Rebel Girls:

The Other American Heroes

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Some rules are meant to be broken. The history of America is full of rule breaking, of breaking with tradition, and of breaking free. That’s not to say that it all happened at once, but rather over centuries and into today. But had the first rules not been broken, the restrictions of the past would continue to bind the America of today as well as the America of tomorrow. The rule breakers of the past have paved the way for the rule breakers and game changers of today, but who were these rebels of yesterday? While the faces that come to mind consist of the founding fathers and men in uniform, their actions only achieved so much in the grand scheme of things, and it is the faces that have not been identified which complete the story of America’s rebellious history. Change knows no gender, and can occur by the actions of anyone daring enough to take initiative and step out of line. The history of America’s women is still being revealed and still being told, but the effects of their actions can be witnessed anywhere in today’s modern America.

The actions of America’s female protagonists as well as their perseverance through trials and tribulations are an example to be followed, and their accounts have been made known through literary means in order to inspire future acts of rebellion for change, from male and female rebels alike. Having grown up alongside Mary “Jacky” Faber through her multiple and curious accounts in the *Bloody Jack* series, I was influenced to pursue writing and exploration into the world of literature, and know the same and more can happen for any young reader seeking to escape to the past in order to find answers to his or her present. Her incredibly flawed and headstrong character provides a sense of realism to the historically inspired narrative, making her story both riveting and applicable to today’s readers in their search for self and purpose. The themes addressed in Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Seeds of America* trilogy provide insight into modern day discrimination, relations, and patriotism, all of which are wholly present in today’s politically charged atmosphere. By looking back, young readers of today are arming themselves against present and future tyrannies, aided by the knowledge of those who have acted, fought, and rebelled before them.

The untold stories of American rebellion represented in fiction reveal what it takes to achieve true change, and how it requires a break with convention and with propriety in order to become a reality. The girls and young ladies featured in these novels possess a sense of agency discouraged in women in those times, claiming the masculinity denied them while maintaining and embracing their natural femininity, proving that the two are far from mutually exclusive. These stories, both based on reality as well as those steeped in fiction, show what women and girls are capable of, despite the expectations projected onto them and the discriminations held against them, fighting alongside their male counterparts for the equality they earn daily. The victories celebrated, trials overcome, and tragedies survived make up the story of women in America, each piece integral to relating a full and truthful account of rebellion against injustice and fight for equality.

Without the knowledge of who came before and what had to be overcome, the privileges and freedoms celebrated today mean next to nothing, their history being the thing that gives meaning to an otherwise empty existence. Because women’s suffrage, rights to equal status, and break with convention had to be fought for, required rebellion and the courage to reject the status quo on the battlefield of societal norms and ages of expectations and discriminations, their significance stands above the declaration of the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness by men alone. The acknowledgement of women’s role in shaping America, though long overdue, is only just gaining recognition and deserves the attention of the current and future generations that now enjoy the freedoms gained by those brave enough to fight for it. These stories of impropriety, bravery, and perseverance must be told in order to inspire future acts of rebellion for good by the boldest generation of all, teens.