The Rise of Women Writers

**Essay by Mary Wollstonecraft**

Mary Wollstonecraft 1759–1797

Passionate, outspoken, and bold—at times even reckless—Mary Wollstonecraft was the antithesis of the proper 18th-century English lady. Inflamed with the revolutionary ideas of the Enlightenment, she denounced not only monarchy and slavery but also the institution of marriage. Her embrace of natural rights included the rights of women, children, and even animals. While still an unknown book reviewer and translator, she took on the eminent conservative Edmund Burke, one of Samuel Johnson’s inner circle, by responding to his criticism of the French Revolution with her own attack on class and privilege in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Two years later, she called for an end to the prevailing injustices against women in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Reviled by some at the time as a “hyena in petticoats,” she was the mother of feminism as we know it today.

**Education of a Radical**

Wollstonecraft was the second of seven children born into a middle-class family spiraling into poverty. Wishing to escape hardship, the young Wollstonecraft supplemented her meager education with extensive reading on her own. When she came of age, she worked first as a lady’s companion and later as a governess, two positions that showed her how the aristocracy lived while reinforcing her own servitude. For a while, she ran a school with her sisters in London, where she met a group of liberal reformers. These new friends gave the restless Wollstonecraft a larger, more political perspective from which to view her personal struggle for liberation.

**A Life Cut Short**

By the time she turned 30, Wollstonecraft had written a pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), as well as a novel. Her London publisher then hired her to write for his new journal and introduced her to reformist intellectuals such as the essayist Thomas Paine, the poet William Blake, and the political philosopher William Godwin. After writing her notorious book on women’s rights, Wollstonecraft spent two years in Paris at the height of the bloody Reign of Terror, which sobered her on the French Revolution but not on its ideals. Back in London, she drew closer to William Godwin, finding in him a kindred spirit. Tragically, only a few months after marrying Godwin, she died from complications in giving birth to their only child, Mary.

**Meet the Author**

Mary Wollstonecraft was the second of seven children born into a middle-class family spiraling into poverty. Wishing to escape hardship, the young Wollstonecraft supplemented her meager education with extensive reading on her own. When she came of age, she worked first as a lady’s companion and later as a governess, two positions that showed her how the aristocracy lived while reinforcing her own servitude. For a while, she ran a school with her sisters in London, where she met a group of liberal reformers. These new friends gave the restless Wollstonecraft a larger, more political perspective from which to view her personal struggle for liberation.

**About the Author**

After reading the biography, ask students to explain the epithets “hyena in petticoats” and “mother of feminism.” Possible answer: Hyenas are unattractive animals known for their unpleasant cackle. The second epithet suggests that Wollstonecraft inspired later movements for women’s rights.

**Notable Quote**

“It is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore to them their lost dignity.” —Mary Wollstonecraft

Have students read and react to the opinion that Mary Wollstonecraft presents. Invite comments about the meaning of manners in this context. Possible answer: Manners here refers to modes of social conduct as well as attitudes and thinking.

**Selection Resources**

See resources on the Teacher One Stop DVD-ROM and on thinkcentral.com.

- **Best Practices Toolkit**
  - Teacher One Stop DVD-ROM
  - Student One Stop DVD-ROM
  - Audio Anthology CD
  - ExamView Test Generator on the Teacher One Stop

- **Technology**
  - Teacher One Stop DVD-ROM
  - Student One Stop DVD-ROM
  - Audio Anthology CD
  - ExamView Test Generator on the Teacher One Stop

- **Video Trailer**
  - Go to thinkcentral.com to preview the Video Trailer introducing this selection. Other features that support the selection include:
    - PowerNotes presentation
    - ThinkAloud models to enhance comprehension
    - WordSharp vocabulary tutorials
    - Interactive writing and grammar instruction

- **Support for Differentiation**
  - Resources for Differentiation
  - Also in Spanish
  - Haitian Creole and Vietnamese
TEXT ANALYSIS: COUNTERARGUMENTS

An argument is speech or writing that makes a major claim, or takes a position, about an issue and supports it with reasons and evidence. In A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Mary Wollstonecraft's purpose is to convince her readers that there should be a change of policy about women's education to provide women with greater educational opportunities. Wollstonecraft uses persuasive techniques that appeal to reason rather than to emotion to support her claim. For example, she anticipates opposing viewpoints and responds with counterarguments. In other words, she foresees opposing arguments and responds logically to them using reasons and evidence to refute their claims and the assumptions upon which they are based. As you read, pay attention to the counterarguments Wollstonecraft presents in the selection.

