



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 6, WEBISODE 4

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview

Many Americans began to see that the concept of liberty for all as outlined in the Declaration of Independence must be more broadly applied to women. Women desired greater opportunities for education, and greater economic and political rights—including the right to vote. Judith Sargent Murray argued that women were intellectually equal to men. In 1837, Mary Lyon, an early advocate of higher education for women, founded Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary, one of the first institutions for higher learning for women. Elizabeth Blackwell, after being rejected by nearly thirty medical schools because of her gender, persevered and eventually became the first American woman doctor. Although women labored persistently for abolition, their opportunities were limited; women who spoke in public, such as the Grimké sisters, faced criticism for “unwomanly” behavior. The fledgling woman suffrage movement benefited from the determined efforts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton



Let's Discuss

Teacher Directions

1. Ask the students the following questions.

- What political limitations did women face at this time?
- What educational limitations did women face at this time?
- Who was Elizabeth Blackwell?
- Who was Mary Lyon?
- Who were Sarah and Angelina Grimké?
- Why did some people criticize them?

2. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

Women in the nineteenth century could not vote and lacked opportunities for education. Women were excluded from most colleges and professions, and received less pay than men for equal work. A woman's salary technically belonged to her husband. Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman to go to a medical school in the United States. Mary Lyon founded one of the first schools for higher education for women in the United States. The Grimké sisters were abolitionists who spoke to large assemblies about the horrors of slavery.



History Sleuth

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Mary Lyon: A Heart and Head for Learning*. Students read the biographical information about Mary Lyon in preparation for the History Sleuth activity.
2. Cut apart and distribute one Student Sheet: *Mary Lyon Cards* to each team of students. Students read and illustrate the cards.
3. After students have read, discussed, and illustrated the cards, initiate a class discussion which addresses the following questions.
 - How was Mt. Holyoke different from other schools for young women?
 - How did Mary Lyon reach her goals?
 - How did Mary Lyon help young women reach their goals?
 - Why is she a heroine?

Teacher Directions

1. Pose the following scenario to students.

Like Mary Lyon, you are starting a new school. Where will you locate it? Who will attend the school? What will be taught? What will the building look like inside? Outside? How will your school differ from other schools?
2. Students design a promotional brochure complete with illustrations about their new school.

Note to the Teacher: To help spark student creativity, show them promotional brochures for other schools.

Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Judith Sargent Murray*. Working with a partner, students read the information.
2. Students discuss the following question:
 - How did Judith Sargent Murray move America toward freedom?



What do you Think?



Moving Toward Freedom



Connections

Teacher Directions

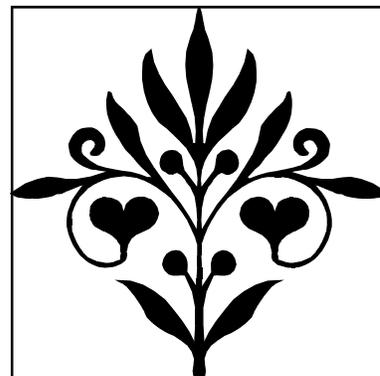
Use the following activities with your students.

Language Arts — Imagine you are a young woman who wants to attend Mary Lyon's school at Mt. Holyoke. Write a letter to your parents in which you try to convince them that higher education for women is a good idea.

Library/Language Arts — Students research the life and writings of Judith Sargent Murray.

Mary Lyon: A Heart and Head for Learning

When Mary was five, her father died, leaving his wife to raise Mary and her six brothers and sisters on their farm. Mary cooked, baked bread, spun and dyed wool, sewed, embroidered, grew and preserved fruits and vegetables, washed clothes, and made cheese, jam, soap, and candles.



Many people did not believe girls needed more than a basic ability to read, write, add and subtract. Many girls could only sign their names. But Mary Lyon had a thirst for learning. At age four, she began attending the village school. A few years later, the school moved and Mary left her family to live with families closer to the school. She did chores to earn her room and board.

At age seventeen, Lyon took her first teaching job. She taught children ages four through teens in a one-room schoolhouse. Lyon worked hard, but still wanted to continue her own education. While a few private female academies, called seminaries, existed in New England, only wealthy families could afford them. These schools were less challenging than schools for boys. Lyon traveled as much as three days by carriage to enroll in a school. Because she did not have enough money to pay all the tuition, she offered the school blankets she had woven.

Mary Lyon became an authority on the education of women. In 1834, she decided to start a school for women. For three years, she worked tirelessly to raise money and support. She wrote letters, developed a curriculum, visited other schools, designed a building, bought equipment, and hired teachers.

In 1837, her dream became a reality. Mt. Holyoke Seminary opened its doors to its first eighty students. While over one hundred colleges for men existed at the time—and Harvard College was already two hundred years old—Mt. Holyoke was the first institution for higher education for women. Mt. Holyoke had a curriculum as difficult as those at men's colleges, and tuition was affordable.

To keep the costs of the school down, students did all the chores necessary to keep the school running. In addition to rigorous studies, students cooked, baked, washed, and cleaned. Students woke at 5:00 a.m. and followed a strict schedule designed by Lyon. Because Lyon believed in the benefits of exercise, all students walked one mile after breakfast. Students also attended church services, prayer meetings, and spent time reading the Bible and praying every day.

Mary Lyon proved that women were as smart as men, and that a women's college could flourish. Graduates from Mt. Holyoke spread education reform across the country, teaching in schools and founding other colleges.

Mary Lyon believed that classes at Mt. Holyoke should be as challenging as those at men's colleges. Students at Mt. Holyoke Seminary used the same books as students at men's colleges.

While women at other schools studied "lady-like" skills such as needlework and drawing, Mary Lyon wanted her students to study challenging subjects such as geometry, science, and Latin.

Students at Mt. Holyoke did all the chores needed to keep the school running, including baking, washing, and cleaning. This helped keep tuition low.

Mary Lyon, a devout Christian, required her students to attend church services, prayer meetings, and Bible studies.

Mary Lyon spent several years writing, speaking, and traveling to collect donations to open her school. These are her glasses and writing tablet.

Mary Lyon helped design the large, four-story seminary building. It included a dormitory, classrooms, gymnasium, library, dining room, kitchen, bakery, laundry, heating plant, office, and teacher's residence.

Mary Lyon traveled thousands of miles to raise money to open her school. She collected the funds in this bag.

Students at Mt. Holyoke followed a strict schedule which began at 5:00 a.m. and ended with bedtime at 9:15 p.m.

Mary Lyon became so famous that dolls and books were created in her honor. This is a Mary Lyon doll.

Judith Sargent Murray

After the Revolutionary War, more communities and states began to tax citizens to support public schools, and the education of girls received more attention. Before the war, many people believed young women did not need an education—they only needed to know how to keep house and raise children. Girls generally did not learn more than the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic—if that much. Young women from wealthier families could attend female academies where they studied music, French, needle-work, and other “lady-like” subjects considered acceptable for girls.



Courtesy Judith Sargent Murray Society

Judith Sargent Murray helped convince people that girls should be educated as well as boys. In her essays, she argued that women’s intellectual abilities were equal to those of men. She wrote that higher education for girls would not only improve their minds, but would also give them skills necessary to help support themselves and their families. If women were better educated and financially able to support themselves, Murray argued, they would choose better husbands and not rush into marriage. They could better raise their children to be good citizens and could remain independent if widowed. Women, she argued, were capable of more than “contemplating...sewing the seams of a garment.”

Judith Sargent Murray’s articles appeared in several well-known magazines of the day, and in 1798, they were published in a three-volume set. George Washington was among those who purchased her book.