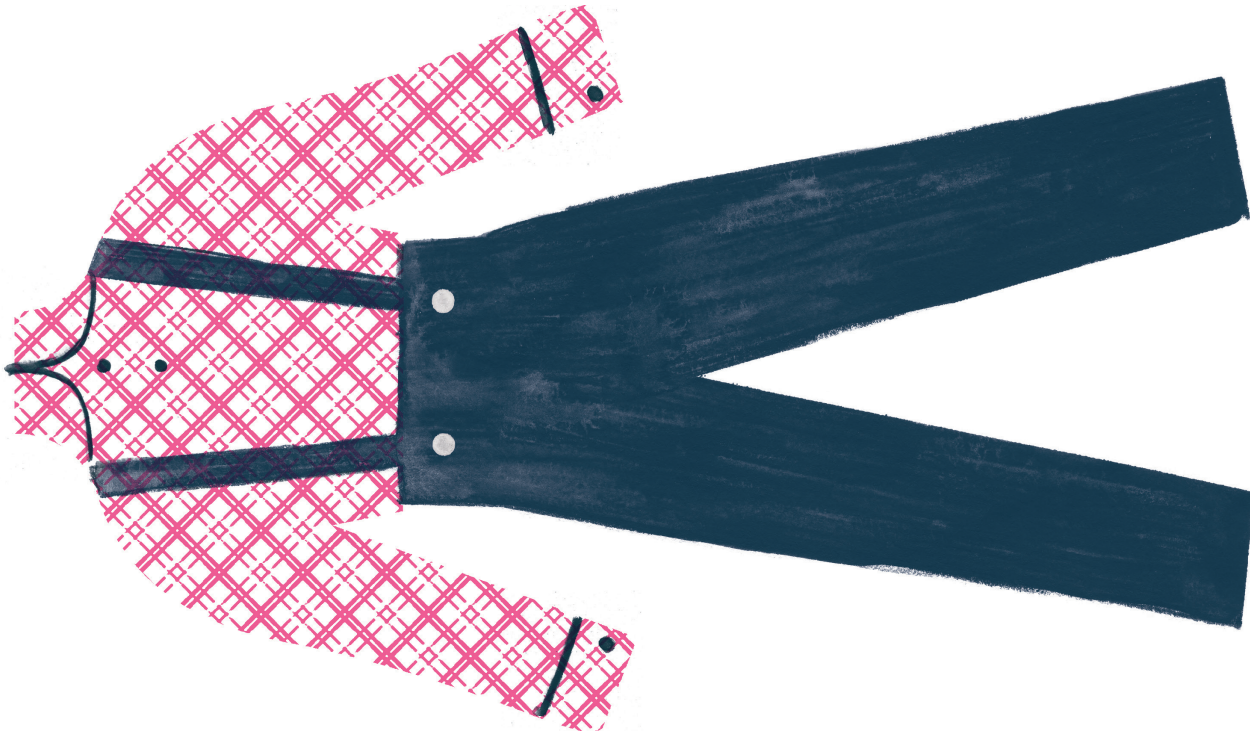
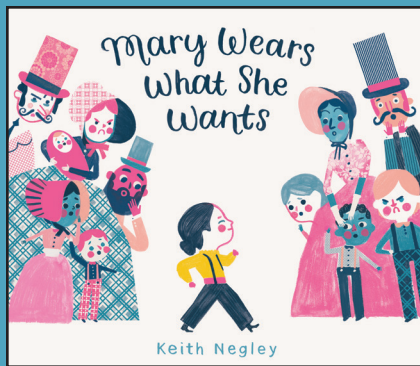


~~girl clothes~~



~~boy clothes~~



# Mary Wears What She Wants

## Keith Negley



### About the Book

Inspired by the true story of Mary Edwards Walker, this book tells of a young girl who challenges the gender norms of her time by choosing to wear pants. The townspeople are appalled and castigate her for wearing “boy clothes,” but Mary responds by saying, “I’m not wearing boys’ clothes. I’m wearing my clothes!” Daring to be different, Mary’s small act brings huge change for the girls in her hometown.

### Discussion Questions

- Read the first page. Why do you think girls in America weren’t allowed to wear pants long ago?
- Why did Mary dislike dresses? Why did she prefer pants?
- How did the townspeople react when Mary wore pants? Why?
- When Mary asks her father why everyone is so upset, what does her father tell her? Do you agree with his response?
- On her way to school the next day, why does Mary appreciate the fact that she can walk faster in pants?
- What happens when Mary arrives at school?
- What does Mary mean when she says, “I’m not wearing boys’ clothes... I’m wearing my clothes!”
- What happens when Mary goes into her classroom?
- Read and discuss the page: “It’s the way things have always been and the way things will always be, they said. And no one thought it should be any different.” Does Mary agree? Why or why not? What would happen if everyone believed this?

### Extension Activities

**If I Could Change the World.** Mary believed that it was wrong to dictate how people should dress based on their gender. Ask the students what they would change in today’s society. Why? How? Young students can draw pictures to convey their ideas, while older students can write a persuasive piece to express their ideas.

**All Dressed Up.** Ask the students to think about their favorite ways to dress. Have them wear a favorite outfit to school and photograph them wearing it. Then have the students design, color, and cut out an outfit that they would love to wear. Have the students affix the photo and the cut-out outfit onto a piece of paper and add a decorative border. Display these and discuss how the pages are different and unique. Why is this important?

**Those Who Dared.** This story is inspired by the amazing life of Mary Edwards Walker, who was arrested many times for wearing pants instead of dresses. Ask the students to research other trailblazers who dared to question, challenge, and change their world. This can be a teacher-led whole group activity for younger students, while older students can conduct own research independently.

**Girls and Boys.** Begin a class discussion about gender roles and expectations. What do the students believe? Why? Do their classmates agree? Why or why not? Emphasize the importance of respectful conversation as the students express their views and challenge one another to think in new and different ways.

