

*Ages  
4-8*

*SUSAN B. ANTHONY  
AND  
FREDERICK DOUGLASS*

# *Two Friends*

BY DEAN ROBBINS

ILLUSTRATED BY SEAN QUALLS

& SELINA ALKO

*Two Friends: Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass* By Dean Robbins, Illustrated by Sean Qualls & Selina Alko • HC: 978-0-545-39996-8 • \$17.99

## *Reading Guide*

In this beautiful, historically based picture book, Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass chat over tea, recounting similar stories about their efforts to win rights for women and African Americans. The premise of this particular exchange between the two is based on a statue in their hometown of Rochester, New York.

The text teaches about the fight for women's and African Americans' rights in an accessible, engaging manner for young children. *Two Friends* includes back matter with photos of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass.



# Pre-Reading

*Two Friends* introduces our youngest students to the idea that friends can work together to solve problems. From the cover to the title page and throughout the book, young children can explore similarities and differences and look for patterns to help understand the story.

## By Its Cover

*Two Friends* could be the book that introduces students for the first time to the historical fact of slavery in the United States, as well as the fact that we discriminated against women too. Consequently, it is useful to notice colors and gender, including the fact that Anthony is a white woman and Douglass is a black man. Keep in mind that books work best when we proceed at the student's pace and not when we think of books as didactic tools. Take cues for discussion points from students' interest and attention.

- As with any book geared for our youngest readers, begin with the cover.
- Have students list the cover elements independently.
- Young students may not recognize cursive writing, so listen carefully for your cue to interject this information.
- Encourage students to include adjectives.

## Making Predictions

Explain to students that good readers continuously make predictions all the way through the book, starting with the cover. Remind students that predictions are never right and never wrong—they simply reflect our best thinking based on what we already know. Note that a prediction is not simply a guess—instead, it is based on observations, thoughts, and experiences. If a prediction does not match what happens, we make new predictions. If our prediction does match, we make new, more detailed predictions.

- Record student predictions from just looking at the cover on a whiteboard or butcher paper.
- Take the dust jacket off the book (if possible) and check to see whether it matches the book. Check to see whether any students notice the color reversal pattern. If they do, ask them to predict the reason the illustrator made that choice.
- Explore the front and back endpapers and ask students for predictions about the colors.
- Show the title page silently for a bit longer than normal (about a minute) and see if students come up with any final predictions or share any additional thoughts.

## Reading the Text

Ask your students to listen silently and not ask any questions the first time you read through the book. Take time to inspect the artwork, but allow the text and art to speak for themselves without you giving any prompts or explanations. Your work with the cover, endpapers, and predictions have laid the foundation for the reading. What your students notice should guide your discussion as well as the activities you introduce.

- Read the book once more to analyze each page, or read the text of certain pages a second time if your students are responding to a particular page.
- After reading, collect and record student reactions and have students compare these responses to their initial predictions.





# Activities

## Venn Diagram Candles

Emphasize that when we work with our friends, we find more answers!

- Use a Venn diagram and have students find at least two things only true about Anthony, two things only true about Douglass, and two things that are the same for both.
- After students do this independently, ask them to come together as a group to fill out a class diagram.



## Drink and Dine and Discuss: Unfairness and Injustice

Children discover and come to understand serious issues in many different ways, from play to talking and listening. Young students, however, may not have the tools to identify or respond to chauvinism or racism. It takes knowledge and practice, especially practice recognizing a problem in the first place and practice talking about how that problem relates to them as a person.

- Discussion over dinner, or while eating or drinking, may be familiar to many young students. Brainstorm with your students (over “tea” or snacks) some of the issues that they believe contain unfairness or injustice. Point out to students that many adults at the time (and even today) think that Anthony and Douglass were unusual partners.
- In smaller groups, have your students do what Frederick and Susan did: drink and dine and discuss one of the problems from the list the class just created. If your classroom dynamic is such that you can have students “pick a partner that you do not play with at recess,” have them do this. If not, assign two to three students to work together. Solutions to problems of injustice are difficult for everyone, even adults. Encourage students to feel comfortable listing small personal steps that will make small differences.
- Bring the class back together and have each student present one idea for improving the problem.

