

Discussion Question: Why did Mary Astell suggest such extreme solutions as a learning environment for woman, and is it necessary?

In Mary Astell's *From A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* is a plea for intellectual equality among the sexes. The author was tired of the oppressive nature of man, which kept her and her sisters from developing their minds. She felt that females back then should have the same rights as women have achieved through the Civil Rights Movement today. Her answer to this was "A Religious Retirement." It is Mary Astell's ideal place to end her intellectual suffering and open new doors for the female mind. I feel that Mary went a little to far with this idea. She wanted to segregate males and females, live in a convent, and find alternates to marriage for women, which, I guess, would be the same as living in a convent. Mary was a feminist which I feel lead her to be so aggressive in this proposal, but I can understand why she is mad. I would feel the same way if I was not aloud to attend Florida State because of some ridiculous stereotype, for example, due to the fact I am a male. I guess I would also want a separate place to learn if society shunned me for who I am and what I wanted to do with my mind, but I would not exclude people to the same degree that Mary wanted to. So these places that Mary Astell wanted to create do have some merit to them. For without them, women of that time, unless rich, would not have been able to be educated.