

Mary Wollstonecraft:

a life in pictures



This comic was designed, created,
and drawn by Martha Mackay.
You can find more of Martha's work on
Instagram at @pirate.with.a.paintbrush

Special thanks to Lucy Hawker.



Thanks also to Amy Todd, Nick Toner,
and the project team at the
Newington Green Meeting House.

Mary Wollstonecraft was born in Spitalfields in 1759.



Her family moved around a lot when she was growing up because of her father's business.

He was a very angry man
so life at home was
often stressful.



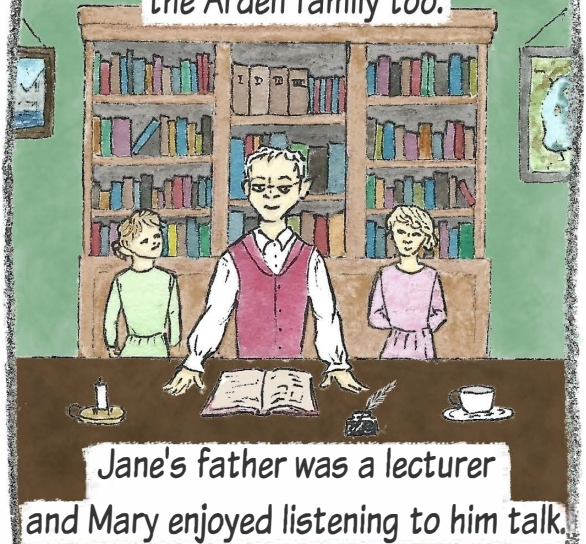
It also upset Mary that
she couldn't go to school
like her brother, just
because she was a girl.

Perhaps this is why
she looked for
connections outside
of her family.

One of her closest childhood
friends was Jane Arden, who
she met while living in
Beverley, East
Yorkshire.



Mary was welcomed by the rest of
the Arden family too.



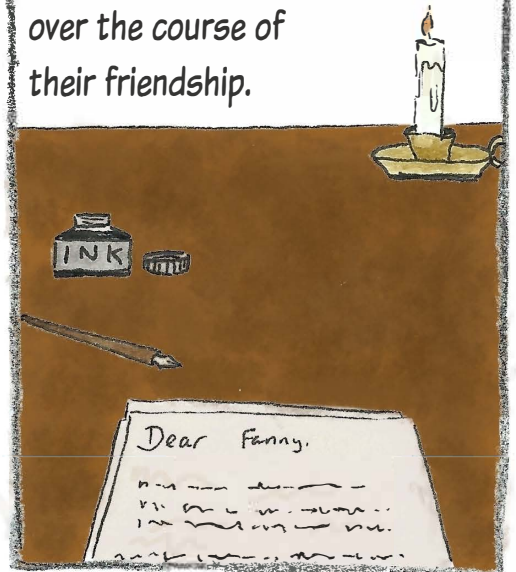
Jane's father was a lecturer
and Mary enjoyed listening to him talk.

In 1775 Mary met Fanny Blood



They became practically inseparable, Mary even admitting she felt jealous when Fanny spent time with anyone else.

