

Founding Mothers

Name: _____

We've heard a lot about the role the Founding Fathers played in the early United States, but what role did our Founding Mothers play? When our country was born, women had almost no voice in politics. Women did not have the same access to education as men. They could not vote, let alone run for office. Yet many women cared deeply for the public welfare. They believed in the young nation's future, and in their own ways fought for the independence of the American colonies. And although women could not contribute directly to the documents that gave birth to our country, they still played an important role in forming the principles and values of the U.S. government.



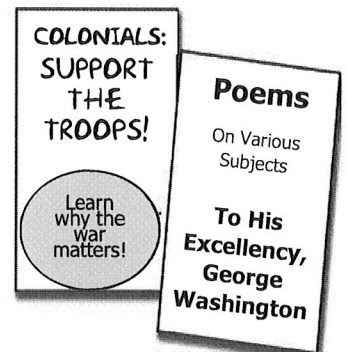
There are several reports of women taking over firing canons on the battlefield.

Fighting For Freedom on the Battlefield...

During the Revolutionary War, many men left their homes to fight. Often, their wives followed them to the battlefield to cook and care for them. But some women actually fought in the war! In the heat of battle, Margaret Corbin helped her husband load and fire a cannon. Her husband got killed, but Margaret kept loading and firing until she herself was badly wounded. Another woman, Catherine Moore Barry, helped an officer named General Morgan at the Battle of Cowpens. He asked Catherine for help because she knew the area around the battlefield like the back of her hand. Catherine not only helped think up a trap for the British troops, she also rounded up women and men in her community to help with the fight.

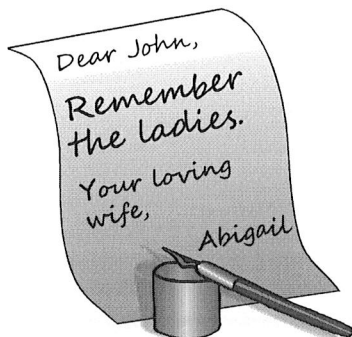
...And at Home.

Many other women stayed home but took on new roles in their communities. They managed family farms and businesses on their own. Some women even took to spreading the views of the patriots fighting for independence. Mercy Otis Warren wrote hundreds of pamphlets in order to educate the public about why the patriots were fighting for independence. Her pamphlets helped many decide to support the patriots' cause. Phillis Wheatley wrote poetry praising America's fight for freedom. Despite being a woman and a slave, she became the first African-American woman to publish a book. Her poems spread across the colonies and to Europe, convincing many people to support the cause. These women proved that without even picking up a gun, they could support the revolutionary cause in their own way.



"Remember the Ladies"

Abigail Adams was the wife of John Adams, who was a politician and became the 2nd president of the United States. Like many women of her time, she didn't get a formal education. But she was very smart, and she learned about governments from books in her father's library. Later, she exchanged many letters about politics with her husband. John Adams came to rely on her advice while he served in the Continental Congress and later as President. She became so active helping her husband run the country that people called her Mrs. President. Abigail used her influence to fight for equal education for both girls and boys and for women to have more power in their communities.



New Country, New Role for Women

At the time of the Revolutionary War, women's role in society was very different from today. Women were expected to run the home and care for the family, leaving community matters to the men. But these Founding Mothers proved that they could do so much more. Although they could not directly influence what the American government would look like, they set in motion the idea that women were full citizens of this country and could contribute just as much as men.

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Remember the Ladies. Read the passage from Abigail Adam's most famous letter to her husband John Adams. Use the reading and the passage to answer the questions below.

As a woman, think about Abigail Adam's role in society.

What things *couldn't* she do?

What things could she do?

How do you think the list above influenced this letter?

"Remember the ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation."

- Abigail Adams, March 1776

Support Our Troops. Take on the role of Mercy Otis Warren and create a pamphlet urging other women to join in the revolutionary cause. Be sure to include 1) a slogan for your campaign, 2) three ways the women could get involved in the war effort at that time, and 3) an illustration.

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