

In 1797, when Mary Lyon was born, girls didn't spend much time in school. They quit at about the age of ten. "It's a waste of time to educate a girl," folks said. "Just teach her to read and write. That's all a housewife needs."

Mary, growing up, did not agree. "Girls have brains too," she said. "We should have an equal chance to learn."

Mary's father was dead. Her mother was very poor. She could not even buy books for her daughter. But that didn't stop Mary. She got a job as a housekeeper. The pay was only a dollar a week. But that was something, at least.

She saved every penny. Soon she was able to buy a few books. She read them eagerly. And she made up her mind: what she wanted most in the world was to go to school.

She took on more work. At seventeen she taught school. In her spare time she did sewing and spinning. Sometimes she worked late at night. At last she had enough money for one term of school.

Those were wonderful months! School-work was easy for her. She did better than many boys. In fact, her good work caught the attention of the principal. He let her stay

in school one more term, free of charge. But after that she had to leave. There was no more money to live on.

Mary became a teacher. For several years she taught at Ipswich, Massachusetts. But all that time an idea was going through her head. She wanted to start a college just for girls. That would take money, of course. She talked to important men in town. Later she went to see the heads of men's schools. But it was no use. Most of the great men in the country refused to help her.

"All right," said Mary, "I'll ask *women* for help."

She went from door to door in Ipswich. She asked the women to give what they could. And they did. Sometimes it was only pennies. But in the end Mary collected a thousand dollars.

"Now the important men will listen," she said. This time they did. They were amazed at what this one woman had done. They were so amazed that they, too, gave money.

On October 13, 1836, Mary's dream came true. She watched workers lay the first stone for a new building. A year later she put a sign above its door: MOUNT HOLYOKE SEMINARY. It was the first women's college in America.

CHECK YOUR READING

1. When Mary Lyon was young, girls quit school when they were about
 - A ten
 - B thirteen
 - C sixteen

2. Most people thought that for girls to learn to read and write was
 - A foolish
 - B useful
 - C unkind

3. Mary first went to work as a
 - A nurse
 - B cook
 - C housekeeper

4. Mary got the money to go to school by
 - A asking her father
 - B selling her books
 - C doing extra work

5. She went to school for
 - A one term
 - B two terms
 - C three terms

6. She left school because
 - A she wanted to travel
 - B her money ran out
 - C the principal asked her to

7. Ipswich, Massachusetts, was the town where Mary
 - A was born
 - B went to college
 - C taught school

8. Mary got the first thousand dollars for her new college by
 - A going from door to door
 - B writing to college heads
 - C making speeches in public

9. When the important men saw what she had done, they
 - A offered her a job
 - B gave her more money
 - C bought her a house

10. Mount Holyoke was the first
 - A free college
 - B state college
 - C women's college