

Mary Wollstonecraft - I

Lead: While she did not found the women's right's movement, Mary Wollstonecraft, inspired those who did. She helped people begin to understand that the limits of liberty could be cast widely, even to women.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: She grew up in the home of a prosperous weaver, the oldest daughter among six children. As the years passed Edward Wollstonecraft evolved into a drunken lout who beat his wife, offspring and even the family

dog, but as her mother faded into hopeless denial, Mary kept the family intact, resisting her father's violence while she devoted her childhood to raising her younger siblings. A brief formal education ending in her fifteenth year was soon married to her native intelligence, inquisitiveness, and resolve and Mary began the long path of disappointment and work that led to that brief but brilliant writing career that opened minds and sensibilities to new role for women in the modern age.

For a time, in her early twenties, Wollstonecraft harbored lingering sentiments born of her cut short childhood, feelings of martyrdom and

lost opportunity. She worked as a seamstress, started a primary school, acted as a governess to wealthy families, and, under the tutelage of London publisher, Joseph Johnson, wrote her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, and began her first novel. In 1787 Wollstonecraft settled in London. Johnson introduced her to his circle of friends, which was among the most brilliant in city society at that time. Joseph Priestly, William Blake, Thomas Paine, William Godwin, accepted her almost as “one of the boys,” but she was getting on with a useful career. Her *Original Stories for Children* went into multiple editions and she was a regular contributor to Thomas Christie’s *Analytical Review*. Next

time: *Vindication*.

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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Todd, Janet M. *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Tomkiewicz, Shirley. "The First Feminist," *Horizon* (Spring, 1972):73-77.

<http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/woll.htm>

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