



American Heroines

By Kay Bailey Hutchison
ISBN: 9780060566364

Introduction

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison's vivid personality permeates every page of this history of American women. She has devoted her life to helping shape her country, and she takes pride in the accomplishments of these women against great difficulties and obstacles. Covering pioneers, political crusaders, teachers, artists, nurses, athletes, and more, *American Heroines* profiles women who share a determination to break through conventional understandings of "the way things always have been." Senator Hutchison has generously brought these women to life and made them more available to readers as the true heroines they were. Her book will no doubt inspire readers to think about the way their own lives might affect the future.

Questions for Discussion

- In her introduction, Senator Hutchison writes, "No history can be written appropriately without acknowledging the part women have played in building the greatness of our country" (Page xix). Why is this true? Do you believe that women are no longer being left out of history-making today?
- With which of these women did you most identify, and why?
- Mary Austin Holly, the senator's ancestor, writes, "Women have the capacity for greatness, but they require occasions to bring it out" (Page 7). What does she mean? How is this reflected in her own life?
- In what ways did the struggles of early Texas settlements provide more and different opportunities for women than the rest of the country might have had at the time?
- Adina De Zavala and Clara Driscoll were both devoted to saving the Alamo as a historical monument. What was the source of their disagreement over this project? Was either of them completely wrong?
- On page 50, Senator Hutchison writes, "Elizabeth Seton frankly admitted that her devotion to her own children represented a 'first claim, which must ever remain inviolate.'" Is this statement reflected in her life? This is such a crucial issue for many professional women. Has it been a concern in your own life?
- Clara Barton's story certainly illustrates that women can recover from setback after setback and go on to achieve great things. Barton's achievements are still making a difference in our world today. Are there women today whose achievements you feel will carry into the future?
- Some of these great women, such as Mary Cassatt, do not always fulfill society's understanding of being friendly or nice. Are women in general judged differently according to these standards than are men? Why or why not?
- In the Senator's interviews with women of today, one of the answers most often given to question of what quality is required for success is "energy." Why is this quality so crucial? Do you think that energy is something one is born with, or can it be learned?

About the Author

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson grew up in La Marque, Texas, and graduated from the University of Texas and the UT Law School. She was twice elected to the Texas House of Representatives. In 1990 she was elected Texas state treasurer, and in 1993, she became the first woman elected to represent Texas in the U.S. senate. Seven years later, more than four million Texans reelected her to a second full term. In 2001 she was elected vice chairman of the Senate Republican Conference, becoming one of the top five leaders of Senate Republicans and the only woman. Senator Hutchinson lives in Dallas with her husband, Ray, an attorney, and their daughter, Bailey, and son, Houston.