

The Feminist Legacy Of Wollstonecraft

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"[Wollstonecraft] is alive and active, she argues and experiments, we hear her voice and trace her influence even now among the living."

-Virginia Woolf.

Mary Wollstonecraft had done a great job as a great philosopher, travel writer, groundbreaking social critic, novelist, and advocate of the rights of women in Britain. She had faced a tough time during her early life, and thus, she stood for the rights of women and wanted to make every woman independent, healthy, and educated. As a prominent figure in the Romanticism literary movement and as an influential social thinker, Mary Wollstonecraft has been a vocal participant in the women's rights debates. She had also been an active part in the Enlightenment debates of the education reforms. She always wanted to make women realize that they needed to stand for their rights and that women must be allowed to get an equal education as men.

The same motivation can be seen in Mary Wollstonecraft's writing. The most controversial topic of her writing was the equal rights of men and women. Mary Wollstonecraft has done a lot for women's rights and to motivate women to get an education, and that is why it wouldn't be wrong to call her the mother of feminism. Now, this study will analyze the life of Wollstonecraft and her writing as a dominant feminist.

Wollstonecraft was against the inequality of gender, and that was because she had suffered a lot during her childhood. In their early life, Wollstonecraft struggled with financial uncertainties and difficult gender roles. In 1759, she was born in Spitalfields, London. She had six siblings and was the second child in her family. Her parents were in an unbalanced relationship. She had always seen her father as dominant. Throughout her childhood, she observed domestic ferocity and mismanagement of assets in her house. John, a weaver of handkerchiefs, wasted money in several unsuccessful ventures of farming. Later, Wollstonecraft served as a companion to a lady in Bath but then resigned to look after her fading mother and started living with her best friend, Fanny Blood.

They both then started a school in Newington Green in 1784, which was home to several Protestant insurgents of the 17th century. This school was another cyclical expedient for the education of poor women, but the school was closed due to the death of Blood from tuberculosis. Then she started working as a governess for one year, in Ireland, this job inspired her book for children *"Original Stories from Real Life (1788)"*. Then, she decided to follow her challenging profession of writing. Then, from Ireland, she shifted to London to learn the German and French languages.

Wollstonecraft also joined the radical community before the French Revolution, which fixed Europe and intellects avid. The community was comprised of several writers and activists, along with Thomas

Paine, the American colonist, and William Godwin, an English philosopher. The period was a very productive period of her life, during which she made a name in history by publishing her books in 1790, "*A Vindication of the Rights of Man*" and "*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" in 1792. By her writing, she wanted to convey the message to the world that women are not less than men and so they must be allowed to get an equal education as men. Women must have the right to live their lives freely and to choose the profession of their choice. After the publication of her writing French Revolution started. During the French Revolution in December 1792, she was in France due to her relationship with Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), who was an original artist. This stay in France further stimulated her evaluation of human conditions (Todd).

The feminist legacy of Wollstonecraft was best stated in her manuscripts. The early writings like "*Original Stories from Real Life*" and "*Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*" declared that values of discipline and reason could be installed in women and kids through education and no one could be naturally inferior. The much-referred manuscript "*A Vindication of the Rights of Man*" reported to an Irish philosopher and conformist Edmund Burke. She condemned the nobility and linked the equivalence of females to autonomous middle-class ideals. "*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" advocated collective instruction and co-education. She insisted in her writings that an educated woman is extremely beneficial for society as a better citizen, wife, and mother (Anon).

Wollstonecraft's infrequent admiration of conventional gender roles was logical, bearing the iconic masculine literati with which she reached community discussion, and their insincerities linking to females were set forth for readers by her. She sarcastically canned male colleagues like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Swiss philosopher who claimed that the conclusion of women's learning could be to gratify males.

Wollstonecraft strapped genre limitations. The books published in 1788 and 1789, "*Mary: A Fiction*" and "*Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman*," criticized the foundation of weddings and burdens on women folk to chase idealistic objectives and ranked distant relations comprising strong feminine attachments. Her solicitous tourism account, "*Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*," highlighted the idiosyncratic lens of Wanderer by mentioning the individual's coffles and primitive arch types. This manuscript was an unusual piece by a female author that intensely swayed the male-conquered legendary Romantic effort (Rothwell).

Wollstonecraft got involved with Gilbert Imlay (1754-1828), who was a businessman, diplomat, and American author in Paris. She gave birth to a baby in 1794 named Fanny Imlay. Then, the historical and ethical interpretation of the French Revolution written by Wollstonecraft was issued in London. Wollstonecraft was not wedded to Imlay, and extreme devotion to this relation caused suicide efforts. After a northern trip, "*Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*" were printed in 1796.

During last eons of her life, she returned to her legendary friends of Johnson's group, and an association was developed with William Godwin. They got married in March 1797 due to her

pregnancy. Their marriage raised questions about the relationship between Wollstonecraft and Imlay and that she twice got pregnant without marriage. But they respected and treated each other with equality despite all the scandals. They resided in neighboring houses to encourage marital independence. Then, she gave birth to Mary Shelley, who then became the renowned writer of *Frankenstein*. Like any other female of that time, she died after a few days of childbirth due to septicemia and fever. Godwin was left devastated after Wollstonecraft then he reviewed her effort and published the remaining texts after editing, in 1798. Finally, he issued "*Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*." His admiration for her made him write her biography, which was blunt enough to cause gossip that obscured her radical reputation for the coming century (Rothwell).

In the 1880s, amongst a growing worldwide effort for ladies' sufferings, Wollstonecraft was progressively appealed to as the foremother of activist belief. In 1884, her biography was published by Elizabeth Robins Pennell, an American author. A centennial version of "*Rights of Woman*" in 1892 included an overview by suffrage forerunner Millicent G. Fawcett, who desired to re-establish Wollstonecraft for a standard of female leads. Wollstonecraft was also demonstrated as a portrait of prominent American suffragists like Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Elizabeth C. Stanton. They quoted her in arguments of similar political and civil rights for women. She was considered as a dominant feminist intellectual by the early 20th century authors like Virginia Woolf a British modernist writer and Emma Goldman a Russian anarchist.

Wollstonecraft was an intellectual and dominating author of her time who raised her voice for equal rights and education for women. The feminist legacy of Wollstonecraft was best stated in her manuscripts. She was considered a dominant feminist intellectual by the early 20th-century authors and was quoted by them in arguments for similar political and civil rights for women. Wollstonecraft's intellectual heritage still perseveres, and many noticeable 19th and 20th-century authors esteemed her and praised her literary efforts. Wollstonecraft set previous instances as an effective, proficient female writer who fought with masculine academic heavyweights and somebody who resisted theorizing and exemplifying an obligation to impartiality. The problems she confronted, and the powerful subsequent denunciation of her work and life appear to be persistent bias and misogyny (Johnstone).

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