

Wallace Women Discovery Kit

A Conversation with Susan and Zerelda Skit Script

Best for Grades 4-11

Goal: to engage students in the ways social issues affected 19th-century women

Needed supplies: Parts and Props list; copies of scripts; 30 minutes (does not include rehearsal time)

- 1) Teacher gives parts to students. If there are not enough students to fill all the parts, then teacher decides which parts to combine. (5 minutes)
- 2) If you check out the Discovery Kit from the Museum, have students select costumes from the clothing in the kit. Students review lines as time allows. (at least 5 minutes)
- 3) Students perform the skit for the rest of the class. (20 minutes)

Adaptations and Extensions

- Teacher follows skit with discussion about the legislation for suffrage and temperance, and that the prohibition amendment was repealed (the only amendment to be).
- Students perform skit as a “reader’s theater” without costumes or props.
- Students share the skit with other classes or groups.

English/Language Arts Standards

- **1. Reading Word Recognition, Fluency, and Vocabulary Development**
- **3. Reading Literary Response and Analysis**
- **7. Listening and Speaking Skills, Strategies, and Applications**

Social Studies Standards

- **3. Geography: Physical Systems**

Art Standards

- **7. Creating Art: Production**
- **14. Integrated Studies**

Wallace Women Discovery Kit

Parts:

Narrator
Susan Wallace
Zerelda Wallace
Esther
Sally
Irene
Secretary
Mayor Bookwaiter
Congressman Brown
Congressman Smith
Congressman Jones

Props:

3 chairs
1 desk
Paper
Pen (available in discovery kit)
Costumes (available in discovery kit):
 Bonnets or aprons for women
 Vests for men

2 grips that move props (non-speaking)

A Conversation with Susan and Zerelda

INTRODUCTION

Narrator: This is a story of two Hoosier women. Susan Wallace was married to General Lew Wallace, a man of many talents. She was an author, world traveler, and mother. Zerelda Wallace was step-mother to General Lew Wallace. When her husband died, she got involved in church and made money by letting people rent rooms in her house. We meet Susan and Zerelda in 1875 in Indianapolis.

SCENE 1

Mayor's office

Mayor
Susan
Sally
Esther
Irene
Secretary
Desk/table, chair

Narrator: Susan is going with a group of women to the Mayor's office to talk about banning wine from the city.

(Knock at Mayor's door. Secretary answers it.)

Secretary: Can I help you?

Sally: Yes, we have an appointment with the Mayor. We're with the Local Council of Women.

Secretary: Oh, yes. Just a minute. *(She goes to the mayor. He's sitting at his desk writing.)* Mayor Bookwaiter, a group from the Local Council of Women is here to see you.

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Mayor: Oh, yes. Send them in. (*he puts his pen down and walks to the front of the desk. Secretary shows the group of women to the Mayor's desk.*)

Esther: Mayor Bookwaiter, we're here to talk to you about getting rid of the abuse of wine in this town.

Irene: Yes, Mayor...Do you know how many wine rooms are operating in town?

Mayor: Well, no, I'm not really sure.

Sally: Too many, Mayor Bookwaiter. As concerned citizens we must take action against this evil.

Esther: Yes, think of all the young men and women who fall into the habit of drinking because of these wine rooms!

Susan: And then they travel throughout the area and set a bad example for young people in other towns.

Irene: We must ask you to close down the wine rooms and end the whole cycle.

Mayor: Well, ladies, I hadn't thought of it that way.

Susan: But now that we called your attention to it, will you take action?

Mayor: Yes, I can assure you that I will take active measures to crack down on drinking in this town. I'll treat it like I did gambling. I've practically gotten rid of that, you know.

Sally: Yes, we heard of your success getting rid of gambling.

Esther: We hope you can do the same thing with this evil wine.

Irene: Thank you, Mayor Bookwaiter.

Susan: We appreciate your help. Good-bye, Mayor Bookwaiter.

Mayor: Good-bye. (*They shake hands, and the women leave.*)

SCENE 2

Indiana Legislature

Chairs for 3 Congressmen

Congressman Smith

Congressman Jones

Congressman Brown

Zerelda

Paper for petition

Narrator: At the same time, Zerelda is finishing a speech to the Indiana Legislature about the evils of drinking.

Zerelda: Gentlemen of the Legislature, the people have spoken: drinking alcohol leads to every kind of evil, and we want it to be banned from the state. I have as my proof a petition signed by 10,000 of the best women in Indiana.

Congressman Smith: Did you say it's signed by WOMEN?

Zerelda: Yes, Congressman, I have 10,000 signatures.