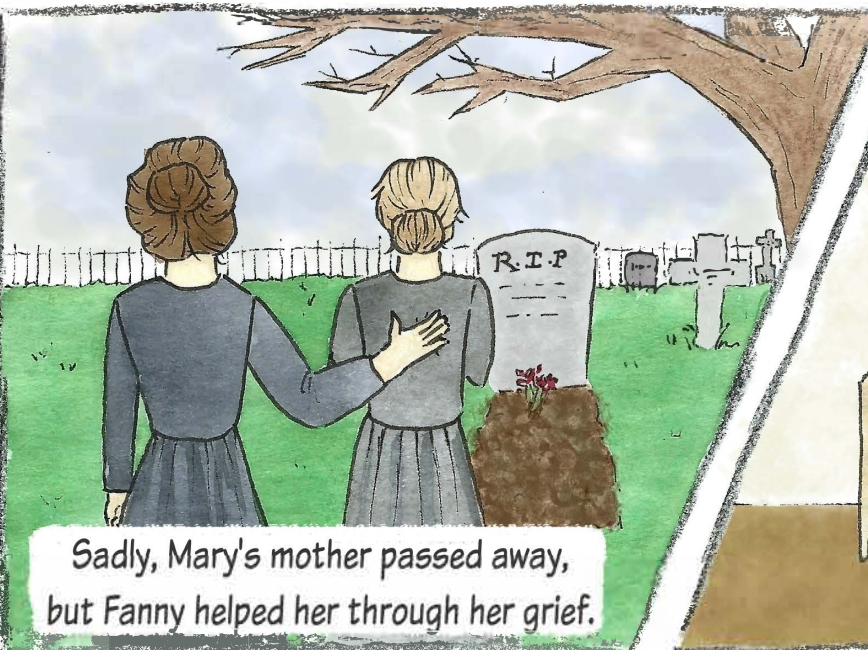
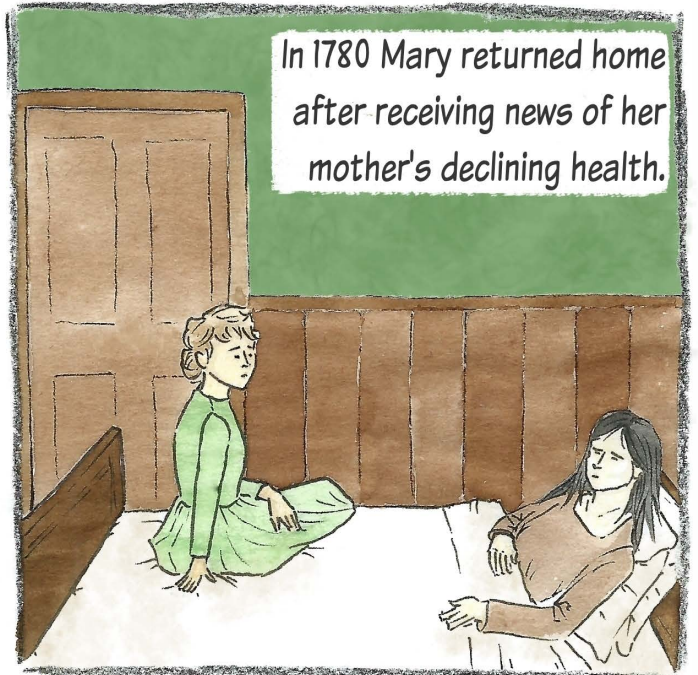
The two exchanged many letters over the course of their friendship.



At 19 Mary got a job assisting an elderly lady from Bath. However, she found the work tedious and became quite unhappy.



In 1780 Mary returned home after receiving news of her mother's declining health.



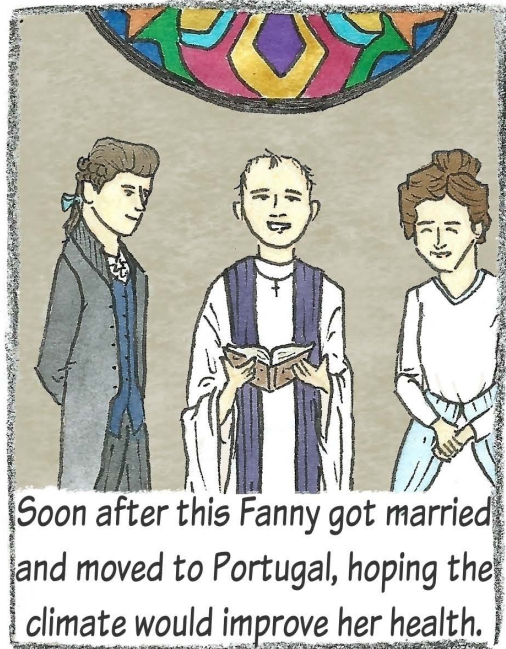
Sadly, Mary's mother passed away, but Fanny helped her through her grief.

