

**AN APPEAL**  
***BREAKING THE BARRIER OF NORTHERN RESISTANCE TO ANTISLAVERY***

Maielle Merriam  
Junior Division  
Individual Website  
Student-composed words: 1,181  
Multimedia: 2:51 minutes  
Process paper words: 455

I first became aware of the abolitionists' struggle with Northern resistance when reading the speeches of Abby Kelley Foster in *The Liberator*. As a native New Englander, I was surprised to learn that prejudice against the antislavery cause had been so common in the North. Curious to know more, I borrowed Lawrence Lader's *The Bold Brahmins* from my local library, and decided on this topic for my project because I was inspired by the moral courage and determination of the abolitionists. Among the many fascinating antislavery figures, Lydia Maria Child stood out to me as the perfect example of a Northerner who broke away from mainstream beliefs and made significant sacrifices to promote antislavery.

Three main sources were indispensable in my research: *The Bold Brahmins* by Lawrence Lader, Carolyn Karcher's comprehensive biography of Child, *The First Woman in the Republic*, and Child's own letters. To explore Child's influence on her contemporaries, I used biographies and recollections by those who knew her. The literary journal *The North American Review* helped me to understand Child's prestige as an author before she published *An Appeal*.

I chose the website format because it allowed me to present the quotes and images I had found. After deciding on Child as a focus for my project, I began researching her life widely. As I realized that I could never express all of my points in the space allowed, I went through a painful process of reduction and revision to keep my project within the word limit. I ended up narrowing my thesis down to a single one of the several barriers that Child broke. After becoming eligible to compete at the national level, I made significant revisions based on the state judges' feedback. These revisions included rewriting much of the text and finding additional images for the website.

Before the Civil War was even in sight, one obstacle to abolition was Northern resistance. The question of emancipation could never have been asked or answered unless Northerners took action. But racial prejudice and business interests caused most Northerners to object to antislavery agitation, often in violent ways. To combat this, Child wrote *An Appeal*. As most abolitionist writings were not permitted to pass through Southern post offices, Child knew that her primary audience was Northerners. Those who were influenced by *An Appeal* went on to complete Child's work of breaking the barrier of Northern resistance, creating the conditions for the Civil War and emancipation. Child helped to break that barrier so that the North turned its resistance from the abolitionists toward the Southern slaveholders.