

Name _____

Date _____

Sojourner Truth



Sojourner Truth was born about 1797 on a farm in Swartekill, New York. Her name at birth was Isabella Baumfree. She was born a slave. She lived in a Dutch settlement where she only knew how to speak Dutch. When she was nine years old, it was her turn to be sold. She was sold to a farmer named John Neely. He was not happy that Sojourner could not speak English. He beat her often because she could not follow orders.

Sojourner was smart. She learned English just by listening to others talk. Her life as a slave was very hard. She was always working and was sold many times. Her fourth owner John Dumont was a little nicer to her and she stayed with him for many

years.

When Sojourner grew up she fell in love with a slave named Robert from a nearby farm. Her owner would not let her marry Robert. He made her marry one of his own slaves named Thomas. That way her children would belong to Dumont. She had five children, but only four of them lived. She was always worried that her children would be taken away and sold.

In 1825, Dumont told her that he was going to free her the next year. She was very happy about this. Dumont didn't have much choice because all slaves in New York were going to be legally free in 1827. The next year, Dumont changed his mind and told her she had to work another year. She was very angry. She decided to escape. One day after she finished her work, she walked off the farm and went to stay with some neighbors. The neighbors, the Van Wageners, thought slavery was evil. They bought Sojourner for \$20 and then set her free.

Even though she was free, her children were not. She found out that her son Peter was going to be sold to a slave owner in the south. At the time in New York it was illegal to sell a slave across state lines. Sojourner decided to go to court. She won the case and Peter was returned to New York. People were surprised at how brave she was. It was very unusual for a slave or a woman to take a white man to court! After she won her case, she gave hope to many people.

Sojourner began to work with abolitionists to end slavery in the United States. She believed in women's rights and basic rights for all people. She traveled around the country telling people what it was like to be a slave. She was an excellent speaker and many people listened to her and began to change their way of thinking about slavery.

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. Sojourner was born in New York. | True | False |
| 2. Sojourner could not speak English early in life. | True | False |
| 3. Sojourner was a slave owner. | True | False |
| 4. She learned English in school. | True | False |
| 5. She fell in love with Thomas. | True | False |
| 6. She was going to be free in 1825. | True | False |
| 7. The Van Wageners family set her free. | True | False |