They moved in together and came up with a plan.

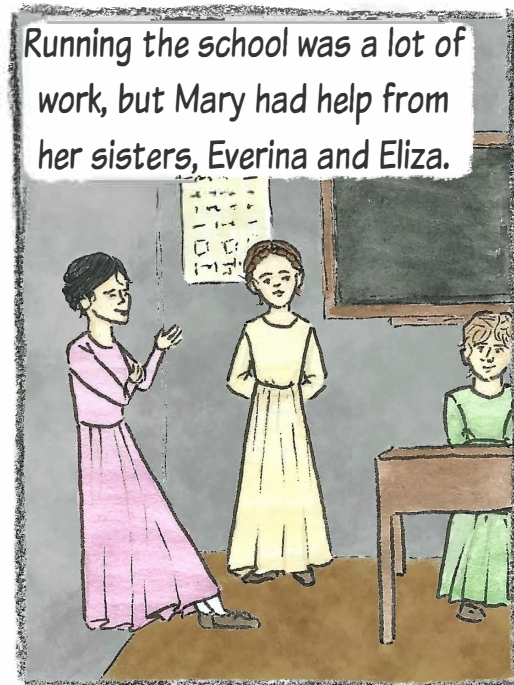




They opened a boarding school for girls in Newington Green



Soon after this Fanny got married and moved to Portugal, hoping the climate would improve her health.

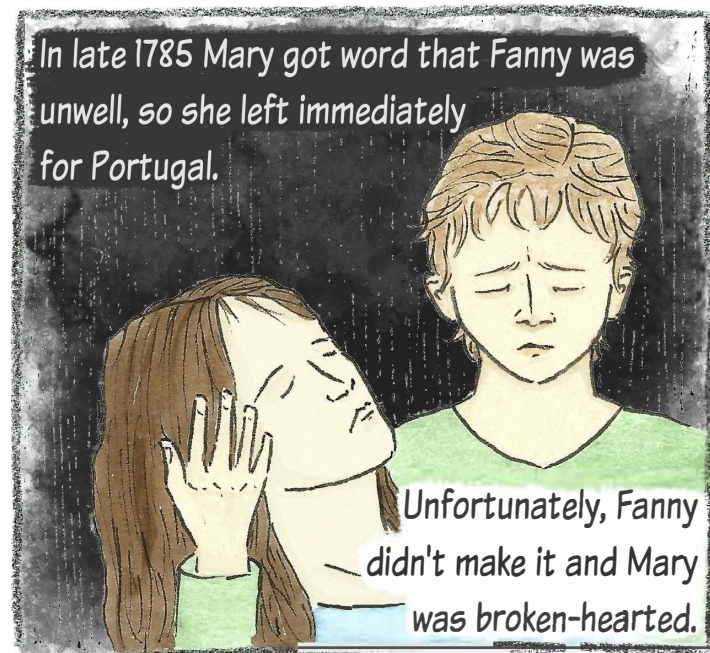


Running the school was a lot of work, but Mary had help from her sisters, Everina and Eliza.



