

# Mercy Otis Warren

1728–1814



**WHY SHE MADE HISTORY** A poet, playwright, and historian, Mercy Otis Warren wrote many plays and poems about the American Revolution. She also opposed the ratification of the Constitution.



*As you read the biography below, think about how poems and plays can be used to make political statements. What position did Mercy Otis Warren take on the American Revolution?*



© Bettmann/CORBIS

After the American Revolution, lawmakers set up a new system of government for the new country. When the Articles of Confederation proved to be ineffective, lawmakers proposed a new system of government in the Constitution. The new Constitution was supported by many. However, Mercy Otis Warren and others opposed it.

Mercy Otis was born in 1728 in Barnstable, Massachusetts, the daughter of a military officer. Although she did not attend school, she was allowed to sit in on her brother's history and literature lessons.

In 1754 Mercy Otis married Massachusetts political leader James Warren. Mercy Otis Warren was also a friend of political leader and future president John Adams. Her connections led Warren to pay close attention to government affairs.

Warren wrote poetry privately for many years. In 1772 she published *The Adulateur*, a play that poked fun at Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson. The play focused on the impending war. It was the first in a series of pieces of war propaganda.

Warren's play *The Defeat* also featured a character based on Hutchinson. Her following play, *The Group*, was about what would happen if the British king did away with the Massachusetts colonial laws.

Following the war, the focus of Warren's writing changed. She attacked the behavior of Americans involved in forming the new government. In particular she wrote about her opposition to the new Constitution. She opposed the document, in part, because she felt it gave too much power to the federal government and would result in an aristocratic tyranny. Warren also wrote two volumes of poems and a history of the Revolution in which she criticized actions of American leaders.

Warren was also one of the first American women poets to be published under her own name. She knew most of the Revolution's leaders

**Creating a New Government****Biography**

personally and was closely involved with many key events, often hosting meetings of Patriots in her home. Warren's writing expressed her political opinions and showed the effect of corruption on government. She died in 1814 at her home in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

1. **Recall** Why did Warren oppose the new Constitution?

---

---

2. **Analyze** Why do you think Warren used plays and poetry to express her opinions about the Revolutionary War?

---

---

**ACTIVITY**

Write a poem or a short scene for a play depicting an incident from the period of the American Revolution. Your piece should express your opinion about a particular historical event.