**“MY EFFORTS TO BECOME A LAWYER” CLOSE READING ACTIVITY**

Read the following excerpts of “My Efforts to Become a Lawyer” (1888) by Belva Lockwood and discuss the phrases that are highlighted:

“Graduating from the district school [in 1844 at age 14], I was soon a teacher of those who so recently been my associates. Here again came up the odious distinction of my sex. The male teachers in the free schools of the State of New York received more than double the salary paid to the women teachers at that time, simply because they were men, and for precisely the same work. It was an indignity not to be tamely borne by one with so little discriminations of the merits and demerits of sex, and of course, impolite as it may seem, I at once began to agitate this questions, arguing that pay should be for work, and commensurate to it, and not be based on sex. To-day [1878] this custom is changed.”

***Discussion:*** *Belva Lockwood grew up at a time, and in a family, when it was accepted by most men, and many women, that females were inherently inferior to males. Why do you think the young Belva was so indignant about salary inequality between male and female teachers in the 1840s? What does she mean by “odious distinction” and “an indignity not to be tamely borne”?*

In 1876, on learning the fate of her third failed attempt to be admitted to the bar of the United States Supreme Court, Lockwood wrote:

“Those nine gowned judges looked at me in amazement and dismay. The case was taken under advisement, and on the following Monday an opinion was rendered, of which the following is the substance: *“As this court knows no English precedent for the admission of women to the bar, it declines to admit, unless there shall be a more extended public opinion, or special legislation.”* No pen can portray my utter astonishment and surprise with which I listened to this decision.”

***Discussion:*** *Why do you think the judges looked at Lockwood with “astonishment and dismay”? Why would the Supreme Court of the United States defer to the “English precedent” rather than setting their own precedent for who should be admitted to the bar?*

Excerpts from “My Efforts to Become a Lawyer” 1888  <https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/object/sc154238>