READING SKILL: USE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To best appreciate why Wollstonecraft wrote A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, you should have some sense of the essay's historical context, or the social conditions that inspired its creation. Although the essay might seem conservative by modern standards, its views were considered radical in 18th-century Britain, where few women publicly expressed discontent over their limited educational opportunities. To further your understanding of the historical context of Wollstonecraft's work, study the author biography on page 718, the background information on page 720, and the footnotes within the essay. Then, as you read, note statements that you are able to clarify by using this information.

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The following boldfaced words are important to your understanding Wollstonecraft’s controversial essay. Try to figure out the meaning of each word from the context.

1. **vindication** from blame or guilt
2. a **prerogative** of rank
3. **inculcate** the ideas through repetition
4. not long lasting but **evanescent**
5. **feign** illness when not really ill

Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

What makes EQUALITY elusive?

Thomas Jefferson wrote that “all men are created equal,” but he and the other Founding Fathers left out many men and all women when they first considered the rights in the new United States. Writing 16 years after the Declaration of Independence, Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the first to confront the issue of equality for women, but even she confined her arguments to education.

DISCUSS Consider why equal rights have historically been so difficult to achieve. How does a country generally ensure that all of its citizens are treated equally and fairly? If you don’t have these rights, how are you generally treated? Write down your thoughts on these issues and then discuss them with a small group of classmates.

What makes EQUALITY elusive?

Read aloud the question and paragraph. Ask students why they think Wollstonecraft discusses education rather than equality in general. For example, did she want to start with a less controversial topic? Continue the exploration with the DISCUSS activity.

MODEL THE SKILL: COUNTERARGUMENTS

Share this viewpoint with students:

Having the varsity and junior varsity swim teams practice together causes the junior varsity swimmers to feel insecure and to perform poorly.

Point out that the writer is against the teams practicing together. Then ask students to suggest a counterargument for teams practicing together. Possible answer: Junior varsity swimmers would get used to competition and swim faster.

GUIDED PRACTICE Ask students to offer a counterargument for this viewpoint: Having the two teams practice together encourages the varsity swimmers to show off and to perform poorly.

MODEL THE SKILL: USE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As an example of historical context, point out that Wollstonecraft was an adult at the time of the American Revolution. Ask students to use what they know of the conditions of the time to help them account for Wollstonecraft’s early death.

RESOURCES MANAGER—Copy Master

Use Historical Context p. 241

(for student use while reading the selection)
Practice and Apply

SUMMARY
In these essay excerpts, Wollstonecraft posits that society educates women not to be strong or useful, but only to be pleasing to men. Given that charm fades, she suggests, such training leads to misery. She appeals to reason as she argues that women should cultivate strength of body and mind and should develop their character, so that they may become worthy wives, mothers, and companions.

READ WITH A PURPOSE
Ask students to think about whether any of Wollstonecraft’s observations about women still apply today.

REVISIT THE BIG QUESTION
What makes EQUALITY elusive?
Discuss  According to Wollstonecraft, in lines 1–15, why is there “a great difference” (line 4), rather than equality, between the sexes?
Possible answer: Wollstonecraft points to the “neglected education” (line 8) of women as the reason; she says that women’s education, which sacrifices strength and usefulness in favor of beauty, makes women weak and miserable.

VOCABULARY

OWN THE WORD
vindication: Read the title of the selection aloud to students. Tell them that common synonyms of vindicate include support, advocate, and champion. Then have students rewrite the title in their own words. Possible answers: In Support of the Rights of Women; Advocating the Rights of Women

DICTATED INSTRUCTION

FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
Vocabulary Support  Use Word Squares to teach these words: conduct (line 6), rational (line 19), physical (line 35), inference (line 45), acknowledged (line 65), constitution (line 77).

FOR STRUGGLING READERS
The Audio Anthology CD provides extra support for students with reading difficulties. It is also recommended for use with English language learners.

Vocabulary Support
• solicitude (line 2), “concern for others”
• partial (line 5), “biased”
• concurring (line 10), “coinciding”
• fastidious (line 14), “displaying attention to detail”
Analyze Visuals

Possible answer: The young woman is pleasurably engrossed in what she is reading; the young man looks apprehensive and mistrustful. The image might suggest that while 18th-century women found pleasure in education and self-betterment, 18th-century men were wary of these developments. It also implies that men were unwilling to relinquish their dominant role in society at this time.

