

Jane Addams, Hull House, and Responsibility

- **Compelling Question**
 - How can you act responsibly and help others?
- **Virtue:** Responsibility
- **Definition** – Responsibility is accountability to myself and others.
- **Lesson Overview**
 - In this lesson, students will learn about Jane Addams’ role in running a settlement house and fighting against war. Students will consider how they can be responsible like Addams.
- **Objectives**
 - Students will analyze Jane Addams’ responsible actions.
 - Students will evaluate how Jane Addams’ actions helped others.
 - Students will apply their knowledge to determining ways they can be responsible in their own lives.
- **Background**
 - Laura Jane Addams was born in Cedarville, Illinois in 1860. She attended Rockford Female Seminary and one year of medical school in Philadelphia before returning to her home state. After reading a magazine article about settlement house, Jane visited the first house opened in London. Upon her return, Jane worked to open her own settlement house, Hull House, in 1889.

Jane was also a pacifist who did not believe in war. She worked to keep the peace across the globe during World War I and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 for her efforts.
- **Vocabulary**
 - Seminary
 - Settlement house
 - Nobel Peace Prize
 - Ailments
 - Affluent
 - Abounding
 - Assimilate
 - Suffrage
 - Carrie Chapman Catt
 - The Hague
- **Introduce Text**
 - Have students read the background and narrative, keeping the “Walk-In-The-Shoes” question in mind as they read. Then have them answer the remaining questions below.
- **Walk-In-The-Shoes Questions**
 - As you read, imagine you are the protagonist.
 - What challenges are you facing?
 - What fears or concerns might you have?
 - What may prevent you from acting in the way you ought?
- **Observation Questions**
 - What was Jane Addams’ identity when she started Hull House? What was her identity when she won the Nobel Peace Prize?
 - What was Jane Addams’ purpose in starting Hull House and fighting for peace?
 - What responsible actions did Jane take?

- **Discussion Questions**

- Discuss the following questions with your students.
 - What is the historical context of the narrative?
 - What historical circumstances presented a challenge to the protagonist?
 - How and why did the individual exhibit a moral and/or civic virtue in facing and overcoming the challenge?
 - How did the exercise of the virtue benefit civil society?
 - How might exercise of the virtue benefit the protagonist?
 - What might the exercise of the virtue cost the protagonist?
 - Would you react the same under similar circumstances? Why or why not?
 - How can you act similarly in your own life? What obstacles must you overcome in order to do so?

- **Additional Resources**

- Addams, Jane. *Twenty Years at Hull House*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910.
- Biography: Jane Addams. <http://www.biography.com/people/jane-addams-9176298>
- Davis, Allen F. *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams*. Lanham, Maryland: Ivan R. Dee, 2000.
- Jane Addams Hull-House Museum. http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/hull_house.html
- Knight, Louise W. *Jane Addams: Spirit in Action*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.
- The Official Website of the Nobel Prize. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1931/addams-facts.html

Handout A: Jane Addams, Hull House, and Responsibility

Background

Laura Jane Addams was born in Cedarville, Illinois in 1860. She attended Rockford Female Seminary and one year of medical school in Philadelphia before returning to her home state. After reading a magazine article about settlement house, Jane visited the first house opened in London. Upon her return, Jane worked to open her own settlement house, Hull House, in 1889.

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Narrative

Jane Addams believed she had a great responsibility to help people. After graduating from Rockford Female Seminary in 1881, Jane decided she could best help others by becoming a doctor. After her father's death soon after graduation, Jane and the rest of her family moved to Philadelphia so that Jane, her sister Alice, and her brother-in-law Harry could all attend medical school. Unfortunately, after the first year, Jane had to drop out due to her own ailments. Jane's stepmother also fell ill, and the family decided to move back to Illinois.

Jane was depressed that she couldn't fulfill her dream to help people, but she soon read about a new idea. Due to the high number of poor and ill in London, groups began to open settlement houses where the more affluent could help those who faced hardships get back on their feet. Jane was intrigued, and she and several friends traveled to London to see the first settlement house, Toynbee Hall, in action. When she arrived, Jane saw a combination of a community, cultural, educational, and social service center all rolled into one. She decided she wanted to open her own settlement house in the United States.

When Jane arrived back in Illinois, she and Ellen Gates Starr purchased an old mansion in Chicago called Hull House and opened their own settlement house there in 1889. The two women worked diligently to ensure that the poor of Chicago had a place with abounding opportunities, and began to grow the number of residents to assist them with Hull House programs. Hull House provided continuing education programs, clubs, a library, an art gallery, a kitchen for the public to use, and resources to help those seeking employment. Hull House was a success and people came from all over the nation and the world to see Jane Addams' dream.

Hull House was staffed by university educated women that would help to provide working class people with the social and educational opportunities they needed to be successful. Many of their clients were immigrants from Europe who differed greatly in language and culture than their American counterparts. Jane and her staff worked to help these people assimilate to the United States.

The research done by Hull House employees helped the rest of the nation understand the difficulties faced by poor. Research projects included sanitation, the causes of poverty, drug use, illness, housing, and other issues that plagued the working class people of the country. Hull House then disseminated their research to the nation to help inform others of the issues and advocate for changes.

As part of being responsible, Jane Addams decided to become more involved in political matters. Jane was a part of the women's suffrage movement and promoted women's rights. She was also a strong pacifist. Jane attended a conference in The Hague, Netherlands in 1915 to help put an end to World War I. When the United States entered the war, she founded the Women's Peace Party with Carrie Chapman Catt. The group became the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Jane served as president for many years. For her efforts in promoting peace, Jane was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

Jane's main focus in life was helping people. The success of Hull House and her involvement in women's rights and peace helped her to fulfill that responsibility. Jane understood that her love of people could be used to make a difference in her community. She knew that her actions could have positive consequences and felt a responsibility to act.