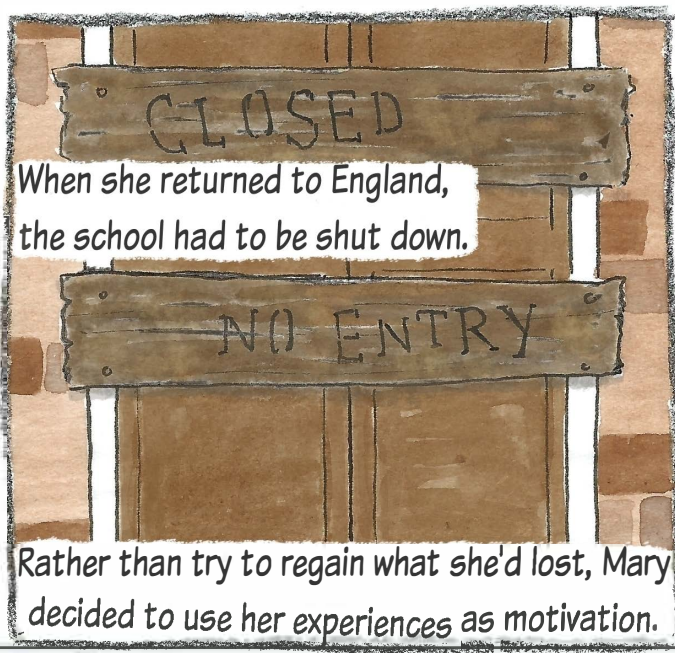
While in Newington Green, Mary attended Newington Green Meeting House - a place of worship where people shared ideas about how to make the world a fairer place.

It was here that she met people like Richard Price.



In late 1785 Mary got word that Fanny was unwell, so she left immediately for Portugal.

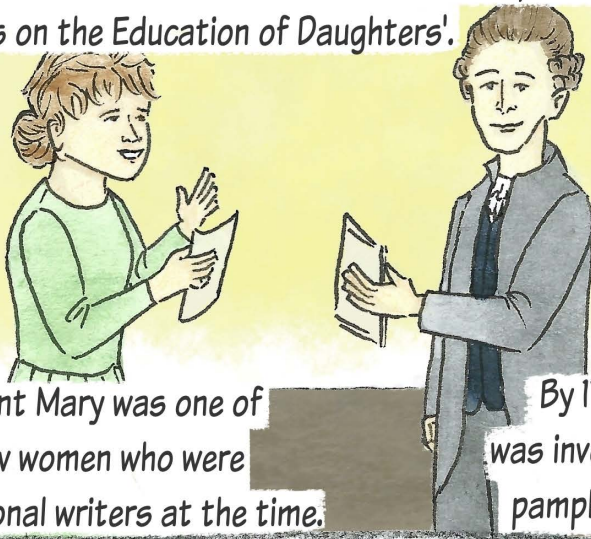
Unfortunately, Fanny didn't make it and Mary was broken-hearted.



When she returned to England, the school had to be shut down.

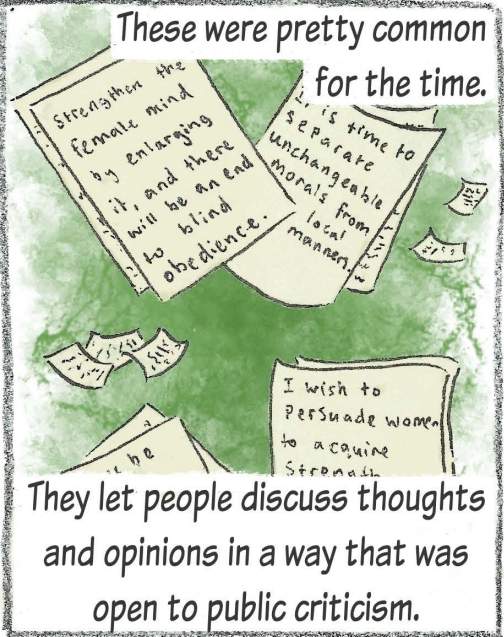
Rather than try to regain what she'd lost, Mary decided to use her experiences as motivation.

Mary contacted Joseph Johnson, a publisher she'd met at Newington Green. He liked her work and in 1786 published 'Thoughts on the Education of Daughters'.



This meant Mary was one of only a few women who were professional writers at the time.

By 1790 Mary was involved in a pamphlet war...