About the Art  English artist Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797) painted A Girl Reading a Letter by Candlelight sometime between 1760 and 1762, during a period in which he created several dramatic images of people in dark rooms, illuminated only by lamps or candles. The lighting calls attention to the faces of the subjects—both the girl’s absorption in what she is reading and the young man’s concern that she is so engrossed.

Tiered Discussion Prompts
In lines 1–15, use these prompts to help students grasp the way in which Wollstonecraft establishes the foundation for her argument:

Summarize What has caused Wollstonecraft to feel melancholy, sorrowful, indignant, and depressed (lines 1–3)? Possible answer: The unhealthy state of women’s minds has caused such feelings in Wollstonecraft.

Analyze Wollstonecraft compares hothouse flowers planted in too rich a soil to women trained only to be beautiful (lines 12–15). What does this comparison suggest about the education of women? Possible answer: The comparison suggests that women’s education is superficial and geared toward pleasing others rather than improving oneself.

For Advanced Learners/AP
Tell students that debating clubs became popular in Great Britain in the second half of the 18th century. At these gatherings, often held in coffee-houses and taverns, men—and occasionally women—expressed their views on social, political, and philosophical issues through informed, insightful, and clever oratory. Have students hold a meeting in which they, as 18th-century readers, writers, and thinkers, debate the question of women’s education.
than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by this specious homage, that the civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.

In a treatise, therefore, on female rights and manners, the works which have been particularly written for their improvement must not be overlooked; especially when it is asserted, in direct terms, that the minds of women are enfeebled by false refinement; that the books of instruction, written by men of genius, have had the same tendency as more frivolous productions; and that, above the brute creation, and puts a natural scepter in a feeble hand.

Yet, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean violently to agitate the contested question respecting the quality or inferiority of the sex; but as the subject lies in my way, and I cannot pass it over without subjecting the main tendency of my reasoning to misconstruction, I shall stop a moment to deliver, in a few words, my opinion. In the government of the physical world it is observable that the female in point of strength is, in general, inferior to the male. This is the law of nature; and it does not appear to be suspended or abrogated in favor of woman. A degree of physical superiority cannot, therefore, be denied—and it is a noble prerogative! But not content with this natural pre-eminence, men endeavor to sink us still lower merely to render us alluring objects for a moment; and women, intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, pay them, do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts, or to become the friends of the fellow creatures who find amusement in their society.

I am aware of an obvious inference: from every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women; but where are they to be found? If by this term (“masculine women”) men mean to inveigh against their ardor: in hunting, shooting, and gaming, I shall most cordially join in the cry; but if it be against the imitation of manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character, and which raise females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind; all those who view them with a philosophic eye must, I should think, wish with me, that they may every day grow more and more masculine.

My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists—I wish to persuade women

---

**FOR STRUGGLING READERS**

**Comprehension Support: Paraphrasing**

[paired option] Have students work in pairs to paraphrase lines 45–53. Remind them that, unlike a summary, a paraphrase usually is the same length as the original text, but it is simpler in language and sentence structure than the original. Point out that since the second sentence runs for eight lines, students will want to paraphrase it clause by clause and phrase by phrase (perhaps turning it into three sentences as they do so), making sure that they understand each part. Urge students to use the footnotes for clarification, as well, and to use a dictionary to check the meaning of other unfamiliar words. Have students share and compare the completed paraphrases.

---

**VOCABULARY**

**OWN THE WORD**

**prerogative:** Tell students that the connotation of prerogative includes the idea of a special or exclusive right. For example, it is your prerogative as an American citizen to vote when you turn 18.
to endeavor to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt.

The education of women has, of late, been more attended to than formerly; yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex, and ridiculed or pitied by the writers who endeavor by satire or instruction to improve them. It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments; meanwhile strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves—the only way women can rise in the world—by marriage. And this desire making mere animals of them, when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act: they dress; they paint, and nickname God’s creatures. Surely these weak beings are only fit for a seraglio? Can they be expected to govern a family with judgment, or take care of the poor babes whom they bring into the world?

