

Susan B. Anthony

Gretchen Murray Sepik

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Actor and storyteller Gretchen Murray Sepik was born in Mercer, Pennsylvania and was raised in the country. "I guess I'm the result of my father's storytelling and my mother's unrestrictive imagination," says Gretchen. Her father could tell the best stories about Pennsylvania coalmines, railroads and horses. Her mother was a singer and encouraged her daughter to sing, learn nursery rhymes and play "dress up." "Before I was old enough to go to school my mother would ask me each morning who I wanted to be for the day. I could be anybody." Gretchen jokingly says that she never knew her real name until she started first grade. "Through theatrical characterizations, I can play 'dress up' for the rest of my life!"

Gretchen presents her form of storytelling across New York State and into Pennsylvania. She is the co-founder of the Flight of Fancy Experimental Theatre (F.O.F). Gretchen's authentic characterizations provide glimpses into history that no book can provide. She continually explores new characters, both real and fictitious, offering storytelling programs of folk tales and regional stories. Gretchen will also design programs to fulfill the needs of individual schools.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

GRADE LEVEL: 4 – 12

CURRICULUM CORRELATION:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Storytelling is an important means of passing information from generation to generation.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Students will learn the history of the women's suffrage movement in the United States.

Standard 5: Civics, Citizenship and Government

Students will learn that as citizens, we have certain rights and responsibilities, and it is important to be aware of these and to act on them. Many people who have come before us have undergone struggles and have been significant in making changes that affect us.

THE PERFORMANCE

Susan B. Anthony brings to the classroom an excellent characterization of the noted nineteenth century woman's right leader and a clear portrayal of her times. From her attempt to register to vote to the culmination of her efforts, her struggle for equality is depicted through the storyteller.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- To present important factors related to the voting process.
- To show Susan B. Anthony's involvement in the Temperance Movement, the Abolitionist Movement, and her work in implementing changes in the educational system.
- To characterize Susan B. Anthony and her struggles to win for women the right to vote.
- To give students an opportunity to recognize some of the qualities of good storytelling.

GETTING READY FOR THE PERFORMANCE

A FEW WEEKS PRIOR TO THE PERFORMANCE

Note: Some of the following pre- and post-performance activities are selected from or based on materials prepared by the Women's Rights National Historical Park, P.O. Box 70, Seneca Falls, NY 13148. Additional materials are available from the artist.

Read and discuss biographical information about Susan B. Anthony. Use the following sketch to prepare for the performance.

Susan B. Anthony

On Friday, November 7, 1872. Susan B. Anthony sat in her house in Rochester, NY quietly reading the morning newspaper. Her eye stopped at the head of the editorial column.

Now register! Today and tomorrow are the only remaining opportunities. If you were not permitted to vote, you would fight for the right, undergo all privations for it, face death for it. You have it now at the cost of five minutes' time to be spent in seeking your place of registration and having your name entered. And yet, on election day, less than a week away, hundreds of you are likely to lose your votes because you have not

thought it worth while to give the five minutes. Today and tomorrow are your only opportunities. Register now.

Miss Anthony read through the editorial quickly. Then she went back and read it over again carefully. There was nothing that said "Men only." There was nothing that said "Women are not allowed to register." She immediately threw aside the paper and called together her sisters Guelma, Hanna and Mary. The four of them went down to a nearby barber shop that served as the registration office for the Eighth Ward.

Imagine the surprise of the inspectors when the four Anthony women marched in and demanded that they be registered as voters. The inspectors were all young men, young enough to be sons of the four ladies. They hesitated. Susan B. Anthony began to read them the Fourteenth Amendment and an article in the New York State Constitution which had no mention of a sex qualification for voting. The inspectors still refused to enroll the women.

Miss Anthony drew herself up with as much dignity as she could muster. "If you still refuse us our rights as citizens," she threatened, "I will bring charges against you in Criminal Court and I will sue each of you personally for large exemplary damages. I know I can win. I have Judge Henry Selden as a lawyer." The young men did not doubt that she meant every word she spoke. They knew that Judge Selden was probably the best lawyer in Rochester. If he supported Miss Anthony in her right to vote, maybe she really did have the right. Finally, two of the inspectors, Beverly Jones and Edwin Marsh, both Republicans, agreed to enter the women's names on the voting rolls, over the objections of William Hall, the Democratic inspector.

Susan B. Anthony was overjoyed. She left the barber shop and began visiting some of her women friends to encourage them to register as well. By the time the registration offices closed that day fifteen women had registered in the Eighth Ward. Other women read about this in the evening newspapers, and the next day went to their registration offices. In all, nearly fifty women registered to vote in Rochester.

Bright and early – at 7 o'clock – on November 5th, the four Anthony sisters and eleven other ladies presented themselves at the Eighth Ward polling place – the same barber shop. One by one they marked their ballot and dropped it in the ballot box under the watchful eyes of the inspectors.

