

Heroes and Heroines: Olympia Brown

Materials: Underlay

Narrow strip of "road"

Image of tree that opens to image of girl in tree

Image of woman in Victorian dress that opens to image of woman in bloomers

Image of fenced school that opens to image of St Lawrence University

Image of suffragette being arrested that opens to image of woman voting in 1920's

Presentation:

Take out the underlay and hold it up. Turn it over and lay it down.

I wonder what this could be... a book? A door? What else do we have to help us?

Take out the strip of road. Lay it across the width of the rectangle.

Hmmm... This looks too long to go this way. What could it be? Maybe it goes the other way?

Turn the strip to go down the middle of the length of the underlay.

Let's try it this way. When Olympia Brown was little, girls weren't supposed to whistle. Little girls ought to be quiet," Said one lady in town. "Little girls ought not to make themselves heard."

Take out image of empty tree and place near a top corner of the underlay.

But Olympia did. She had a voice, and she was going to use it, every day. Girls weren't supposed to climb trees or run fast or catch frogs.

Open the top image to show a picture of a girl in a tree.

But Olympia did; she did all those things, all those things and more. "You can do whatever a boy can do," her mother and her father told her, and Olympia knew it was true. She climbed trees and ran fast and caught frogs, and when she was in school, she answered the teacher's questions loud and clear.

When Olympia Brown was in college, women weren't supposed to wear pants. Women weren't supposed to wear anything except very long dresses that came all the way down to their toes.

Take out image of woman in long, dark dress and place near the other side of the underlay, a little further down.

But Olympia did. She wore dresses that came down only past her knees, and under them, she dared to wear pants! "Bloomers" the pants were called, after Amelia Bloomer, the woman who had created them a few years before. "Women ought not to show their ankles in public!" exclaimed some of the men. "And women certainly ought not to wear pants!"

Open the top image to show a picture of a woman in bloomers.

But Olympia did. She wore her bloomers every day, no matter how much the men sneered.

When Olympia was finished with college, women weren't supposed to be ministers. Women never stood up in front of a congregation and talked about God.

Take out image of fenced in school and place on the underlay, below and further down from the first image.

Women weren't allowed in seminaries, which are special schools to become ministers. But Olympia did; she did all those things and more. Olympia graduated from the Theological School at St. Lawrence University in 1863, and she was ordained as a Universalist minister in June of that year.

Open the image to show St Lawrence University.

She became the Reverend Olympia Brown. "Women ought not to speak in public," said a minister at that time. "Women ought not to take the pulpit or discuss the nature of God." But the Reverend Olympia Brown did. During the next thirty-five years, she was a minister in five different congregations, and she visited other congregations, too. She spoke on the nature of God and love. Olympia Brown had a voice, and she used it, every day.

When Olympia Brown was born, women weren't allowed to vote. Women weren't allowed to have any say in who was elected president or senator or mayor of the town. But Olympia had something to say about that. Olympia had a lot to say about that.

Take out image of suffragette being arrested and place below the 2nd image, so all four are spread out along the "road."

She traveled all over Kansas in a horse and buggy, giving speeches to convince people that women deserved the right to vote. She spoke to the representatives and senators in Congress. She marched in parades. Olympia and her friends worked hard to get women the right to vote. Olympia Brown had a voice, and she used it every day... every day for over fifty years.

Open the 4th image to show a woman voting for the first time.

And finally, women were allowed to vote. In November of 1920, when Olympia was eighty-five years old, she voted for the very first time.

Olympia had always had a voice, and she'd used it to make sure that she--and all the other women in the United States --had a vote as well. She stayed true to herself and her path and finally reached her goal.

Wondering Questions:

I wonder what part of the story you liked the best?

I wonder what part is most important?

I wonder where you are in the story?

I wonder if there is any part of the story that we can leave out and still have all the story we need?

Based on a UUA lesson located at <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/tales/session15/story-3>, which was reprinted from A Lamp in Every Corner: Our Unitarian Universalist Storybook (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004).