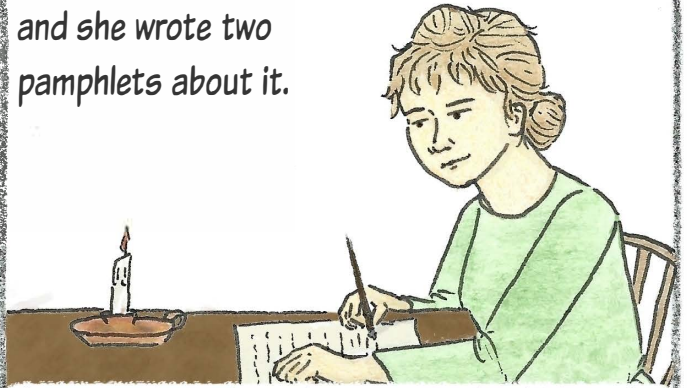
These were pretty common for the time. They let people discuss thoughts and opinions in a way that was open to public criticism.

This particular pamphlet war was about how best to rule the country. There was fighting in France about this and it made people in Britain question their own system.

Was it fair that the king and the rich people got to decide everything?

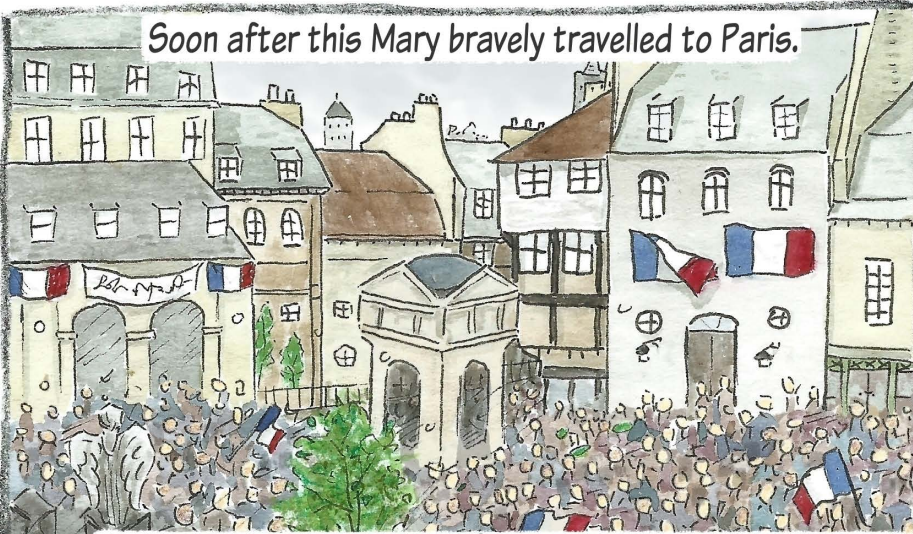


Mary didn't think so and she wrote two pamphlets about it.



One was about how the country should be ruled more fairly for everyone, the other focused entirely on how women deserved to be treated as equals - something no one had done before.

Soon after this Mary bravely travelled to Paris.

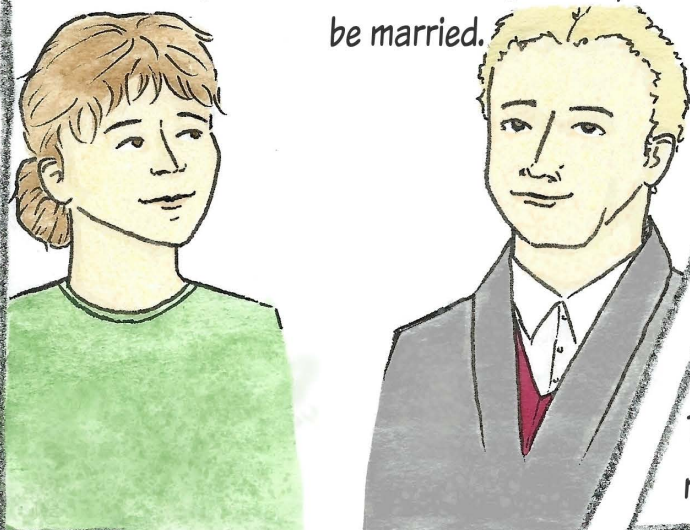


France was in the middle of a revolution and Mary wanted to experience it first-hand to better understand the situation.

