

# American Heroines STUDY GUIDE

## Pre Performance Activities

### About the Show...

Emma Williamson, All Star Softball Player and Freshman at Central High, has a history paper due. The assignment is, "Write an essay entitled *American Heroines* using the following list of noted American Women." Emma has put off this assignment until the last minute and the show begins with Emma rushing into the biography room of the local library. There's a thunder storm coming in, she has to get some books to research her *American Heroines* essay and the library closes in ten minutes.

Mrs. Hogabook, Head Librarian, sees Emma and offers to help. Emma explains her assignment and Mrs. Hogabook takes a look at "the list." She then asks Emma how long she has had to do the assignment.

"We got it a couple of months ago."

"And when is it due?"

"In a couple of days."

With a heavy sigh, Mrs. Hogabook says, "Good luck with your essay, Emma. You're going to need it." And she leaves Emma to her research.

In the few minutes left before the library closes, Emma sets out to grab a few books. Suddenly, there is a lightening flash, booming thunder, the door slams shut and the lights go out. When the lights blink back on, Emma is no longer alone... Betsy Ross, the first American Woman on her list, is right there with her in the Biography room! Emma tries to get out, but she is locked in. Betsy Ross then proceeds to explain to Emma that she will not be released from the biography room until she has written a compelling opening paragraph for her *American Heroines* Essay. To Emma's amazement and disbelief, Betsy also informs Emma that in order to facilitate her research, she will be visited by all the American Women on her list!

Through monologues, dialogue and music, the American Women on the list visit Emma in the Biography Room and share their unique stories with the disbelieving jockette! Emma learns much more than writing a history essay from her unexpected visitors... with an additional unexpected surprise in the end!

Targeting middle grades and Junior High audiences, *American Heroines* is a brand new American Musical celebrating March... Women in History Month!

## **Brief Bios...**

Read the following brief biographies so the students are familiar with the American Women who appear on Emma's list.

**Betsy Ross** In 1776, General Washington asked Betsy Ross to sew the first American Flag. Her personal contribution to the design: A five point star in a single snip of her scissors!

**Deborah Sampson** disguised herself as a man to fight in the Revolutionary War. She fought as a Revolutionary Soldier for over a year and was only found out because she became deathly ill, and the doctors discovered she wasn't a man. Years later she was awarded land and a pension... the first American Woman to be recognized as a soldier.

**Molly Pitcher** traveled with her husband from camp to camp during the Revolutionary War. During the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, in 100 degree heat, she gave the fallen soldiers across the battlefield water from her pitcher. She also helped fire the cannon after her husband was shot and could no longer fight.

**Sojourner Truth** was born into Slavery in 1797. In 1826 she walked to freedom, carrying her infant daughter, Sophia. She settled in New York City and in 1843, she changed her name to Sojourner Truth, announcing she would travel the land as an itinerant preacher, telling the truth and working against injustice. She never learned to read or write, but she traveled across the country as a

powerful figure in several national social movements, speaking forcefully for the abolition of slavery, women's rights and suffrage, the rights of freedmen, temperance, prison reform and the termination of capital punishment. Her famous speech of 1851, "Aint I a Woman?" is a powerful argument for Human Rights.

**Elizabeth Cady Stanton** organized the Seneca Falls Convention where she, in 1848, was the first American Woman to publicly demand the right to vote. She began the Women's rights movement and spent her life fighting for universal suffrage and human rights. Elizabeth Cady Stanton worked closely with Susan B. Anthony, writing speeches for Susan which she delivered across the country.

**Susan B. Anthony** spent her life fighting for the right for women to vote. She is the face of the Women's Suffrage movement with the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution (where women won the right to vote) was written in her name.

**Harriet Tubman** is a famous conductor on the Underground Railroad. Despite the danger, she returned to the South seventeen times, leading groups of escaping slaves North, to Freedom. She said, "I figured I had the right to two things, liberty or death. If I could not have one, I would have the other."

**Catherine Coffin** lived with her husband, Levi Coffin in Newport Indiana for twenty years. During that time, she and her husband sent over 3,000 escaping slaves safely to

freedom. They began taking in escaping slaves in 1827. Levi and Catherine Coffin were known as the President and First Lady of the Underground Railroad. Their house, the Coffin House, was known as the Grand Central Station of the Underground Railroad. It still stands and is a popular historic site in Fountain Springs (formally Newport), Indiana.