If then it can be fairly deduced from the present conduct of the sex, from the prevalent fondness for pleasure which takes place of ambition and those nobler passions that open and enlarge the soul; that the instruction which women have hitherto received has only tended, with the constitution of civil society, to render them insignificant objects of desire—mere propagators of fools!—if it can be proved that in aiming to accomplish them, without cultivating their understandings, they are taken out of their sphere of duties, and made ridiculous and useless when the short-lived bloom of beauty is over, I presume that rational men will excite me for endeavoring to persuade them to become more masculine and respectable.

Indeed the word masculine is only a bugbear; there is little reason to fear that women will acquire too much courage or fortitude; for their apparent inferiority with respect to bodily strength, must render them, in some degree, dependent on men in the various relations of life; but why should it be increased by prejudices that give a sex to virtue, and confound simple truths with sensual reverses?

FROM CHAPTER 2
Youth is the season for love in both sexes; but in those days of thoughtless enjoyment provision should be made for the more important years of life, when reflection takes place of sensation. But Rousseau, and most of the male writers considered suitable for middle- and upper-class women, such as painting, singing, playing a musical instrument, and embroidery. This term, when applied to women, designated only those achievements then thought to be appropriate for women, such as cooking, sewing, and embroidery. As a result of such treatment, women become weak; and, after their beauty fades, they are useless and ridiculous.

Text Analysis

Sarcasm

Read aloud lines 54–62 to students, emphasizing the sarcastic tone Wollstonecraft uses in the first sentence. Possible answer: Wollstonecraft directs her remark to those who consider women irrational “creatures.” She wants to encourage women to “endeavor to acquire strength” (line 58) to defy the perception that they are weak.

Possible answer: Wollstonecraft counters the assumption by saying that since improved education will make women better wives, mothers, and companions, education will not make them more masculine. She also claims this concern is exaggerated.

COUNTERARGUMENTS

Possible answer: Wollstonecraft counters the assumption by saying that since improved education will make women better wives, mothers, and companions, education will not make them more masculine. She also claims this concern is exaggerated.

Language Coach

Roots and Affixes Answer: to obtain, to get by one’s own efforts. Point out that the c in the prefix is not pronounced. Provide other examples of words with ac- before q, such as acquaint, acquit, and acquiesce.
REVISIT THE BIG QUESTION

What makes EQUALITY elusive?

Discuss Consider Wollstonecraft’s response to Dr. Gregory’s ideas in lines 118–131. What do you think she would urge mothers to teach their children so that boys and girls might enjoy a greater equality? Possible answer: She would urge mothers to teach their children to recognize and take pride in their strengths (lines 122–124), to not fear what other people think of them (lines 125–126), to speak their mind (lines 127–128), and to seek purity of heart rather than a mere outward show of goodness (lines 129–131).

REVIEWING THE BIG QUESTION

What makes EQUALITY elusive?

Discuss Consider Wollstonecraft’s response to Dr. Gregory’s ideas in lines 118–131. What do you think she would urge mothers to teach their children so that boys and girls might enjoy a greater equality? Possible answer: She would urge mothers to teach their children to recognize and take pride in their strengths (lines 122–124), to not fear what other people think of them (lines 125–126), to speak their mind (lines 127–128), and to seek purity of heart rather than a mere outward show of goodness (lines 129–131).

READING SKILL

Model the Skill:

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To model understanding and using historical context when reading, think aloud about using the information in footnote 10, as you read lines 91–93, to identify Rousseau and to clarify his ideas about female education.

Possible answer: The information reveals that even progressive Enlightenment thinkers and writers, such as Rousseau, did not believe that women’s place in society should change.

VOCABULARY

OWN THE WORD

• inculcate: The Latin root for inculcate is inculcare, “to force upon.” Have students contrast the meanings of inculcare and inculcate. Possible answer: Inculcate means “to impress upon the mind,” but does not carry the stronger connotation of force.

• evanescent: Tell students that evanescent comes from the Latin vanus, “empty.” Have students write a sentence showing the relationship of vanus and evanescent. Possible answer: Things that are evanescent fade away until nothing is left; in this sense they are empty.

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS/AP

Analyze Figurative Language Have students write and share a paragraph or two in which they respond to one of these questions about the figures of speech that Wollstonecraft uses:

• Why does Wollstonecraft compare oblique sunbeams to the charms of a woman taught only to please (lines 96–98)?

• What is the figurative meaning of “summer” (line 98)? Why is that meaning important to Wollstonecraft’s argument throughout the essay?

