

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

# *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*

by Sojourner Truth and Olive Gilbert

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# *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*

## Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. define vocabulary words used in this story.
2. discuss the significance of the name Sojourner Truth.
3. write and comment on the ways Gilbert tries to gain support for the abolitionist movement.
4. cite incidents from Sojourner's life which illustrate the hardships of slavery including: poor accommodations, harsh punishments, lack of education, separation from family, abandonment in old age, and moral disintegration.
5. find examples of irony in the behavior of the "Christian" masters toward their slaves.
6. trace the development of Sojourner's religious beliefs from her childhood until she decides to become a traveling preacher.
7. cite examples of Sojourner's wit and humor.
8. discuss Sojourner's involvement with "The Kingdom" and whether or not she benefits from her exposure to their religious beliefs.
9. comment on why many different religious groups welcome and accept Sojourner.
10. discuss the problems Sojourner faces battling the white justice system.
11. understand why Sojourner excluded many of the details of her life as a slave.
12. cite incidents from the story to support the following generalizations Sojourner makes about life.
  - The rich rob the poor, and the poor rob each other.
  - It is easier to find lodging in a poor person's home than it is in a rich person's home.

# *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Why does Isabella change her name to Sojourner Truth?
2. What does Isabella learn about God from her mother?
3. Cite one or two incidents from the story illustrating each of the following hardships associated with slavery: separation of family, injustice, false accusations, and abandonment in old age.
4. Find a passage in the narrative where Olive Gilbert tries to persuade her readers that slavery results in moral disintegration for slaves. In what ways does slavery also result in moral disintegration for slaveholders?
5. Why is it ironic that many of the slaveholders considered themselves to be good Christians?
6. Cite three reasons Sojourner decides to leave the details of many of the hardships she suffered as a slave out of the narrative.
7. Why does Isabella prefer Mr. Dumont to Mrs. Dumont? In what ways do each of them disappoint Isabella?
8. What is Isabella's view of slavery during the years she lives with the Dumonts? Why does she look back on those years with "astonishment"?
9. List three adjectives to describe Sojourner's character. Cite an incident from the story to support each of your choices.
10. Who does Isabella credit with helping her get Peter returned after he is sold into the South? Why?
11. How does Eliza Fowler's murder contribute to Isabella's belief that God extracts "retributive justice" from sinners?
12. Find a passage in this story illustrating Isabella's sense of humor.
13. How does the Panic of 1837 contribute to Isabella's decision to leave New York City?

# Narrative of Sojourner Truth

## Study Guide Student Edition

### INTRODUCTION: by William Kaufman

#### Vocabulary

indomitable – *not easily defeated*

temperance – *self-restraint in not drinking alcoholic beverages*

imbibe – *to drink*

animism – *the belief that all objects (such as trees, rocks, and the wind) are alive and have souls*

saturnalian – *riotous, merry*

ambience – *environment or atmosphere*

epiphany – *an awareness; an awakening of religious beliefs*

imperatives – *rules, duties, or requirements*

beguiled – *deceived or misled*

itinerant – *a person who travels from place to place*

slough – *deep hopeless dejection or discouragement; moral degradation*

solidarity – *unity*

resilient – *bouncing or springing back to shape; recovering strength or good humor*

1. Sojourner Truth becomes a preacher and an orator to fight for human rights issues. List three issues that interest her.
2. Briefly discuss Sojourner's youth including her original name, date of birth, first language, and her family's religious beliefs.
3. For what reasons does Isabella decide to embark on a journey as a preacher-activist?

## LAST DAYS OF BOMEFREE.

### Vocabulary

servitude – *slavery*

lamentations – *expressions of grief*

superannuated – *too old; worn out*

bewail – *to complain about*

anguish – *great suffering*

ludicrous – *absurd, ridiculous*

destitution – *poverty*

1. Find the allusion on page 7.
2. What does Gilbert mean when she says the Ardinburghs took turns “keeping” Bomefree?
3. How does Bomefree feel about his life in his old age?
4. After some years, the Ardinburghs decide to offer Caesar and Betsy their freedom if they agree to take care of Bomefree. They are delighted to accept their freedom even though they are old and sick. Why does Sojourner declare that “their thoughts are no longer than her finger”? (Pg. 8)
5. Why is Isabella unable to help her father?

## IT IS OFTEN DARKEST JUST BEFORE DAWN.

### Vocabulary

proverb – *a short saying that states a basic truth*

palpable – *tangible, clear to the mind, obvious*

wended – *went*

expeditiously – *efficiently, quickly*

avers – *states positively*

remuneration – *the act of paying or compensating*

callosities – *hardened, thickened spots, like a callus*

indurations – *see callosities*

1. Why does Solomon Gedney decide to go to Alabama to get Isabella's son?
2. What prayer does Isabella say concerning her son?
3. Who is Eliza? What does she do when Pete is beaten?

## DEATH OF MRS. ELIZA FOWLER.

### Vocabulary

irrefragable – *unbroken*

1. What evidence is there in this chapter that Isabella is a strong woman who would rather live in peace than extract revenge on those who have wronged her?
2. Prove the following statement: Isabella believes that through a "special providence of God," she is able to witness His "retributive justice." (Pg. 30)

## FINDING A BROTHER AND SISTER.

### Vocabulary

putrescent – *rotting, decaying*

1. In what ways is Isabella's discovery of her lost brother and sister both a joyous and a sad event?

## GLEANINGS.

### Vocabulary

cupidity – *greed; desire to possess*

imbecility – *stupidity*

veracity – *truthfulness, honesty*

magnanimously – *generously*

1. List three reasons Isabella chooses to exclude from this narrative many of the details from her past.
2. Cite incidents from this chapter to support the following two ideas: a) Slaves do not love their masters and are not grateful for the chains of slavery. b) The cruelty of slavery exists only in the imagination.
3. Find a use of litotes in this section.

## SOME OF HER VIEWS AND REASONINGS.

### Vocabulary

amanuensis – *one who writes for another*

1. State Sojourner's beliefs on the following subjects:

The worship of God –

A day of rest –

A paid ministry –

2. Why does Sojourner, who is illiterate, prefer to have children, rather than adults, read her the Bible?

## THE SECOND ADVENT DOCTRINES.

1. What are the people in the community who believe in the second advent doctrine waiting for? What does Sojourner say to these people?
2. Why do the Shakers like Sojourner?