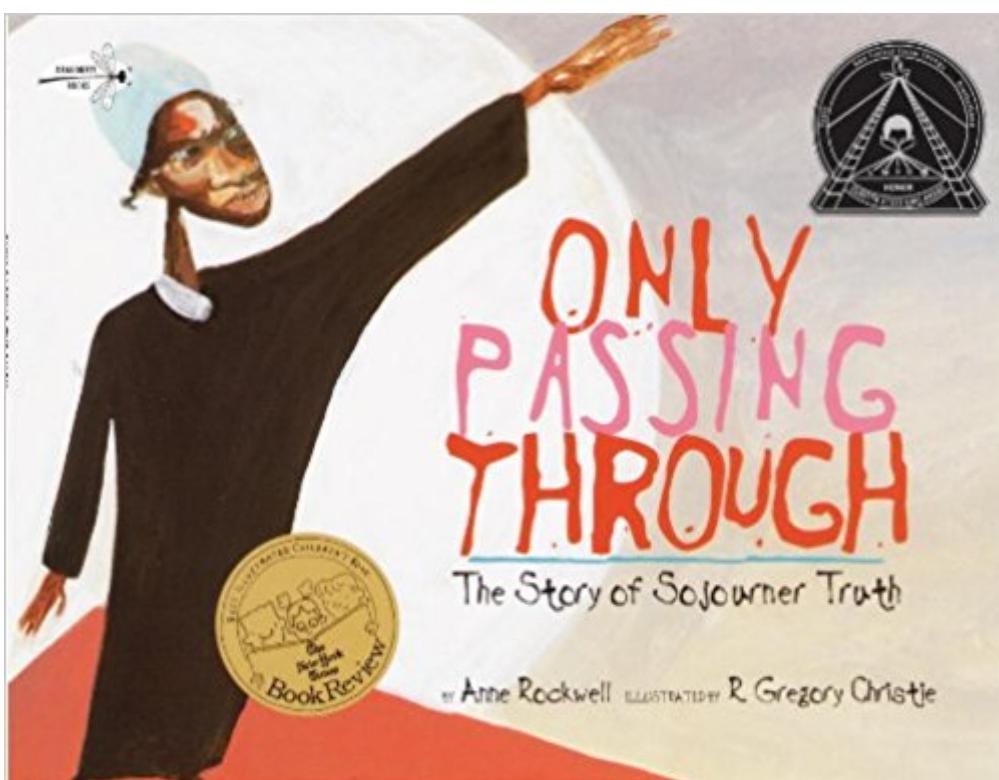


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# Only Passing Through: The Story Of Sojourner Truth



## Synopsis

A powerful picture book biography of one of the abolitionist movement's most compelling voices. Sojourner Truth traveled the country in the latter half of the 19th century, speaking out against slavery. She told of a slave girl who was sold three times by age 13, who was beaten for not understanding her master's orders, who watched her parents die of cold and hunger when they could no longer work for their keep. Sojourner's simple yet powerful words helped people to understand the hideous truth about slavery. The story she told was her own. Only Passing Through is the inspiring story of how a woman, born a slave with no status or dignity, transformed herself into one of the most powerful voices of the abolitionist movement. Anne Rockwell combines her lifelong love of history with her well-known skill as a storyteller to create this simple, affecting portrait of an American icon. From the Hardcover Library Binding edition.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

Born in 1797, and sold three times by the time she was 13 (and beaten many more times), a tall young slave girl named Isabella grew in her determination to fight the evils of slavery and speak for human rights. At the age of 46, having been a free woman for 17 years, Isabella woke from a dream telling her she must travel the country, conveying to people what it meant to be a slave. On that day,