## Working Together

- Have a group discussion and collect stories from students about how they worked with a friend to do something nice at school or at home.
- Make a poster or have students write and illustrate these stories about working together to do something nice.
- Find an object in your classroom that is too heavy for one student (maybe a desk or a big box or a shelf) and ask a student to move it (or ask the student what they would do if they were in charge of moving it).
- Note how long it takes your students to understand that many jobs are completed more quickly and more efficiently when we work together and then point that out when your class is discussing the process of working together. Create a list of tasks that are better done alone and tasks that are easier to do with help. Identify which list seems easier to make and discuss this with your class.





# Activities

## Human Rights

Much of *Two Friends* deals with basic human rights, which are guided by values of fairness, inclusion, respect (including respect for diversity), and cooperation. Young students may not have a clear idea of what this phrase means. Many will confuse “rights” with the idea of correctness and ability.

- Collect and record information from your students germane to their understanding of rights.
- Share pictures of a danger sign, filthy air, dirty water, spoiled food, dilapidated houses, etc. If possible, after sharing these images, share paired pictures that portray their opposites. Have students look at the pictures and make posters with the heading: “All people have the right to\_\_\_\_!”
- Since recess and play are such powerful motivators, use them to guide students toward thinking of cooperation and inclusion, basic human rights values.

Play a variation of musical chairs. Have six to ten (or more) chairs in a circle and invite students who identify with a certain descriptor (those who love soccer, for example) to sit in the chairs. Tell them that the only way they can continue to play is if they are on a chair when the music stops. Take away a chair each time, but the rules of this variation do not require just one student per chair. Don’t help students figure out how to do this, but do set the expectation by saying that you hope everyone will still be playing after five rounds. Play until a group figures out how to cooperate and work together to keep everyone included.



## When I Grow Up

In *Two Friends*, readers learn that women were not allowed to go to school and were expected only to take care of children. Depending on the maturity level of your students, there are many ways to approach this topic. You may find that your students want to engage more on this topic in discussion or with other activities.

- Have each student fill out a two-part speech bubble: People expect me to \_\_\_\_\_. I will surprise them when I \_\_\_\_\_. Although focusing on careers or sports or hobbies are good choices, they are not the only ones. Students will surprise us with their selections and many of these unexpected choices will be worth pursuing.

## Oration and Persuasion

Ignoring discrimination does not help our students and does nothing to improve relations among and between groups of people. This book is geared toward younger students—many of whom are not emotionally ready for the more difficult or graphic details of the suffragette and emancipation struggles. Each teacher will need to gauge the maturity of their class and decide how to frame the spreads showing that “some people liked [the] ideas and some people did not.” Note: Students may surprise you with their ability to handle tough topics. Follow their lead and continue to assess the class’s capacity to talk about these issues throughout the conversation.

- Both Anthony and Douglass made speeches that shared their ideas for how to make the world a better place. Have students act out what they believe was in the speeches. Have them dress up and deliver speeches to the class.
- Much of this book is about the fact that Anthony and Douglass had the job of changing the minds of the people they spoke to. Find a topic relevant to your students and have them debate it, either in small groups or one-on-one. The topic does not have to be serious—the goal is to have students practice trying to change a classmate’s mind.
- Examine the spreads in which Anthony gives her speech and Douglass gives his. Before discussing, have students show with their bodies how they would look if they agreed or disagreed with a speaker.  
  
If your class needs help with this, pretend imagining a scenario that will affect them, for example if all students should have more recess time vs no lunch time at school. Have the students examine these spreads and sort the individuals in the crowd into one of three groups: supporters, not supporters, and not sure. Count how many are in each group. Have students identify the body language in the illustrations that drives their decision.



