

Document Based Question
Comparison of Three Women: Angelina Grimke, Dorothea Dix, Sojourner Truth.

Pre Civil War - Middle Grades
Cassie Hill, Boone Middle School

Procedure:

In groups of two, please read each of the three documents. Answer the questions after each document. When all three speeches are read, there will be a class discussion that explores the students' findings. Then, the students are to write the following essay, "How these women are alike, how they are different." The essay will be graded using the six point FCAT rubric.

Time Allotted:

Three to four 60 minute time periods.

Materials Needed:

Class set of the three speeches.
Paper, writing utensils.

All speeches were obtained from the book, Our Nation's Archive: The History of the United States in Documents. Edited by Erik Bruun and Jay Crosby. Copyright, 1999 by Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, Inc.

Document A-Angelina Grimke:

Background:

Angelina Grimke gave the following speech at the National Anti-Slavery Convention in 1838. She was a Quaker, born in South Carolina. She published such pamphlets as, "Am Appeal to the Christian Women of the South". She also wrote a book, American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses.

".....As a Southerner, I feel that it is my duty to stand up here tonight and bear testimony against slavery. I have seen it! I have seen it! I know it has horrors that can never be described. I was brought up under its wing. I witnessed for many years its demoralizing influences and its destructiveness to human happiness. I have never seen a happy slave. I have seen him dance in his chains, it is true, but he was not happy. There is a wide difference between happiness and mirth. Man cannot enjoy happiness while his manhood is destroyed. Slaves, however, may be, and sometimes are mirthful. When hope is extinguished, they say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.".....It is remarked in England that women did much to abolish slavery in her colonies. Nor are they now idle...When the women of these states send up to Congress such a

petition our legislators will arise, as did those of England, and say: "When all the maids and matrons of the land are knocking at our doors we must legislate." Let the zeal and love, the faith and works of our English sisters quicken ours; that while the slaves continue to suffer, and when they shout for deliverance, we may feel the satisfaction of "having done what we could."

1. To whom is this speech directed? Men or women, Northerners or Southerners?
2. In what way does Grimke tell her audience to try to abolish slavery?
3. How does she compare the colonies to England?

Document B-Dorothea Dix.

Background:

Dorothea Dix was a person who raised awareness of the mentally ill in Pre Civil War America. Because of her actions, Congress passed an act that allocated 12.2 million acres of public land among the states to create institutions for the insane and deaf. President Pierce would veto the bill because in his words federal aid would be an end to state and local "fountains of charity." This speech is from her 1843 petition to the Massachusetts Legislature.

"...I proceed briefly to explain what has conducted me before you unsolicited and unsustained, trusting, while I do so, that the memorialist will be speedily forgotten in the memorial. I come to present the strong claims of suffering humanity. I come to place before the Legislature of Massachusetts the condition of the miserable, the desolate, the outcast. I come as the advocate of helpless, forgotten, insane, and idiotic men and women: of beings sunk to a condition from which the most unconcerned would start with real horror; of beings wretched in our prisons, and more wretched in our almshouses.the following extracts from my notebook and journal: Springfield....one lunatic woman, furiously mad ...a state pauper...It is a case of extreme self-forgetfulness and oblivion to all the decencies of life, to describe would be to repeat only the grossest scenes....Concord: A woman from the hospital in a cage in the almshouse. In the several, decently cared for in general, but not properly placed in a prison. [She is] violent, noisy, unmanageable most of the time. Lincoln: A woman in a cage. Medford One idiotic subject

chained and one in a close stall for seventeen years. Pepperell. One often doubly chained, hand and foot; and another violent; several peaceable now. Brookfield. One man caged, comfortable. Granville. One often closely confined; now losing the use of his limbs from want of exercise. Charlemont. One man caged. Savoy. One man caged ...Dedham. The insane disadvantageously placed in the jail. In the almshouse, two females in stalls, situated in the main building, lie in wooden bunks filled with straw; always shut up. One of these subjects is supposed curable. The overseers of the poor have declined giving her a trial at the hospital, as I was informed, on account of expense..."

3. What is Ms. Dix describing in this speech?

4. What is her goal in giving the speech to the Legislature of Massachusetts?

Document C-Sojourner Truth:

Background:

Sojourner Truth was a slave in New York, but was emancipated in 1827. She became an evangelist who preached religious and abolitionist ideas. She also was one of the few African American women who joined the women's movement in securing the right to vote. This speech was given at the 1851 Ohio Women's Rights 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 of 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 plowed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much as eat as much as a man-when I could get it-and bear the lash as well! I have borne thirteen children and seen them 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? [Someone tells her, "intellect"]That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or Negro's right? If my cup

won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, would 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? 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."

5. How does Truth use herself to convey how she feels about women's rights?

6. What do slavery and women's rights have in common, according to Truth's speech?

Using the information gained from the documents and your own background knowledge, write a well organized essay answering the following question:

Question: Compare and contrast Angelina Grimke, Sojourner Truth, and Dorothea Dix in regard to their background, the causes they fought for, and the views they held.