Isabella renamed herself. "It was as though the life she'd known up till then belonged to someone else. A new one was beginning. The old life had become a tale to tell, a story to bring freedom to others. Her old name belonged to her old life. From that day on, she was never called Isabella again. Her name was Sojourner Truth." Anne Rockwell's picture-book biography of the legendary and powerful messenger of civil rights rings with authority and dignity, matched by Gregory Christie's full-page impressionistic paintings featuring Truth's symbolically outsized head and hands, and striking perspectives of both slaves and slave owners. Awash with rich color, Christie's images will linger long with readers, as will Rockwell's description of Sojourner Truth singing in the face of enraged, drunken antiabolitionists. The author includes a historical note and a 19th century timeline for further context. Rockwell is the noted author of more than 100 books for children, and Christie was the recipient of the Coretta Scott King Honor for his illustrations in *The Palm of My Heart*. (Ages 8 to 12) --Emilie Coulter --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Though writing in the third person, Rockwell (*Bumblebee, Bumblebee, Do You Know Me?*) here gives Sojourner Truth an authentic, resonant voice. Ably tailoring her account to a young audience, the author opens her story as nine-year-old Isabella is being sold at a slave auction in Kingston, N.Y., in 1806. The narrative follows the heroine through her transformation into "Sojourner Truth," an itinerant preacher against the evils of slavery. After being denied the freedom that her master had promised her in 1826, the young woman escapes to the home of a nearby couple who abhor slavery; they then buy Isabella from her deceitful master and free her. Rockwell documents some remarkable incidents and demonstrates how far ahead of her time Isabella was: when her son is illegally sold to a plantation owner in another state, Isabella takes the perpetrator to court and wins the boy's freedom. "No one had ever heard of such a thing. Slaves didn't do such things. Women didn't do such things. But Isabella did." The author dramatically builds up to and convincingly recounts the pivotal moment when Isabella changes her name and vows to travel the country as "a voice for all the silent slaves still in bondage." Rockwell's vibrant storytelling, powerful content and moving author's note will likely send readers off to further reading about this extraordinary heroine. Christie (*The Palm of My Heart: Poetry by African American Children*) contributes stylized paintings that suggest a complex interior life for Sojourner. The artwork skillfully approaches the abstract twisting traditional perspective in a way that illuminates Sojourner's groundbreaking vision and voice. Ages 7-10. (Dec.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This picture book tells the story of Isabella, born into slavery, but freed by New York state law before the Civil War. When a former master sells Isabella's son Peter, acting against state law, Isabella takes the white man to court and wins. Her child is brought back from the South. In a dream, Isabella hears a voice telling her she must leave New York. So she begins to travel and changes her name to Sojourner Truth. As Sojourner, she fights against slavery and for women's rights, though the latter isn't covered in this book. Nor is the Civil War. What is in this book is inspiring, but it seems strange to me that the story of this important person in American history does not include her struggle for women's rights or the war which freed the slaves. Every time I read this book, I feel as if the story stops in the very middle of Sojourner Truth's life.

What better way to realize life as it existed for a person of color born into slavery, who did everything and more to break free the shackles and inspire countless new generations to live life to your fullest potential. Love this book.

Wonderful story about an important woman in history for home or a classroom. Love the illustrations as well.

Book was excellent...

Great book

Many a young reader will be shocked by the opening page of this story about slavery in the U.S. For the auction block from which a 9-year-old girl was sold in 1806 was in Kingston, N.Y., not Alabama or Mississippi. Isabella was sold only after a long day in which no bidders showed any interest--until the auctioneer threw in a flock of sheep. She was separated from her aged, ill parents, who were left to fend for themselves, having been worn out by cruel masters. Hell followed for Isabella, for her new master spoke English while she spoke Dutch--like most people in the Hudson valley. For not understanding, he whipped her so hard that her back bore the scars all the rest of her life. She was sold to a tavern-keeper and, when she was 13, to a neighboring farmer named John Dumont. At 16, she was six feet tall and could do the work of any man. She was forced to wed, against her will, and bore four daughters and a son. In 1817, New York enacted a law that would free all slaves on July 4, 1827. By then, Isabella was 28. But when Dumont reneged on his promise to free her, she ran to a nearby farm, believing that its abolitionist owners would save her. The Van Wageners bought and

freed her. Dumont, however, sold her son Peter to an Alabama plantation owner. To sell a slave out-of-state was then illegal in New York. Isabella took the unheard-of step of hiring a white lawyer to plead a court case for the return of her son. She won, he returned, she sent him to school, and he became a sailor on a whaling ship. After Peter left, Isabella dreamed that she should travel the U.S. and tell people of her bondage. She took the name of Sojourner Truth. The final pages of this adventure tell some of the accomplishments of this American heroine. The illustrations greatly compliment the story, accentuating the iron will of a woman who would not be bought, or silenced. The book concludes with a one-page author's note and a chronology of the events of Sojourner Truth's life. In the former, the author writes of those times when evil rules, and good people feel called upon to tell the truth to those who do not wish to hear. Sojourner Truth was such a person, and she lived in such a time. Children find this story inspirational. Alyssa A. Lappen

Very unsatisfying read. Seemed like dry facts cobbled together from someone's ramblings, then ended sort of with a whimper. I actually looked to see if there was a missing page as it ended so arbitrarily. Mentions son Peter, who she fought to have returned to the state. She wins in court, then instead of ending Peter's story with his mother's victory, it goes on to say he goes off to work on a ship, letters stop coming, and she figures he must be dead. Talk about pointless and anticlimactic.

Anne Rockwell's moving picture book biography of Sojourner Truth is a powerful and evocative story that will draw youngsters in and take them on a journey toward freedom with an amazing woman. Born into slavery, Isabella was taken away from her parents when she was only nine, sold three times, threatened, beaten and lost her own children to slavery before she was finally freed. Though she never learned to read or write, she challenged the system of buying and selling people in court, traveled around the country, spoke out against slavery and became one of the most powerful voices in the abolitionist movement. She was a sojourner, one who is only passing through and her mission was to speak the truth about the evils of slavery..... Ms Rockwell's passionate and eloquently written biography is complemented by Gregory Christie's beautifully rich paintings and together they've authored a story about this remarkable woman that's full of courage and strength. With an author's note and timeline at the end to augment and enhance discussions, Only Passing Through is a wonderful book, perfect for youngsters 9-12 and a story few will soon forget.

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