However, Paris was a dangerous place for an Englishwoman.



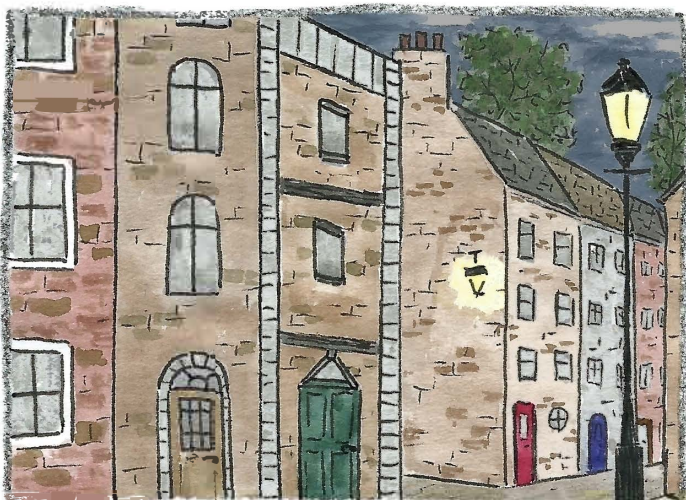
To protect herself she asked Gilbert Imlay - an American man she'd grown close to - if they could pretend to be married.



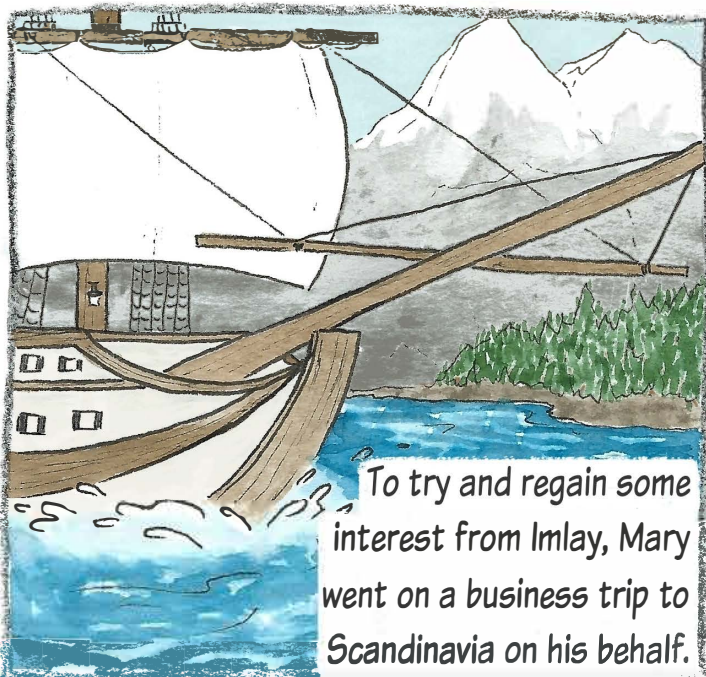
Imlay agreed to the plan and soon they had a baby.



They decided to name her Fanny.



After a while the pair moved back to London, but Mary was worried that she was losing Imlay's affections and became very downcast.



To try and regain some interest from Imlay, Mary went on a business trip to Scandinavia on his behalf.

Sadly this plan didn't work, and Mary returned to London feeling hopeless.



However, things did get better for Mary when a book she'd written about her time in Scandinavia was read by William Godwin.

Godwin enjoyed Mary's book and immediately wanted to get to know her properly.



Despite not getting on very well when they'd met a few years before, Mary found she enjoyed William Godwin's company.



They shared many of the same perspectives and opinions, and quickly grew close.



In 1797 they got married at Old St Pancras Church

On 30th August the same year they had a baby daughter.



She was named after her mother.