• What is the “spring of bitterness” to which Wollstonecraft refers (line 104)? In what way does that metaphor advance her argument?

• In what way do Wollstonecraft’s allusions to Rousseau, Dr. Gregory, King David, and King Solomon help Wollstonecraft to support her arguments? What effect would they have had on her audience, male or female?
made clean, and not trivial ceremonies observed, which it is not very difficult to
fulfil with scrupulous exactness when vice reigns in the heart.

Women ought to endeavor to purify their heart; but can they do so when their
uncultivated understandings make them entirely dependent on their senses for
employment and amusement, when no noble pursuit sets them above the little
vanities of the day, or enables them to curb the wild emotions that agitate a reed
over which every passing breeze has power? To gain the affections of a virtuous
man, is affectation necessary? Nature has given woman a weaker frame than man;
but, to ensure her husband's affections, must a wife, who by the exercise of her
mind and body whilst she was discharging the duties of a daughter, wife, and
mother, has allowed her constitution to retain its natural strength, and her nerves
a healthy tone, is she, I say, to condescend to use art and feign a sickly delicacy
in order to secure her husband's affection? Weakness may excite tenderness, and
gratify the arrogant pride of man; but the lordly caresses of a protector will not

**FOR STRUGGLING READERS**

**Vocabulary Support** [paired option] Have partners work together to use context clues and/or a dictionary to determine the meanings of these words: *habitude* (line 95), *oblique* (line 97), *native* (line 99), *cultivate* (line 99), *dormant* (line 100), *mortification* (line 102), *languid* (line 104), *abhorrence* (line 107), *homage* (line 108), *gallantry* (line 108), *congenial* (line 110), *infirmities* (line 117), *dissimulation* (line 120), *eloquent* (line 122), *immodest* (line 122), *vivacity* (line 125), *frankness* (line 127), *instilling* (line 128), *trivial* (line 130), *scrupulous* (line 131), *endeavor* (line 132), *agitate* (line 135), *affectation* (line 137), *condescend* (line 141), *delicacy* (line 141), *gratify* (line 143).

**FOR STRUGGLING READERS**

**Develop Reading Fluency** Have students work in pairs to read one of Wollstonecraft's extra-long sentences, beginning “Nature has given . . .” (lines 137–142). Have them first read silently. Then have them choral-read the sentence together, pausing briefly after each clause or phrase. Finally, have each student read alone, using both pace and pitch to help the listener follow the author's train of thought.
gratify a noble mind that pants for, and deserves to be respected. Fondness is a poor substitute for friendship! . . .

Besides, the woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practicing various virtues, become the friend, and not the humble dependent of her husband; and if she, by possessing such substantial qualities, merit his regard, she will not find it necessary to conceal her affection, nor to pretend to an unnatural coldness of constitution to excite her husband’s passions . . .

If all the faculties of woman’s mind are only to be cultivated as they respect her dependence on man; if, when a husband be obtained, she have arrived at her goal, and mealy proud rests satisfied with such a paltry crown, let her grovel contentedly, scarcely raised by her employments above the animal kingdom; but, if, struggling for the prize of her high calling, she look beyond the present scene, let her cultivate her understanding without stopping to consider what character the husband may have whom she is destined to marry. Let her only determine, without being too anxious about present happiness, to acquire the qualities that ennoble a rational being, and a rough inelegant husband may shock her taste without destroying her peace of mind. She will not model her soul to suit the frailties of her companion, but to bear with them: his character may be a trial, but not an impediment to virtue . . .

These may be termed Utopian dreams. Thanks to that Being who impressed them on my soul, and gave me sufficient strength of mind to dare to exert my own reason, till, becoming dependent only on him for the support of my virtue, I view, with indignation, the mistaken notions that enslave my sex.

I love man as my fellow: but his scepter, real or usurped, extends not to me, unless the reason of an individual demands my homage; and even then the submission is to reason, and not to man. In fact, the conduct of an accountable being must be regulated by the operations of its own reason; or on what foundation rests the throne of God?

It appears to me necessary to dwell on these obvious truths, because females have been insulated, as it were; and, while they have been stripped of the virtues that should clothe humanity, they have been decked with artificial graces that enable them to exercise a short-lived tyranny. Love, in their bosoms, taking place of every nobler passion, their sole ambition is to be fair, to raise emotion instead of inspiring respect; and this ignoble desire, like the servility in absolute monarchies, destroys all strength of character. Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics,14 and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature.