## Activities

## Discussion of Slavery

*Two Friends* addresses the fact of slavery as well as discrimination against women. While any discussion of slavery requires guidance from the teacher, engaging in this topic is dependent on classroom dynamics. Before discussing with your class, set expectations by explaining that slavery is a part of American history, and that all students, regardless of their ethnicity, need to know and understand this topic. Please refer to the bibliography in *Two Friends* for resources that may give you ideas on how to talk about this topic with your students. Both slavery and women's rights are serious and complicated issues that demand a considerate and respectful approach.

## Words Support Us

- Several spreads in this book use the text of actual words by Anthony and Douglass as a design element, sometimes as if they are walking on word carpets.

Have teams of two or more work together to come up with words and phrases that they would like to walk upon and images that could also convey those messages.

- If you have access to big rolls of butcher paper, you can use this to make your own life-size word carpet. Students should practice writing favorite words on regular writing paper first. Then, tape a large section

of paper to the floor and have students fill it with the words, phrases, artwork, and designs they have brainstormed together. Using *Two Friends* as an example, have students decorate their word carpets with collage elements. Show them the spread in which Anthony and Douglass promise to help each other. See whether students notice the stars and the blue arc and connect any meaning to that design element.

- Repeat this with words they would like to have as goals, or words that would help when we are angry or discouraged. Brainstorm other sets of words that they would like to see in this format.

## Detailed Discussions

Noticing details is an important early elementary reading focus. *Two Friends* has books depicted on the cover (and on several other pages), candles, stars, cloth ribbons, word art, globes, and more. Educators may use these details to reinforce concepts of print, provide math activities, explore other content areas, and to deepen comprehension. Use the following questions to explore the text and art further.

- What do you think the books on the front cover are about?
- We see candles on the title page; when do we light candles today? How do candles make us feel?
- How many stars are in the book? How do you feel when you see stars?
- How many trees have words on them?
- What colors are on the cloth ribbons that are on the voting booth page? On the same spread, what is the feather for?

- How many insects did you find?
- How many cell phones or telephones did you find?
- How many cars are there?
- In looking at the picture details, how many years ago did Anthony and Douglass live?
- Will other students your age enjoy this book? Please explain why or why not and include a picture.





# About the Creators



**DEAN ROBBINS** is an award-winning writer based in Madison, Wisconsin. He contributes arts, features, and news stories to publications around the country and reads his cultural commentaries on Wisconsin Public Radio. Dean was also a longtime newspaper editor and syndicated television critic. This is his first picture book. Visit him online at [deanrobbins.net](http://deanrobbins.net).

**SEAN QUALLS** has illustrated many celebrated books for children, including *The Case for Loving* by Selina Alko, *Giant Steps to Change the World* by Spike Lee and Tonya Lewis Lee, *Little Cloud and Lady Wind* by Toni Morrison and her son Slade, *Dizzy* by Jonah Winter, and *Before John Was a Jazz Giant* by Carole Boston Weatherford, for which Sean received a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor. He lives in Brooklyn, New York, with his wife, Selina Alko, and their two children. Visit him online at [seanqualls.com](http://seanqualls.com).



**SELINA ALKO** is the author of *The Case for Loving*, which she illustrated with her husband, Sean Qualls. She is the author and illustrator of several other acclaimed books for children, including *Daddy Christmas & Hanukkah Mama* and *B Is for Brooklyn*. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with Sean Qualls and their two children. Visit her online at [selinaalko.com](http://selinaalko.com).

This guide incorporates the following Common Core standards:

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

About the Author of This Guide: Ed Spicer has about two decades of experience working with his beloved first graders in Allegan, Michigan. He served on the Caldecott, the Printz, and many more ALA committees. Ed does freelance work for publishers and authors on ways to understand, extend, and enjoy great literature.

