

LESSON TWO

∞ Abigail and Abigail 2nd in Europe ∞ *1784–1788*

Sources:

Adams Family Correspondence. Volume 5. Edited by Richard Alan Ryerson, et al. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993.

Adams Family Correspondence. Volume 6. Edited by Richard Alan Ryerson, et al. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993.

Adams Family Correspondence. Volume 7. Edited by Margaret A. Hogan, C. James Taylor, et al. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

Adams Family Correspondence. Volume 8. Edited by Margaret A. Hogan, C. James Taylor, et al. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

œDiplomatic Families œ

John served his country in Philadelphia at the Continental Congress. He then worked as a diplomat in France and the Netherlands. After years of separation from her husband Abigail Adams would not allow the division to continue. After the successful conclusion of a definitive treaty with Great Britain, John Adams was named the first American minister to the Court of St. James. Though dreading the month-long journey over the Atlantic Ocean, Abigail Adams packed, and she and her only daughter Abigail (known to her family as “Nabby”) boarded a ship bound for London.

For the next four years, Abigail and Nabby would live in Europe enjoying the company of expatriate Americans, European aristocracy, and even the company of King and Queen of England. Yet both yearn for nothing more than the rocky New England soil of Braintree, Massachusetts. While John Adams negotiated treaties, received solicitors, and defended the new Constitution from across the ocean, Abigail maintained the household, and Nabby fell in love, married, and made John and Abigail grandparents for the first time.

In long letters home, Abigail and Nabby reveal the human side of foreign service. Though the now famous letters between John and Abigail are on hiatus, the letter writing continues as Abigail and Nabby carry on a correspondence that reveals much about the private side of this very public family.

Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Smith Shaw, July 28, 1784

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 402–407

My dear sister

London July 28. 1784

I think when I finished the last page I was rubbing myself up on Board Ship. But this was not the only rubbing I had to go through, for here is the stay maker, the Mantua maker, the hoop maker, the shoe maker, the miliner and hair dresser all of whom are necessary to transform me into the fashionable Lady. I could not help recollecting Moliere's fine Gentleman with his dancing master his musick Master &c. nor dispising the tyranny of fashion which obliges a reasonable creature to submit to Such outrages. You inquire of me how I like London. For particulars I refer you to sister Cranches Letter, but I charge you as you expect to hear again from me, not to expose it, or let any body see it, except Brother Shaw, who is one and the same with yourself. My Lads may read it if they please. I assure you my dear sister I am better pleased with this city than I expected. It is a large magnificent, and Beautifull city, most of the Streets 40 feet wide built strait, the houses all uniform, no [...] small tennaments, many fine open Squares where the nobility reside, and where most of the publick Buildings are Erected. I have been only to two or 3, the foundling Hospital where I attended divine service on sunday morning and to the Magdeline in the afternoon, of which you will find an account in the Letter to which I refer you. You will also learn from that all the particulars of my voyage and journey. Mr. Adams is not yet come from the Hague. I wrote him by the first opportunity, but the wind has been contrary ever since I arrived. He had removed the family which was in the House, out more than a month ago, and sent Master John to wait for my Arrival in Calihan where he expected I had taken passage. [...] Americans from all Quarters are daily calling upon me, some of whom I know, and others whom I never saw; out of Respect I presume to Mr. Adams, or curiosity to see the wife and daughter. Amongst those of my American acquaintance who have calld upon me, is a Mr. Joy of whom *you once* had some knowledge. Nay Blush not my sister, he is still a Character that you need not blush at having an Esteem for. I was unfortunately not at home. He left his card with his Name, and direction and a polite Billet requesting me to dine with him to day if I was not engaged, and if I was, the first day I was disengaged. He married a Yorkshire Lady and is in high esteem here. So tomorrow I dine with him, being the first day I have. I have received great politeness and attention from some of my (Tory) acquaintance. Mr. and Mrs. Hollowell came to see me upon my arrival, invited me to dine with them, and then sent an invitation to me to take up my Lodgings with them whilst I resided in <town> the city, then sent and presst me to accept the offer, but I excused myself not chuseing on many accounts to encumber a private family, and having a large leavie, to Speak in Stile. I however accepted their invitation to Dinner, and was treated with a great deal of hospitality and kindness. Mrs. Atkinson [is like a sister to me?] and I have dined twice with her. Mrs. Hay I have dined with once. She lives a mile or two from the city. I was invited last Night to the play; but declined going for several reasons. Parson Walter amongst others has made me a visit.

