

Poem: The Library of the World (Gold Key)

People are books
Filling the library of the world.
Each has their own story,
Every name a title.
And while similarities can be found,
Each is different from the next.

A person's lifetime is a story,
A plot filled with highs and lows.

Adolescence is the exposition,
Revealing the personality and beliefs of the character.
Adulthood is the rising action, fluctuating with conflicts big and small,
While plot twists encourage a change in mood.

A plethora of emotions endlessly consumes the story line:
Parts that cause grinning, others that cause weeping,
Groaning, laughing, and teeth-clenching, to name a few.

Many stories, tales filled with emotion,
are only partially written, events inscribed as life goes on.
Others instead hold the memories of loved ones who no longer live.
Passing away is the resolution,
An end to their life but a beginning to their legacy.

Each story in this library cannot be judged by its cover
Since the surface isn't everything:
It's just the tip of the iceberg.
And even within its pages,
There are chapters not read out loud
And a subplot between the lines.

All in all, every book is different,
No one exactly alike.
However, together they make the diverse library of the world,
An impeccable variety of stories to share.

Flash Fiction: Our Right to Vote (Silver Key)

“Women’s right to vote soon part of constitution... Finally!” Virginia Washburn, a friend of mine, read proudly from the local newspaper into the humid, June morning air. “It’s about time! Congress has finally started the process of making the most necessary change.”

“Yes, it has been long anticipated.” I uncertainly replied, grabbing my energetic four-year-old daughter Ruthy’s hand as she attempted to scramble away. Despite Virginia’s delight in this amendment, I was not sure what to think of it. Was it too soon? This was quite the significant revision to our national government, something many of us had dreamed of but never quite wrapped our minds around.

I was still pondering this later while I, accompanied by Ruthy, completed my errands in town. As I waited for the cashier at the general store to ring up my purchases of sugar, flour, and paper, I let my thoughts wander to what this change could mean in my life. Many women that were part of women’s suffrage campaigns, like Virginia, wholeheartedly believed that women should have a voice in the government, but what if our voice is too overpowering? Is this truly the best decision?

“Mommy! Mother! Look at the picture!” Ruthy called excitedly as she tugged at my skirt and jabbed her finger in the air to our left.

“Ruthy! Pointing is impolite!” I scolded her, batting her hand down, but looked to where she had been pointing, a poster publicizing a women’s suffrage meeting. There had been a lot of these signs, both for and against women’s suffrage, hanging around the town in the time period leading up to the passing of the nineteenth amendment. Many women’s suffrage groups, like the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the more radical National Women’s Party that my friend Virginia participated in, held regular meetings and were always searching for new members to build their campaigns. I had never joined any of the groups, for my husband, George, would never have approved, and I, too, was uneasy when it came to what rights women have. Additionally, people who opposed the idea of women’s suffrage created posters that aspired to bring into light all of the negative aspects of the suffrage campaigns. However, my daughter had no idea, of course, what these drawings represented; she simply enjoyed the looks of them.

After this occurrence, I made my way home, Ruthy holding my hand and skipping by my side. We passed by many townspeople going about their daily chores as usual, but I could hear many snippets of conversation specific to the new governmental change. Soon enough, we had reached the red front door of our home and entered inside.

Later that evening, as my family sat down for supper, I noticed my husband, George, wrinkling his brow moodily and staring at the tablecloth, seemingly deep in thought. “What’s wrong?” I questioned as I pulled out my chair, concerned with his mood.

“This dislikable new amendment they have passed,” he sighed with a shake of his head, disapproval dripping from every syllable. My husband did not believe in the rights of women at all. According to him, men ought to be the only ones voting or gaining any political power. “I think it’s sufficient enough for one man to represent the vote of his household. There is no need for the women to gain this ability.”

I passively nodded in agreement but realized instead what good could actually come out of this, if my husband eventually allowed me to vote. In the past, although I never said it out loud, his vote sometimes had not truly reflected both of our beliefs. Having a vote could mean I wouldn’t have to depend on him to represent me, which could be beneficial.

Throughout the meal that evening, our conversation turned to lighter topics, but thoughts of the monumental change still lingered.

After washing the dishes and putting Ruthy to bed, I pulled out a sheet of paper and a pen within the confines of my bedroom, and I began to write a letter to my sister Margaret. After the greeting and introductory small talk, I started writing about what had been on my mind all day. *I am sure you have heard of the new amendment Congress had passed. I am not quite sure what to think of it. George has already disapproved, but I’m wondering if maybe it’s not such a bad revision, if I would get a chance to represent myself. What do you think?* I updated her on a few of the other events in my life and then closed with my signature. As I started to place the letter in the envelope, I paused and thought one more time of what this could mean for me but also for Ruthy. Do I really want her to grow up in a world where her opinions are dismissed solely because she is female? She and future generations of women might benefit from the opportunity to speak their minds freely, without the criticism and disapproval of people who believe females should have no say. This new amendment, though unfamiliar, may be a step towards a more ideal world, where a woman’s voice is valued rather than ignored.

