

Jane Addams

1931

“Civilization is a method of living, an attitude of equal respect for all men”

Jane Addams was born in Illinois. She was strongly influenced by her father who led a very active life. He was a State Legislator for sixteen years, and directed a bank as well as a railroad. Her mother Sarah Weber Addams was a strong woman and "stern disciplinarian" of her eight children. When Jane was three her mother became very ill and died. Martha, the eldest child, took over raising the family. Jane had a curved spine and felt self-conscious about this during her childhood.



Courtesy nobelse.com

In 1881 Jane graduated from Rockford Female Seminary at the top of her class. She began to study medicine. The death of her father along with her own health problems made attending school difficult. With the support of her family she left school to travel with her college roommate Ellen Starr, to study on her own. During a trip to Europe she visited Toynbee Hall, a settlement house in the poor end of east London. This visit influenced her and one of her goals became to open a similar settlement house in the United States.

- Attended Medical School
- Founded Hull House
- Chairman Women's Peace Party
- Worked with President Hoover
- Humanitarian
- Suffragist

“the good we seek for ourselves is uncertain until it is secure for all of us”

stated that:

"The good we seek for ourselves is uncertain until it is secure for all of us."

This seemed to show through in her goals for the Hull House and she seemed to live by it throughout her life as well. She saw huge differences between rich and poor. She was

In 1889 Jane and Ellen, searched for a house in a low income neighborhood in Chicago. The house they found, built by Charles Hull in 1856, was called Hull House. The house had been a factory, a used furniture store, and a home for the poor elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor nuns. The two friends moved in and began to create a community center for civic and social life. They focused on education and problems coming from poverty.

Jane believed that the nation did not like to acknowledge the fact that democracy was threatened by the extremes in classes. She

disturbed by the accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, and destitution and poverty in the lower classes.

The organizations that she started tried to equalize the inequality between people and educate them on things they had in common as well as the qualities that made them unique. She believed that the "things that make men like are finer and better than the things that keep them apart" .

Jane Addams and Ellen Starr encouraged the wealthy to contribute money and time to their settlement house. Volunteers provided childcare, took care of the sick, and counseled people. In two years Hull House was helping over 2000 people per week. Kindergarten classes were taught in the morning, club meetings for students met after school, and there were night school classes for adults.

Hull House grew adding an art gallery, a public kitchen, coffee house, gym, swimming pool, boarding house for girls, employment agency, library, book bindery, drama group, and a labor museum.

In 1905 Jane became more active in the larger community. She was appointed the Chicago board of Education, and became chairman of the School Management Committee.

In 1908 she joined the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, and was named president of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections. She led investigations on midwifery, narcotics, milk supplies, and sanitary conditions. She became the Garbage Inspector of the 19th Ward, a job that paid one thousand dollars a year.

In 1910 she received the first honorary degree ever awarded a woman by Yale University for this work in improving the lives of the poor.

Although Jane accomplished a great deal in her lifetime, some people disliked her because of her radical ideas and ways of doing things. She believed so strongly in peace that she was seen as a deviant during World War I. She was even expelled from the Daughters of the American Revolution. Jane donated money to Rockford College's library to improve their selection of science books and was named a trustee as a result of an invitation from the head of the college.

Jane did an enormous amount when it came to peace. The American Union Against Militarism worked to keep the US out of the war and received acknowledgment from the government for allowing the Hull House to be used as a "conscription center" In 1915, the year after W.W.I began, she became involved in the Woman's Peace Party and was elected national chairman. With this she went to the International Woman's Conference in The Hague and was chosen to head the commission to find an end to the war. This included meeting ten leaders in neutral countries as well as those at war to discuss mediation. This was the first significant international effort by women against the war

and was documented along with co-workers Emily Balch and Alice Hamilton in *Women at The Hague*

It was in 1917, when the US joined the war, that Jane started to be strongly criticized. In 1919, Jane was the American delegate for the Second Women's Peace Conference where the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom began. Jane was elected the first president, a position she held until her death (1960). She assisted Herbert Hoover by supplying food and other necessities to women and children of the opposing side. This is explained in further detail in her book *Peace and Bread in Time of War* written in 1922. It has been suggested that she was capable of criticism because her beliefs derived from experiences in her neighborhood and "could always go back to the source of her strength"

Jane had a strong interest was in improving the lives of women. She was a feminist long before feminism was known and accepted. She believed that women's voices should be heard and that they should have the right to vote. She believed that women should have dreams, and have the power to reach them.

Another dream of Jane's was to rid the world of war. In 1906 she published a book "Newer Ideals of Peace". In 1913 at a ceremony honoring the building of the Peace Palace at the Hague she spoke for peace. In the next two years she was sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation to speak against America being involved in World War I.

In 1915 she was named chairman of the Women's Peace Party. Soon after she became president of the International Congress of Women. This group met at the Hague led by Dr. Aletta Jacobs, a Dutch suffragist.

This congress founded an organization called the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Jane Addams served as president until 1929. She was then named honorary president for life.

Because she was outspoken against America's entry into the war, Addams was attacked by press and organizations that supported the war. She continued working against war however, and was named humanitarian assistant to President Herbert Hoover. In this job she oversaw providing relief supplies of food to women and children of enemy nations. In 1922 she wrote the book "Peace and Bread in time of War" about this effort.

In 1926 she suffered a heart attack and never fully recovered. She was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace the same year with Nicolas Murray Butler. Her prize was for her extensive work with the poor and women, and her opposition to violence and war. She was hospitalized on December 10, 1931, the day she received her Nobel Peace Prize. She never delivered an acceptance speech in Oslo due to her health.

She died in 1935 and her funeral was held at Hull House.

Suggested Classroom Activities - Jane Addams

Introduction/ Warm Up: use a quote to introduce discussion or journal

1. "The good we seek for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secure for all of us"

2. "things that men like are finer and better than the things that keep them apart"

3.. "America's future will be determined by the home and the school. The child becomes largely what he is taught; hence we must watch what we teach, and how we live."

Discussion Questions

1. Describe two ways Jane Addams worked in a hands-on style to help improve the lives of people who lived in poverty. (Level 1)
2. What health problems did Jane Addams have? (Level 1)
3. How did her health problems influence her life's work? (Level 2)
4. What were Addams's feelings about war? Give examples. (Level 3)
5. How did people react to her work during World War I? (Level 2)
6. In the book "Peace and Bread in Time of War" Addams wrote of a humanitarian project. What was this project and why did she believe in it? (Level 3)

Vocabulary

1. settlement house
2. precarious
3. destitution
4. conscription
5. feminist
6. suffragist
7. humanitarian

Activity grades 9-12

This lesson uses Jane Addams Award-winning books to explore author's voice. After reading and examining *The Yellow Star* by Carmen Agra Deedy, a Jane Addams Honor Book in 2001, students choose another Jane Addams Award-winning book for personal investigation.

Technology Option: using the site: (level 1-2)

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/Exhibits/janeaddams/hullhouse.htm>, create a power point with each picture and three facts about each.

Resources

www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/ This website is from the University of Illinois at Chicago and the focus is on the social work of Jane Addams

[Jane Addams collection](#). This is a collection of primary sources from Swarthmore College on the life and work of Jane Addams

http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1931/index.html This is the Nobel Peace Winner site. It contains books, speeches and other information on Jane Addams

<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/addams>. This is a history site containing information, biography, and historical context for Jane Addams

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