The women decided to vote early in the morning before the streets were crowded to avoid any unpleasant scene that might result when men saw women voting. "Not a jeer, not a rude word, not a disrespectful look has met one woman," Susan B. Anthony wrote her friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton later that day. Anthony voted the straight Republican ticket headed by Ulysses S. Grant for President. Elsewhere in the city, women were not so fortunate. Poll inspectors, afraid of the local reactions they had read about in the newspapers for several days, refused to let any of the other registered women vote.

Over three weeks later on November 28th, Susan B. Anthony and the other women who voted were informed that they were going to be prosecuted by the government of the United States for the crime of voting. They were asked to call at the office of

Commissioner Storrs that day. When they ignored this invitation, Marshal E.J. Keeney began visiting their homes to arrest them. It was Thanksgiving Day.

That afternoon Susan B. Anthony was told that she had a gentleman visitor waiting for her in the parlor. She found a tall, well-dressed man "nervously dandling in his gloved hands a well-brushed high hat." He was clearly embarrassed and uncomfortable. "The Commissioner wishes to arrest you," said the deputy United States marshal, "Is this your usual method of serving a warrant?" asked Miss Anthony. He promptly and politely served the legal document, which charged her with voting for a representative to Congress of the United States without having the legal right to do so. (She was charged specifically with violation of Section 19 of an act of Congress approved May 31, 1870, entitled, "An act to enforce the right of citizens of the United States to vote in the several states of this Union and for other purposes.")

Miss Anthony wanted to change her dress before going to the commissioners office. Marshal Keeney offered to let her come along by herself, but she refused his offer. He waited in the parlor until she came back downstairs. Miss Anthony stood facing him with her wrists held out and insisted that he handcuff her like any other criminal. He mumbled that he didn't think he would need handcuffs and politely escorted Miss Anthony out the door and to court.

They went to the office of U.S. Commissioner William C. Storrs where Miss Anthony was to be questioned about her crime. When she got there she was surprised to find that all fourteen of the other women who voted in the Eighth Ward had been arrested, as well as the two inspectors who had allowed them to vote. After hours of waiting in a dingy little room, they were all sent home because the Assistant District Attorney who was supposed to examine them could not reach the city that day. They were told to return the next morning.

All the women pleaded "not guilty" and were released on bail until their scheduled appearance in court on January 21, 1873. Susan B. Anthony refused to pay her bail. She had her lawyer apply for a writ of habeas corpus, which challenged the right of the government to put her in prison. The district judge listened to arguments on both sides of the question. He decided against the writ, and increased her bail to one thousand dollars. Miss Anthony refused to pay that bail. Her lawyer, Henry Selden, felt that it would be a disgrace for her to go to jail for several months while awaiting trial and so he paid her bail against her wishes. Although this was kind of him, it cost her the chance of having the United States Supreme Court hear her case.

During the months while she was waiting for her trial, Susan B. Anthony traveled all over Monroe County lecturing about her case "to educate any possible jurymen." She visited every village in the county - a total of twenty-nine post-office districts. By the time she was done, the judge decided that she had made it impossible to find an unprejudiced jury. On May 23, 1873 he moved the case out of Monroe County to neighboring Ontario County. Her trial was rescheduled for June 17th in Canandaigua.

Once more, in the month before her trial, Susan B. Anthony began giving her talks, this time in the villages of Ontario County. Matilda Joslyn Gage joined her in speaking about "the United States on trial, not Susan B. Anthony." The two women visited a village a

day as they carried their message throughout the county. They concluded the night before the trial was to begin with speeches in Canandaigua, the location of the courthouse.

When Susan B. Anthony went to bed that night, she was thoroughly tired. She knew that her lawyers had carefully prepared the case. She had gone over her ideas about voting time and again. She was ready for the trial to begin. But she had no idea how it would end.

- Discuss Susan B. Anthony's arrest and indictment. Was this fair? Ask students to predict what happened next. What do they think of her reaction (lecturing throughout the area)?
- Discuss our right to vote. What might our country be like if we didn't have that right. Why is it important? How did we achieve the right to vote?
- Voting Activity: Divide the class into two equal groups. One group is allowed to vote and the second is not. Elaborate that the first group is responsible enough or smart enough or mature enough to make decisions for the entire class and the second group is not.

Select an issue that is both current and of importance to the members of the class, one that could have an impact on classroom life or confer a privilege only upon the voting group or restrict the privileges of the nonvoting group. The object is to have half of the class experience power and the other half, the lack of power.

As a group, write a statement on the issue as it might appear on a ballot. Discuss the pros and cons of the issue. Firmly point out to the non-voters that, although they may have an opinion, it doesn't matter since they will not be able to vote on the issue.

Pass out paper ballots to the voters only. Read the question on which they are voting. Ask them to cast their vote, fold it for secrecy, and place it in the ballot box. Be sure that the non-voters are watching.

Discuss the issues that arise with this scenario – power, fairness, discrimination, etc. Ask the non-voters how they feel about not being allowed to vote. Encourage them to explain why they feel the way they do. Then do the same with the voters.

Count the vote and report the results. Enforce the new rule or privilege for the rest of the day. At the end of the day, ask the voters and non-voters again how they feel about it. Would they trade places?

The next day, repeat the exercise with the roles reversed, Conclude with a discussion about the right to vote.

