rights to black Americans. You wanted to work for suffrage for all. You were called names like "sourpuss" and "old maid," people laughed at your opinions—even women—and you had eggs thrown at you. Yet, you continued in your efforts. Tell us about your most famous attempt to vote, which led to your arrest.

Anthony 1: At the age of 52, several of my friends and sisters decided that it was time to vote. I was arrested for voting for Mickey Mouse

as a write-in candidate for President of the United States.

Anthony 2: I was arrested because I didn't have a photo ID or driver's license with me and, since the computers were down, the officials were unable to confirm my identity. This really made me angry. After all, I had waited an hour to vote. I was chewing some bubble gum and blew a bubble in the man's face who refused to allow me to vote. It popped right in his face and gum splattered all over him! It was he who called the police and had me arrested.

Anthony 3: Several other women and I went to a nearby barbershop in Rochester to register to vote. We were told that, that wasn't possible. The 14th and 15th Amendments to U.S. Constitution forbid any state from passing a law that keeps its citizens from voting. These were really aimed at protecting the rights of black Americans, but I believed that women also as citizens of this country had a right to vote. The officials let us register to vote. Days later, on Election Day, I cast my vote for Ulysses S. Grant. I was arrested for voting and found guilty by a judge who would not allow me to speak in my own defense. Judge Ward Hunt said, "Women are not competent to be witnesses." I was fined \$100. I told the judge I would never pay the fine. I never did.

Panelist 5: You and Elizabeth Cady Stanton published *The Revolution*, a women's suffrage newspaper. You split with other suffragists when some felt that your National Woman Suffrage Association, which only allowed women, was asking for too much, too soon. It took 20 years before the suffragist leaders united in their goals for women's rights. Can you share with us something else about yourself?

Anthony 1: Most people don't know that I ran for president of the United States and was the first woman to ever do this. I of course lost the election. It didn't help that half the population of the United

States—women—weren't allowed to vote in the election.

Anthony 2: When I was in my 70s, NASA asked whether I'd like to be the first woman to walk in space. It was truly an experience that I will always remember.

Anthony 3: I was the first woman in U.S. history to have her face put on a coin circulated as money. In 1979, the United States minted a silver dollar with my portrait. It's of my good side, of course.

Host: Panelists and members of the audience, it is now time for you to decide who is the real Susan B. Anthony. Is it Number 1? Number 2? Or Number 3? [Pause.] All right, the votes have been cast. Will the *real* Susan B. Anthony please stand up?