Possible answer: A woman who will no longer feel inferior to or dependent on her husband. Because as a person of substance, she will be a respected friend to her husband and be able to share her feelings with him honestly.

Possible answer: The information indicates that Wollstonecraft apparently practiced what she preached. She developed her mind and character and lived independently for many years. Her work shows that her chief purpose in life went far beyond making herself pleasing to her husband.

Possible answer: Students who enjoyed this selection may also enjoy The Vagabond by Collette.

Differentiated Instruction

For advanced learners/AP

Analyze References to Nature [small-group option] Point out that Wollstonecraft often refers to nature, both in her imagery and in her figurative language. Have groups of students review such references (for example, in lines 11–22, 96–105, 132–136, and 179–182) and consider their effect. Ask them to respond to these questions:

- Why might Wollstonecraft have chosen to include references to nature? How easily would her readers have connected with these references?
- Do references to nature convey an implied message about “natural” rights? Explain. Have students give reasons for each response. Allow time for them to share and compare their findings.
After Reading

Comprehension

1. Recall In what area does Wollstonecraft concede male superiority?
2. Clarify According to Wollstonecraft, why do most women go along with the “false system of education” that fails to develop their reason?
3. Clarify Why does she think women need strong minds and bodies?

Text Analysis

4. Analyze Argument What claim, or position on an issue, does Wollstonecraft make in her essay? Identify three examples of reasons or evidence that she offers to support her claim.
5. Understand Historical Context In the late 18th century, some writers were beginning to question traditional attitudes toward women, but most people would have found it hard to imagine the changes in gender roles that occurred over the next two centuries. Which of Wollstonecraft’s statements anticipate modern ideas about women and their place in society? Which statements are more in line with 18th-century views? Cite examples from the text.
6. Interpret Figurative Language Wollstonecraft uses figurative language to appeal to her audience and enhance her argument. Explain the figurative language in the following passages:
   - flowers in too rich soil (lines 11–15)
   - tyranny and monarchy (lines 173–179)
   - liberty, virtue, and nature (lines 179–182)
7. Evaluate Counterarguments How well does Wollstonecraft use counterarguments in developing her points? Analyze the following passages to arrive at your conclusion:
   - Rousseau’s view on female education (lines 89–117)
   - Dr. Gregory’s Legacy to his Daughters (lines 118–145)

Text Criticism

8. Different Perspectives What might Wollstonecraft say about the women in popular culture today? Name specific women that she would most likely admire and those she might criticize. Explain the reasons for your choices.

What makes EQUALITY elusive?
If Mary Wollstonecraft were alive today, what issues about women’s lives do you think would concern her most? Why?

Practice and Apply

For preliminary support of post-reading questions, use these copy masters:

RESOURCES MANAGER—Copy Masters
Reading Check p. 246
Counterarguments p. 239
Question Support p. 247
Additional selection questions are provided for teachers on page 233.

ANSWERS

1. Wollstonecraft concedes that males are physically stronger.
2. Women acquiesce because they become “intoxicated” by the admiration of men.
3. Strong minds and bodies make women better wives and mothers.

Possible answers:

4. COMMON CORE FOCUS Analyze Argument Wollstonecraft’s claim is that women should be educated to nurture strength of body and mind and to develop character, not solely to be pleasing to men. She supports that claim by arguing that training to please puts women under the influence of their senses (lines 41–44 and 132–136) and leads to misery (lines 98–105), that nurturing their bodies and minds makes women better wives and mothers (lines 146–151), and that a broader education preserves women’s virtue (lines 179–182).

5. COMMON CORE FOCUS Use Historical Context Modern ideas: Women should be encouraged to develop themselves and to avoid dependency upon men; too much emphasis on physical beauty objectifies and weakens women; in relations with men, women should be strong, competent companions. 18th-century views: The physical superiority of men is a given; women should not enter into manly sports, such as hunting; if a woman has a strong character, she can endure her husband’s frailties virtuously.

