

Student Name

Date

Learning about Betty Ford

Article Title: *Back in View, a First Lady with Her Own Legacy*

Article Link: <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/students/pop/articles/31betty.html>

Betty Ford became the First Lady in 1974 when her husband, Gerald Ford, became president. This article describes how she was a different First Lady in her candor from the ones that came before her. She had her own ideas and spoke her mind on important issues while most First Ladies before her did not. She followed the fashions and fads of the 1970s and voiced her opinions on the concerns of women and mothers. Because she was so honest in her opinions, she changed how Americans viewed the role of First Lady.

The purpose of this article was to explain the legacy that Betty Ford created while she was First Lady. The author, Jennifer Steinhauer, points out that Betty Ford had a different style as First Lady and answers questions about why Mrs. Ford was comfortable speaking out on controversial issues. She did not plan on being a First Lady. Her husband had been the Speaker of the House and was appointed to the Vice-Presidency in 1973. He became president when Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 and Mrs. Ford became First Lady. The article quotes a story from Betty Ford's press secretary about her uncertainty about what to do as a First Lady.

Everything changed two months later when Mrs. Ford had a mastectomy to treat her breast cancer. Any uncertainty she had about her role disappeared and she talked honestly about her battle with breast cancer to the American people. At that time, most people did not discuss breast cancer publicly and Mrs. Ford did so other women would learn more about tools to detect and treat breast cancer. Betty Ford campaigned for the Equal Rights Amendment, spoke about women's rights, and voiced her support of abortion rights. These were issues that First Ladies before Betty Ford never discussed. These stories support the author's belief that Mrs. Ford changed the way that Americans view the role of First Lady.

The important concepts in this article focus on the role of the First Lady of the United States. Betty Ford's actions redefined the role of First Lady. The author describes her contribution to breast cancer awareness, women's rights, and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse and supports these contributions with stories and quotes. The author concludes that Betty Ford has left a legacy for all First Ladies to be free to express their opinions on many topics related to politics and current issues of the day.