Tis Nine oclock and I have not Breakfasted, for we dine at four and I am half dead. Dr. Clark one of my fellow passengers whom I mentioned before, and Col. Trumble are to Breakfast with me, and here they are.

Two oclock.

From nine till 2 I have not had a moment. Mr. Appleton, Mr. Joy Mr. Cushing Mr. Murray Mr. Storer and Smith have all been to make their morning visits. Morning in this country signifies from Nine oclock till 3 and from that hour till four, you are left to yourself to dress for dinner. I do not conform wholly, when I dine at my Lodgings, I have dinner at 3, but an earlier hour would Subject me to company. The buisness of this city is all done before dinner. I have never Supped abroad, Suppers are little practised here, unless upon publick invitations. Mr. Smith received a Letter from Mr. Adams last evening in reple to one he wrote him informing him that I had taken passage in Captain Lyde. He tells him that it is the most agreeable News Next to that of my certain arrival, gives some directions with regard to me, expects to be obliged to set our for France as soon as I reach the Hague. Before this; he has from my own hand, received an account of my arrival. This is wednesday; on fryday, I expect either Mr. Adams, or Master John, and this day week, I shall set of for the Hague. I design to see this week, Westminster Abbey, and the British Museum, together with Mr. Wests paintings. I have been to see a very Elegant picture of Mr. Adams which belongs to Mr. Copley, and was taken by him, it is a larg full length picture. He is drawn with a Globe before him: the Map of Europe in his hand and at a distance 2 female figures representing Innocence, and Peace. It is said to be an admirable likeness. I went from Mr. Copleys to the Hay Market, to what is called Mr. Copleys exhibitions. These are open only for a certain Season: there are two or 3 most [beautifull?] paintings here, the death of Lord Chatham in the house of Lo[rds with?] likenesses of every Member, and an other picture more Strikeing [even th?]an that. This was a picture of Major Peirson and the defeat of the [French?] Troops in the Island of Jersey. Mrs. Cranch will send you the account of this which I have inclosed to her. One is ready upon viewing these pictures to apply those Lines of Popes upon Kneller.

“Copley! by heavn and not a Master taught
Whose Art was Nature, and whose pictures thought;”

Here is Mr. Storer come to Breakfast with me and then I am going out to *Cheap Side*; if to be found, but it is not this Side Boston I assure you; I am astonished to find that you can purchase no article here by retail but what comes much dearer than in Boston. I had heard these Stories; but never believed them before. I shall dine with Mr. Joy to day and when I return I will tell you all about our entertainment [...]

Review Questions

1. What city is Abigail in and what is her impression of it?
2. What is Abigail's reception like when she arrives in Europe?
3. What paintings by a Boston artist does Abigail view?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Considering whom Abigail Adams is, in what ways was this journey monumental for her?

Abigail Adams 2d to Elizabeth Cranch, July 30, 1784

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 410–412

N. 2

London July 30. 1784

This day [...] I [was?] Dining with Mamma at Mrs. Atinsons in hourly expectation of receiving letters from America, Mr. Elworthy called and sent me up, one from my Dear Eliza. It was a pleasure that I have not known till now. You cannot form an idea of the sensations that operates in the mind of one, at receiving letters from those we esteem when situated from almost every friend. Sure I am you cannot judge of the disappointment after haveing flattered yourself with hopes, of receiving letters, not to find any. Charles Storer laughs at me and tels me that I shall find my correspondents fall off in a little time. They will be attentive at first but soon grow negligent. I answer him that I do not fear it, as indeed I do not. He says our friends in America never know of a Ships sailing unless they come from the yard or garden, or where it is impossible not to hear of it. However I do not complain. Thankfull shall I be to any friend that will take the trouble to address a few lines to me, and shall esteem myself indebted to them. Let them be who they will.

Your letter Eliza called afresh to my memory every scene that I so lately passed, a retrospect that I can never take without paying the tribute of tears. Perhaps tis a weakness, if it is, it is a weakness that I would not exchange, for every other sentiment that was ever admitted to the heart. The remembrance of our friends is indeed dear to us. I shall never entertain so unworthy an opinion of myself as to believe it possible that mine should ever forget me, let me be placed in whatever clime fortune designs for me[...]

