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Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy. by Louise W. Knight

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Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy.

Louise W. Knight,

U of Chicago P, 2005. 598 pp.
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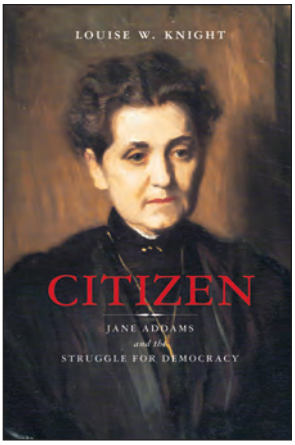

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Louise W. Knight's greatest strength in *Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy* is the meticulous attention to detail that she brings to her topic. Unbelievably, Knight covers only the first thirty-nine years of Jane Addams' life over the weighty 582-page tome. Knight's 2005 work follows on the heels of Victoria Bissell Brown's 2004 The Education of Jane Addams, which covers nearly the same time period in almost as much length.

With its expanse of detail, this book may not obviously be targeted toward readers unfamiliar with Jane Addams' accomplishments. However, its depth does not necessarily exclude this work from all but the most ambitious graduate student's reading list. The book's sixteen-chapter structure is divided into two parts. The first part, "The Given Life," consists of seven chapters detailing her development form birth to age eighteen and provides insight into Addams' family, education, and faith backgrounds. The second part, "The Chosen Life," is comprised of nine chapters that focus on Addams' life in Chicago through age thirty-nine. Its organization is a necessity in making the wealth of information easy to access.

Citizen is not a typical example of a composition text that would be helpful for instructors. The extensive history provided so outweighs any literacy discussion as to make the reading of this book in its entirety, at least for a composition instructor's purpose, a labor of love. However, one area of Addams' educational life will provide discussion topics for any literacy class, regardless of students' prior knowledge of Jane Addams' life and works. This book would provide a nice complement to studies of John Dewey and Horace Mann or supplement a background for a working-class pedagogy movement that would give rise to Paulo Freire, Gerald Graff, and Ira Shor.

Composition and literacy instructors will appreciate Knight's highlights of Addams' love for rhetoric that developed during her time spent, initially unwillingly, at the Rockford Seminary. Addams was persuaded by her father to attend the school where he had been named a

member of the board of trustees. As a junior in the spring semester of 1880, she was introduced to Alexander Bain's *Composition and Rhetoric*, a text which "stressed the importance of establishing an emotional connection with the audience. Men follow 'the lead of others. . . through imitation or sympathy.' This approach had many adherents. If you wish to be a master orator, another expert observed, you must possess the 'art of . . . identifying yourself with the feelings of your hearers . . . [and] the power . . . of making their thoughts your thoughts, or your thoughts theirs'" (95). These ideas can be easily adapted by instructors to open up discussion on ideas of language and audience.

As president of the Castalian Society, one of Rockford Seminary's literary societies, Addams instituted a junior oratory symposium. Her topic examined the future goals of her generation's educated woman. She claimed "Work. . . is the answer because it is central to happiness" (96). Knight's analysis of this event demonstrates the effect this had on Addams' rhetoric: "For the rest of her life, Jane Addams would often use this allusive and elusive rhetorical style. It would prove both a strength and a liability. Because she could present radical ideas gently, she often drew the politically cautious into new ways of thinking" (98). Again, this section can be pulled from the book and presented to students with the encouragement that they consider self-analysis of their rhetorical styles and the consequences of their rhetorical techniques.

Most of the book, particularly the later chapters dealing with Addams' time at Hull House, would be beneficial for professors interested in promoting social justice in the classroom. This work encourages conversations on social equality and the need for individuals in positions of power to work to affirm ideals of egalitarianism. Knight also focuses on Addams' attempts to translate her strong faith into action in late 1800s Chicago. Issues of class and gender are also raised, which help clarify the portrait of a well-to-do woman who felt a call to help those in need. Addams' role in Chicago committee politics during several labor conflicts, notably the Pullman Strike of 1894, is used to highlight her flirtations with Marxist ideals. It discusses Addams' theories of the need for an educated workforce in a democracy and shows how her work with the community gave her life meaning.

One aspect of Knight's work focuses on Addams' response to the Panic of 1893, which saw her named to several public committees, among them the Central Relief Association (CRA), through which she helped provide aid and suggest work to families in financial straits. This section of the book could be used by instructors to encourage students to discuss issues of social needs that they see being addressed (or not addressed) and facilitate discussion of the translation of social values from theory to practice. This

section focuses on the need for literacy to empower people to protect themselves legally and financially.

This text would be most helpful for students considering social work careers as well as those who wish to address issues of poverty, classism, and labor relations. Its use in the classroom will encourage discussions that challenge social mores and examine the connection between faith and action. Knight's case study of Addams, while not ideal as a complete text for the classroom, does a thorough job of creating a portrait of a woman who was dedicated to benefitting with her community and empowering its citizens.