Congressman Jones: But they're from women, not from men.

Congressman Brown: It might as well be signed by 10,000 mice!

Zerelda: Excuse me, Congressmen! The women who signed this petition obey the law, pay their taxes, and want to do what is best for the people of their communities.

Congressman Smith: Well, Mrs. Wallace, I'm afraid we can't help you.

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Congressman Jones: No, we were not elected to follow our opinions, but to do what our voters want us to do.

Congressman Brown: And since you're a woman and can't vote, we can't do what you want us to do.

Zerelda: Well, if I have to be a voter for you to listen to me, then I guess I'll have to work for that goal. Thank you, Congressman: today you have made me a suffragist. *(She shakes Congressman Brown's hand and leaves.)*

SCENE 3

Susan's room

2 chairs

Desk

Paper and pen

Susan

Zerelda

Narrator: Later that night, Susan is writing a letter when she gets a knock at the door. *(Knock at the door. Susan answers the door and lets Zerelda in.)*

Susan: Mother Wallace! I'm so glad to see you. Come sit down. *(They both sit.)* I want to tell you about the success we made for temperance today.

Zerelda: Really? What happened?

Susan: Well, I went with the Local Council of Women to ask Mayor Bookwaiter to close down the wine rooms in town, and he agreed to take action! Isn't that exciting! Without wine rooms, think of how much closer we are to banning alcohol completely.

Zerelda: Yes, that sounds like a great success. I'm so glad your request was granted. I wish I could say the same for mine.

Susan: Oh, dear. Did something bad happen today?

Zerelda: Yes, a big disappointment. I gave a speech on temperance to the Indiana State Legislature, asking them to ban alcohol from the state.

Susan: I remember you had the petition with all those signatures.

Zerelda: I brought it to show them, and the congressmen almost laughed at me. They said it might as well be signed by 10,000 mice!

Susan: What did they mean by that?

Zerelda: Well, they said they were not elected to do what they feel is right, but rather to do what the voters tell them to do. So, since women signed the petition and we can't vote, they didn't even look at it!

Susan: Then I guess we'll just have to encourage the men we know to vote for temperance.

Zerelda: What! I'm convinced that if the legislature will only listen to voters, then women need to be voters so our voice can be heard.

Susan: Oh, nonsense, Mother Wallace. You're just angry from the disappointment today. Voting and politics are for men, not women.

Zerelda: I disagree with you, Susan. How are we to help people when we have no say in the laws of our country?

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Susan: I just told you: by encouraging the men we know to vote for things we believe in. Women don't know much about politics, so how could we vote?

Zerelda: I'm surprised at your answer. You read so much, you could learn about politics very quickly.

Susan: I suppose I could learn about it, but why would I want to? The world was made for men, they have run it for about six thousand years, and it is quite likely that they will rule to the Last Day.

Zerelda: You're a published writer, and that's usually a man's field. How do you justify breaking down that barrier, but not political barriers?

Susan: The reason women want to write is that their lives have been hidden for so long. But, writing doesn't pay very well, and it's up to men to go out into the world and support their families. That includes at election time.

Zerelda: They may support their families, but that doesn't mean they can represent the entire country by asking only half the people what they think. How can women's opinions be heard?

Susan: Well, as wives and mothers it is our duty to influence the men in our lives.

Zerelda: But what better way to influence people than by voting? After all, the only place where the American citizen expresses his acts, his opinion, and his power is at the ballot-box.

Susan: There are other ways to influence things. Look at all the things women did to help our brave soldiers during the war! Would you want women to become soldiers, since you want us to enter politics?

Zerelda: The fact that women are not soldiers makes this issue more important. The votes of women who want peace could balance out the votes of men who want war. I feel that wives and mothers should have a say in whether or not their husbands and sons go off to war.

Susan: They can say it at home. Suffrage is an issue that people are tired of. We may get the vote before long, we may hold office, we may be angels, but we will never be men.

Zerelda: I won't argue with you there. I don't want to be a man, I just want to be a voter.

Susan: I don't want to be either. I can see that we won't agree on this tonight.

Zerelda: It doesn't look like we will. I'll say good-night, then, and maybe we can talk about it some other time.

Susan: Fine. Good night.

Zerelda: Good night. (She goes out the door. Susan goes back to her desk and sits down to write again.)

Narrator: Susan and Zerelda always agreed that drinking alcohol was bad, but they never agreed about women voting. Susan kept writing for newspapers, but she is best known for helping her husband, General Lew Wallace, with his books. Zerelda made speeches about suffrage all over the country. She died before women got to vote, but it finally happened in 1920.

THE END