Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) was an African American women's rights activist and abolitionist who fought to end slavery. Truth was born into slavery but escaped to freedom in 1826. "Ain't I a Woman?" is her most famous speech, which she delivered without preparation at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851. Two versions of Truth's speech exist today. The original version of the speech, which appears below, was transcribed by an attendant of Truth's speech, Marius Robinson. Truth collaborated with Robinson on the transcription before it was published. The second version, which is viewed as an inaccurate representation of Truth's speech, was transcribed by Frances Dana Gage who did not collaborate with Truth before its publication in 1863 and 1881. As you read, take notes on what evidence Truth presents to support her claim that women should have equal rights.

[1] May I say a few words? I want to say a few words about this matter.

I am a woman's rights.

I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man.

I have plowed and reaped¹ and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?

[5] I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it.

I am as strong as any man that is now.

As for intellect, all I can say is, if women have a pint and man a quart² — why can't she have her little pint full?

You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we can't take more than our pint'll hold.

The poor men seem to be all in confusion, and don't know what to do.

[10] Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better.

1. to cut or gather a crop or harvest
2. One quart is equivalent to two pints.
You will have your own rights, and they won't be so much trouble.

I can't read, but I can hear.

I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve\(^3\) caused man to sin.

Well if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again.

\[15\] The Lady has spoken about Jesus, how he never spurned\(^4\) woman from him, and she was right.

When Lazarus\(^5\) died, Mary and Martha came to him with faith and love and besought him to raise their brother.

And Jesus wept — and Lazarus came forth.

And how came Jesus into the world?

Through God who created him and woman who bore him.\(^6\)

\[20\] Man, where is your part?

But the women are coming up blessed be God and a few of the men are coming up with them.

But man is in a tight place, the poor slave is on him, woman is coming on him, and he is surely between a hawk and a buzzard.

“\textit{Ain’t I a Woman?}” by Sojourner Truth (1851) is in the public domain.

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3. According to the Bible, Eve gives Adam fruit from a tree that God has forbidden them from eating from.
4. Spurn (verb): to reject someone because you think they are beneath you
5. a follower of Jesus and the brother of Mary and Martha
6. In the Bible, the mother of Jesus is portrayed as a virgin.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement describes the main argument of Truth’s speech?
   A. Women would be able to accomplish more than men, if given the proper rights.
   B. Men will eventually be forced to give women the rights they have been fighting for.
   C. Men shouldn’t continue denying or fearing women’s access to equal rights.
   D. Women have been unfairly blamed for men’s troubles in the world.

2. PART B: Which detail from the speech best supports the answer to Part A?
   A. “I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it.” (Paragraph 5)
   B. “You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we can’t take more than our pint’ll hold.” (Paragraph 8)
   C. “I can’t read, but I can hear. / I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin.” (Paragraphs 12-13)
   D. “Through God who created him and woman who bore him. / Man, where is your part?” (Paragraphs 19-20)

3. How does the following quote contribute to the development of ideas in the speech? “As for intellect, all I can say is, if women have a pint and man a quart — why can’t she have her little pint full?” (Paragraph 7)
   A. It highlights the intellectual differences that Truth believes exist between men and women.
   B. It reveals that Truth wishes for women to have the same access to education as men because she believes they are less intelligent.
   C. It shows how men fear giving women equal rights because they know women are more intelligent than them.
   D. It emphasizes how men shouldn’t worry about giving women equal rights if they truly believe that women are less intelligent.

4. How does Truth’s discussion of the Bible and religion contribute to her defense of women’s rights?
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. According to Truth’s speech, how do you think she was treated unfairly because of her gender? How do you think her experiences with inequality as a black woman compare to the experiences of white women? Have you ever been treated unfairly due to your identity?

2. In her speech, Truth describes men and women as being capable of completing the same work. How are men and women treated differently, despite completing the same work? What are modern-day examples of this problem?