- Introduce Susan B. Anthony as a woman who wanted to vote. Show her photograph. Ask for students' reactions to it and record them on the chalkboard. Leading questions might include: How does she make them feel? Does she

remind them of anyone? Is she someone they would like to meet? Which of the following words might describe her? kind, stern; mother, old maid; intelligent, ignorant; weak, strong; serious, lively; friendly, unfriendly; pleasant, unpleasant; sympathetic, unsympathetic; masculine, feminine, etc

Lead students through an evaluation of their responses, asking why or what about the photograph made them feel that way. From their responses, put together a word portrait of Susan B. Anthony based solely on her appearance.

- Discuss our right to vote. Who is allowed to vote in city / county / state / federal elections? Who is not allowed to vote? Using their answers, create a profile of a voter, eg: A voter is an adult (age 18 or older, a resident, a US citizen, etc.)

Explain that once only white male citizens of the United States who owned a certain amount of property were allowed to vote. After the Civil War laws were passed to allow former slaves to vote (but only the men).

Read the 14th amendments and discuss the effect of these on voting rights.

ON THE DAY OF THE PERFORMANCE

- Review facts about Susan B. Anthony's life. Discuss the courage it must have taken for a woman to do what she did.
- Have students watch and listen for the various techniques used by the artist to make this character come to life – costume, voice, body language, vocabulary, etc. and the feelings that Susan B. Anthony experienced during her struggle.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

- Talk about the artist's portrayal of Susan B. Anthony. Did she seem real? How did the artist make this character come to life?
- Have your students imagine that they are to interview Susan B. Anthony about voting in 1872. What questions would they ask? Hold a "press conference" and have students take the roles of questioners. You may wish to take the part of Susan B. Anthony, or, if possible, arrange for an unfamiliar adult take this role.
- Susan B. Anthony voted the straight Republican ticket, headed by incumbent Ulysses S. Grant. The Republicans had adopted a "splinter" for women's suffrage. The other presidential candidates were Horace Greeley (Democrat) and Victoria Woodhull (Cosmo-political party). Find out more about the candidates and the issues. Why did Susan B. Anthony vote Republican?
- Writing Activities:
 - Have students write and perform a play about Susan B. Anthony voting.
 - Have them write their own version of Susan B. Anthony.

- Ask students to imagine that they were at the polling place for the Eighth Ward in Rochester on Nov. 5, 1872, early in the morning. They were there when Susan B. Anthony arrived to vote and were eyewitnesses to the event. Write a diary entry for that day or a letter to a friend about it. (Have students consider whether they support Anthony's views or not, their awareness of this event as historic, and the viewpoints of others.)
- Ask students to imagine that they are Susan B. Anthony. Have them write diary or journal entries as she may have written them on the day she went to register, the day she went to vote, the day she was arrested, etc.
- Develop a timeline that includes the significant events of Susan B. Anthony's life.
- In the Presidential election of 1992, the candidates effectively used call-in talk shows to promote their ideas with the public. Imagine that such a format existed for Susan B. Anthony. How might the interchange go? Have one person take the role of Susan B. Anthony, another as the talk show host, and several others as the callers. The rest of the class is the listening public. After the call-in segment is finished, poll the audience for their reactions.

VOCABULARY

ABRIDGE - to deprive or cut off

BALLOT - a sheet of paper on which a voter marks his or her choice Originally it was a little ball used in casting a vote

BALLOT BOX - a box into which ballots are placed. Often ballot boxes have a slit in the top for the ballot and some way of sealing the box so that it is obvious when ballots have to be removed

BIAS - predisposition or leaning either for or against an issue

CITIZEN - a member of a state or nation who owes his or her allegiance to its government and in return is entitled to its protection

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE - the refusal to obey certain laws in order to change the laws or influence policy or public opinion

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT - changes and additions to the original Constitution of the United States since it took effect in 1789.

EDITORIAL - an article in a newspaper or periodical that expresses the views or opinions at the editors or publisher

ETHNIC GROUP - a group of people of the same race or nationality who share a common and distinct culture

POLLS - places where votes are taken

PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES - rights and protection

REGISTER TO VOTE - to enroll a person's name on an official list as a list of those who can vote

STEREOTYPE - a standardized image or idea

SUFFRAGE - the right to vote, especially in a political election

TEST CASE - a case brought to law to determine where the law stands or of testing its constitutionality

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Susan Anthony was first instructed by teachers at home. She was sent afterward to finish her education at a Friends' boarding school in Philadelphia. She continued to attend this school until, at the age of fifteen, she was occasionally called on to help in the teaching. Susan B. Anthony was once asked if all women in the United States would ever be given the right to vote. She said, "it will come, but I shall not see it...It is inevitable. Susan B. Anthony was a prominent American suffragist and civil rights activist. She campaigned against slavery and for women to be given the vote. She was the co-founder of the Women's Temperance movement which campaigned to tighten up laws on alcohol. She played a significant role in raising the profile of equal rights for women and is credited with playing a significant role in the passing of the nineteenth amendment (1920) which gave women the vote. Short Biography Susan B. Anthony.