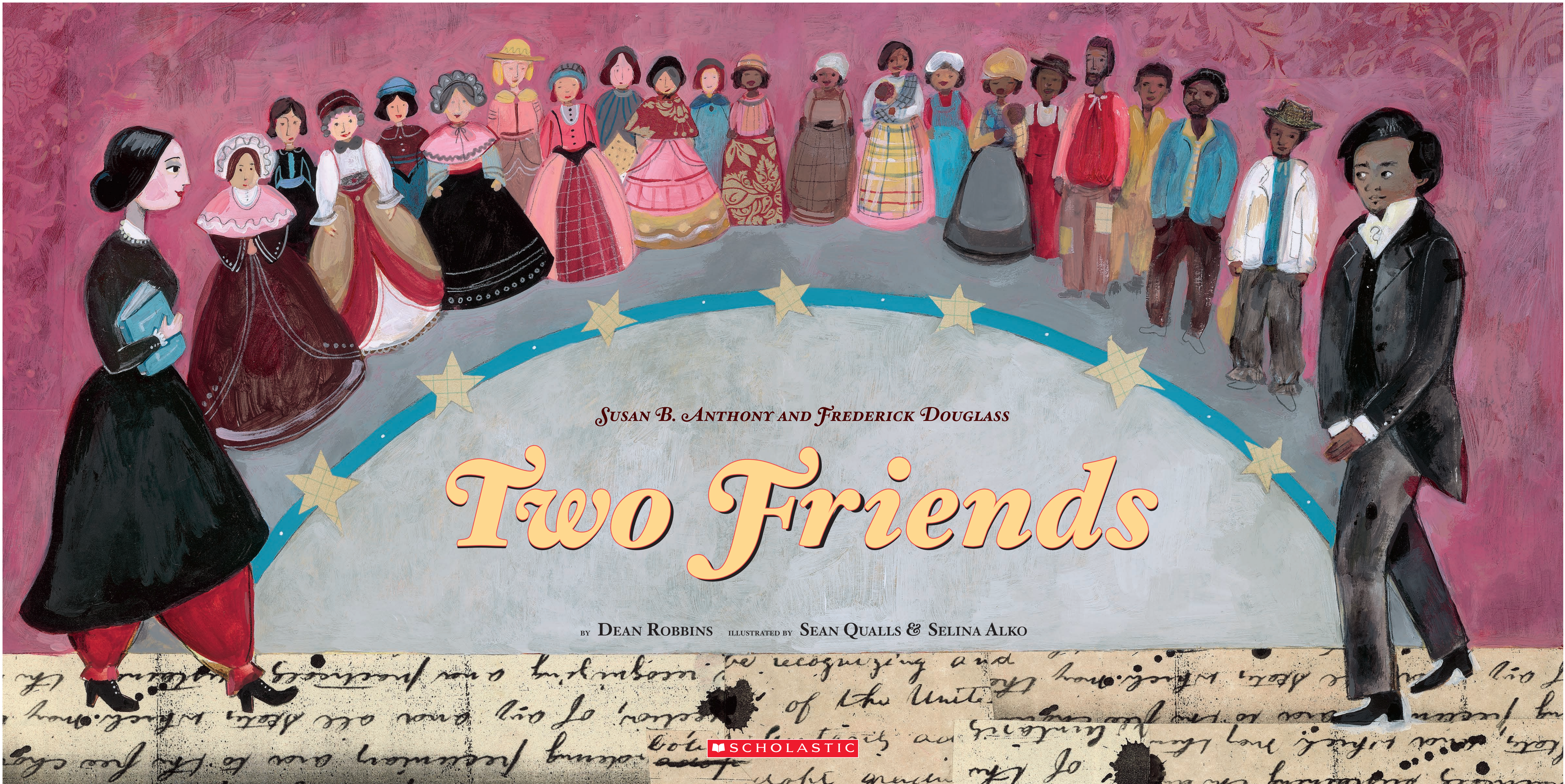
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