6. Flowers in too rich soil: Wollstonecraft’s simple draws a connection between hothouse flowers and women who are raised to be beautiful and refined at the expense of their reason, strength, and usefulness. Tyranny and monarchy: She uses relevant political terminology to draw a parallel between the subjugation of the “nobler passions” to romantic love and the subjugation of a people to an absolute monarch. Liberty, virtue,
Assess and Reteach

Assess
DIAGNOSTIC AND SELECTION TESTS
Selection Tests A, B/C pp. 213–216
Interactive Selection Tests on thinkcentral.com

Reteach
Level Up Online Tutorials on thinkcentral.com
Reteaching Worksheets on thinkcentral.com
Informational Text Lessons 14–17
Vocabulary Lesson 23

Vocabulary in Context

**VOCABULARY PRACTICE**
Indicate which choice best completes each sentence.

1. An *evanescent* image (a) vanishes, (b) reappears, (c) lingers.
2. Someone who *feigns* amnesia (a) has completely lost his or her memory, (b) has forgotten a few things, (c) is pretending.
3. To *inculcate* an idea, someone might (a) contradict it, (b) ask you to repeat it, (c) ask you to ignore it.
4. If someone accused of a crime gets *vindication* in court, he or she will likely (a) go to jail, (b) go free, (c) pay a large fine.
5. A *prerogative* is (a) a question to be asked, (b) a problem to be avoided, (c) a privilege to be enjoyed.

**ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING**
What challenges do women face today? How might they respond to them? Discuss this in a small group, using at least one additional Academic Vocabulary word in your discussion.

**VOCABULARY STRATEGY: ANALOGIES**

An analogy compares two items that may have many points of similarity or may be alike in only one way. Analyzing an analogy can help you clarify an idea. Wollstonecraft draws an analogy between women’s minds and plants grown in over-fertilized soil in her discussion of women’s education (lines 11–15):

*The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity.*

You can use the relationship between words in an analogy to determine their meanings or connotations. For example, Wollstonecraft believes too much emphasis is placed on superficial qualities like beauty. Therefore, when she refers to a plant’s *flaunting* leaves, you can guess that flaunting is a negative word for something attractive—that is, “showy or gaudy.”

**PRACTICE** These questions refer to the analogy above. Answer each question.

1. Does a woman’s *conduct* refer to her beliefs or her actions?
2. Is someone with a *fastidious* eye picky or penetrating?
3. If you disregard something do you pay more attention to it or less?

**DIFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION**

**FOR STRUGGLING READERS**

Vocabulary in Speaking  Suggest that students focus on specific areas of women’s rights today, such as education, work, and sports.

Vocabulary Strategy: Analogies  To reinforce the strategy, have students summarize the points of similarity between women’s minds and pampered flowers—the two items compared in the analogy from Wollstonecraft’s essay.

**FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS/AP**

Vocabulary Strategy: Practice  [paired option]  Instruct each pair to generate an analogy similar in length and complexity to the one offered in the Practice. Then have pairs exchange analogies and analyze them. Make sure that each pair identifies the two items that are compared in the analogy and explains the main idea of the comparison.
Differing Roles for Women

Literacy rates for both genders were on the rise in 18th-century England, but women were still excluded from universities and discouraged from pursuing careers. Instead, their lives were defined in advance for them: most women were destined solely for domestic roles as wives and mothers. Those who preferred to take a different path risked a serious social and financial backlash. In A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Mary Wollstonecraft likened women’s situation in her day to slavery:

"Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature."

The authors in this section write in a variety of genres. Examples in this section include Behn’s and Smith’s poems, Burney’s personal diary, and Wollstonecraft’s persuasive essay. Some of these authors write directly about their gender; others do not. What they all share, however, is the choice they made as women to become writers in the face of great cultural resistance.

Writing to Reflect

Choose two of the writers from this section. Why might the subjects they discuss have been controversial for a woman in 18th-century England to write about? What do you think these women may have gained from taking a risk and becoming writers rather than choosing not to do so?

Consider
• the subject each writer discusses
• how each writer portrays this subject
• what it might mean for an 18th-century female writer, rather than a male writer, to express her thoughts about this subject

Extension

WRAP-UP 729

FOR STRUGGLING WRITERS

Concept Support After students have selected the pieces to compare, instruct them to fold a sheet of paper in half lengthwise, forming two columns, and to write the titles of the two pieces as column headings. Then suggest that students choose a topic, such as "marriage," and brainstorm ideas about the way in which each piece addresses the topic (citing line references) in the appropriate column. Have students review the notes in each column, looking for similarities and differences that can be developed in comparison-and-contrast paragraphs. Ask students to write two or three paragraphs, and encourage them to share their completed essays.