**Belva Lockwood** was the first American Woman to go to law school, the first to become a lawyer and the first to practice law in the Federal Courts. In 1884, she was the first American Woman to run for President. On behalf of the Equal Rights Party, Belva campaigned across the country and in the election received 4,129 votes. She always considered her run a victory as all her votes were from men who never considered voting for a woman before her campaign.

**Prudence Crandall** a schoolteacher raised as a Quaker, stirred controversy with her education of African-American girls in Canterbury, Connecticut. Her private school opened in January 1832, was boycotted when she admitted a 20-year old African-American female student in the autumn of 1833 creating what is generally regarded as the first integrated classroom in the United States. Parents of the white children mostly withdrew their daughters, leading Crandall to found a school for "Young ladies and Misses of color." Despite the Black Law, local opposition and even being arrested, Prudence Crandal managed to keep her school open. But finally, one night, a dozen men

surrounded the school and broke all the windows. The climbed into the school and destroyed everything they could, even starting a fire. Afraid for her students safety, Prudence then decided to close her school. She and her husband moved to the midwest and never returned to Canterbury. She is known as Connecticut's Heroine.

## **Post Performance Activities...**

### **Discussion Questions**

What was Betsy Ross' contribution in the design of the American Flag?  
*The five point star in a single snip.*

What did Deborah Sampson do?  
*She disguised herself as a man to fight in the Revolutionary War.*

How long did Deborah Sampson get away with pretending to be a man?  
*One year.*

What is Molly Pitcher's real name?  
*Mary Hays.*

What was Molly's husband's job?  
*He was a Gunner. He fired the cannon.*

What was the name of the Battle where Molly stepped in and helped to fire the cannon?  
*The Battle of Monmouth.*

Why is Mary Hays called Molly Pitcher?  
*In the Battle of Monmouth Molly gave the fallen soldiers water from her pitcher.*

What is the name of Sojourner Truth's famous speech?  
*Ain't I'm a Woman?*

Where did Elizabeth Cady Stanton publicly demand the right to vote?

*The Seneca Falls Convention.*

Who did Elizabeth Cady Stanton work with for over fifty years in the fight for the right to vote?

*Susan B. Anthony*

Did either Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Susan B. Anthony see women's suffrage come to fruition?

*No. They both died before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed in 1920.*

Who was Catherine Coffin?

*Catherine Coffin lived with her husband Levi in Newport Indiana for twenty years. During that time they sheltered and sent freedom over 3,000 escaping slaves.*

What did Harriet Tubman do?

*She was a conductor on the Underground Railroad.*

What was Belva Lockwood the first to do?

*She was the first to go to law school, become a lawyer, practice law in the Federal Courts and the first to run for president.*

What was the group of men called that campaigned in costume for Belva?

*The Mother Hubbards.*

After Prudence Crandall admitted Sarah Harris to her school what did the white students do?

*They boycotted Miss Crandall's School.*

When Prudence Crandall realized the white students would not attend if she enrolled students of color, what did she do?

*She opened a school exclusively for young ladies of color.*

What was the name of the law that prohibited black students from attending a CT school if they did not reside in that state?

*The Black Law.*

What is Prudence Crandall now known as?

*Connecticut's Heroine.*

When Belva Lockwood ran for President, what party did she represent?

*The Equal Rights Party.*

How many votes did Belva Lockwood receive in that election of 1884?

*4,149 legal votes.*

What happened in 1920?

*The Nineteenth Amendment was approved and women won the legal right to vote.*

**Ask the students...**

What is your favorite historical American woman from the show?  
Why?

Name some contemporary American women that were the first to do something.

Write an essay about *American Heroines*.

**ACTIVITIES**

1. Go to the Betsy Ross Home Page and learn how to make a Five Point Star in a single snip!
2. Write the names of Famous American people on small strips of paper and put them in a hat. Do a separate one for the boys and girls. Ask the students to each pick a name. The name they pick is the character they will portray. They should do some research and write a monologue no longer than a minute. The trick is to simply put their research into the first person... and their character of American History will come to life! The students can use costumes, props and of course, hats! Then you can put on your own living history presentation.

After the show is completed, take the information that the students used in their monologues and have a history Quiz!

3. Draw the ten designs found on Underground Railroad Quilts. These are easily found on line.  
    Monkey Wrench, Wagon Wheel, Bears Paw, Cabin, Crossroads, Bow Tie, Shoo Fly, Drunkards Path, Flying Geese and North Star.
4. Look up the quilt designs and what they mean.  
    Make a Class Quilt or paint a mural with the Underground Railroad designs.
5. Discuss what you think Emma learned with her experience in the Biography room.