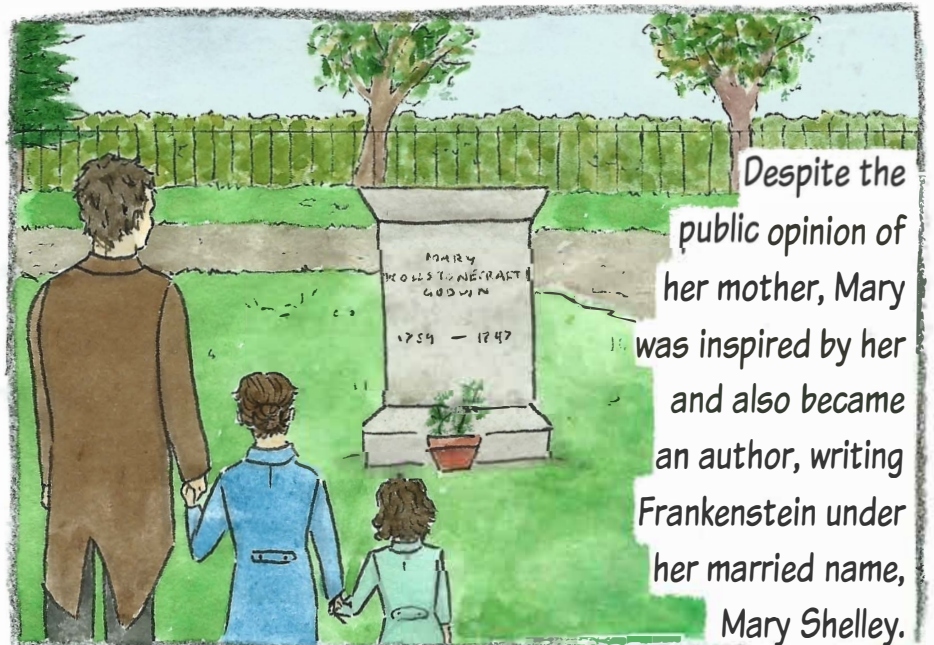
Sadly just ten days later Mary passed away, leaving her two daughters to be brought up by Godwin.



He decided the world needed to know of Mary's achievements and published a memoir.



Unfortunately, her opinions were still considered too radical and it wasn't well-received.



Despite the public opinion of her mother, Mary was inspired by her and also became an author, writing Frankenstein under her married name, Mary Shelley.

Whether people know who Mary is or not, everyone's lives have been shaped by the actions and words of this remarkable woman.

She was extremely resilient, never gave up, and fought for many different causes to make the world a fairer place, and that's why it's so important that she's remembered for all the things she achieved.



The Newington Green Meeting House has just undergone a major renovation thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It's been transformed into a fully accessible, free heritage space, ready to share its radical history and encourage visitors to think differently.



The building was a hotbed of revolutionary thinking in the 18th century and holds stories of Richard Price, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Andrew Pritchard, and most notably Mary Wollstonecraft - leading it to be described as "the birthplace of feminism". It is now the home of non-religious church New Unity.



This comic has been designed as part of a free, six-lesson philosophy scheme of work for primary school students, centred on the life and legacy of Mary Wollstonecraft. It has been developed by the Newington Green Meeting House and the People's History Museum.

The Meeting House heritage project also offers a wide variety of other free educational resources for teachers, students, and home learners. Please visit www.ngmh.org/category/schools where you'll find assemblies, worksheets, slideshows, and other materials on history, social justice, arts & crafts, and more.



To find out more about Mary Wollstonecraft why not visit the Wollstonecraft Society website? We work to bring Mary Wollstonecraft's legacy of human rights, equality and justice into young people's lives. Visit wollstonecraftsociety.org to learn more or email education@wollstonecraftsociety.org to find out how we can work with your school or library, or if you would like a copy of this comic book. To keep up to date with our news follow us on Twitter at [@TheWollSoc](https://twitter.com/TheWollSoc) or on Facebook

