

**Conflicts in the Colonies****BIOGRAPHY READING****Mercy Otis Warren****WHY AM I IMPORTANT?**

*Mercy Otis Warren was a historian, poet, and dramatist whose works were greatly influenced by her support of the American Revolution. During the course of the Revolution, she corresponded regularly with these and other friends about the important social and political matters of the day. Warren's A History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution offers a unique view of the American Patriot cause. How did Warren's work demonstrate her pursuit of excellence?*

Mercy Otis was born into a wealthy Boston area family in 1728, the third of 13 children of James and Mary Otis. During her lifetime, Mercy Otis's political spirit found support in her closest relationships. Her brother James served as a king's representative until he resigned his post to oppose the writs of assistance. James Otis was also famous for his opposition to the Stamp Act. James Warren, whom Mercy Otis married in 1754 and with whom she had five sons, was a member of the Massachusetts legislature. When tensions increased in Massachusetts before the Revolutionary War, the Warren home became a meeting place for Revolutionary leaders.

Warren's writings on the American Revolution provide a unique view of the times. Her sharp assessment of political events was accompanied by lively descriptions of the leading personalities of the era. Her *History* provides an analysis of the character and motives of those who opposed American independence and is valued today for her firsthand accounts and opinions of events and people she knew personally.

After the Revolutionary War the Warren family suffered criticism for their political opinions. Mercy and James Warren, however, believed very strongly in democracy. They opposed the ratification of the U.S. Constitution because they felt it gave too much power to the federal government.

Mercy Warren endorsed the right of women to pursue interests outside of everyday domestic duties. She believed that women were not intellectually inferior to men because of their gender but rather were intellectually inferior because they had not received the same education as men.

Mercy Warren's later years were highlighted by an argument she had with her friend John Adams. After her history of the American Revolution was published in 1805, Adams stated in a letter to Warren that he objected to her portrayal of him in the book. The two argued through a series of letters for about three months, until Warren declared that Adams's opinions were irrational. There was no contact between them for five years. Mercy Otis Warren continued to live a very active life until her death in 1814 at the age of 86.

## Chapter 5: Biography Reading continued

**UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ** After you have finished reading the selection, answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What kinds of literary works did Warren write?

---

---

2. How did Warren become involved in the American Revolutionary cause?

---

---

3. Why did the Warrens oppose ratification of the U.S. Constitution?

---

---

4. What were some unique aspects of Warren's history of the American Revolution?

---

---

5. What was Warren's view on the role of women?

---

---

### ACTIVITY

Design a bulletin board that characterizes or illustrates the life of Mercy Otis Warren. Create a sketch of your bulletin board, illustrating visually the major events in Warren's life as well as her opinions about politics and women's roles. Write captions for the items on your bulletin board to explain their significance.