<Thursday Morn> friday Morn

This moment a servant tells me that my Brother has arrived and has stoped at the next house to dress. Why has he done this. He knows not the impatience of his sister and Mamma. My happiness is but half compleat—but why did I think of this. Let me enjoy the present moment and anticipate future satisfaction. I cannot write now. When I have seen him I will at least tell you how he looks, if he is any thing short of a monster I shall be disappointed, from the accounts I have had of him [...]

Review Questions

1. What is Nabby's concern about people writing to her?

2. Whose arrival was much anticipated by both Nabby and her mother?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why might letters from family and friends have been so important for both Nabby and her mother?
2. How would you describe Nabby's feelings about her brother John?

Blog Prompt

How does letter writing compare to phone calls and email as a means of communication?

Abigail Adams 2d to Elizabeth Cranch, September 4, 1784

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 428–430

Auteaul septem. 4th . 1784

Here my dear Eliza is your friend placed in a little village two or three miles from Paris, unknowing and unknown to every person around except our own family. Without a friend a companion, or an acquaintance of my own sex. In this may I expect to spend the next Winter, retired, within myself, and my chamber, studiously endeavoring, to gain a knowledge of the French Language which I assure you I find not a very easy matter.

There are at Present fewer American Ladies here than for some years past. Ladies of our own Country are the only ones with whom we can with pleasure or satisfaction have any society with. We have become acquainted with Mrs. Volnay, and find her an agreeable Woman. Mrs. Hay dined with us yesterday, with another American Lady. She intends to spend the Winter in France but not near us—which I regret very much. We should find so agreeable a Woman quite an acquisition.

Were I to attempt giving you my real opinion or a just description of this Country and of the City of Paris in particular I am sure you would not believe it. The people are I believe, the dirtiest creatures in the Human race. Paris has been stiled a beautiful City, perhaps it is judged by the strict rules of—architecture and proportion—but it strikes the eye as very far from beautiful. The streets are very narrow in general, and the buildings amazing high, all built of stone, and which was once white but by the smoke and dirt that have acquired, a very disagreeable appearance. The publick building[s] are I believe more elegant than in London. I was last Eve at the French Comedy which is a most beautiful building without, and within it is the most elegant perhaps in the World. But as a City I do not think that Paris in point of beauty and elegance, will bear a comparison with London.

The appearance of the lower class of people, is of a heavy leaden kind of creatures, whose greatest art and what indeed is most attended to by almost all classes is to cheat you of as much as they possibly can, in which they succeed with strangers, much to their own satisfaction.

I shall learn to prize my own Country above all others. If there is not so much elegance and beauty and so many sources of amusement and entertainment, there is what to every honest and virtuous mind will be far preferable, a sincerity, and benevolence which must be prized above every other consideration. Even those who do not possess it admire it in others. I do not see an American that does not ardently wish to return to their Country. Of this I am sure, that it is the first wish of my heart, and <only> not three months absent. At the end of twelve months I shall be quite satisfied with Europe, and impatient to return home [...]

Review Questions

1. What are Nabby's complaints about France?
2. What does Nabby learn about her own country during her sojourn in France?

Blog Prompt

What might it be like to live as an American expatriate today?

Abigail Adams to Royall Tyler, [September 5, 1784]

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 445–446

[5 September 1784]

Dear Sir

[...] Europe has no charms to attach me to it disconnected with my family, nor ever can have, curiosity gratified, and I turn my thought to my lowly cottage, to my rough hewn Garden, as objects more pleasing than the Gay and really beautiful one which now presents itself to my view. My taste is too rigidly fixed to be warped by the Gay sun shine and Splendour of Parissian attractions, it is true that like or dislike you must eat drink and dress as they do. I will not say Sleep, for to that I have not conformed. I will not pretend to judge of a people by the Manners of a few individuals. The acquaintance I have had with several Gentlemen of this nation lead me to more favourable opinion of their exterior, than what I have seen and heard respecting the other Sex. I shall however be better able to judge as I mix more with them. It is manners more than conversation which distinguish a fine woman in my Eye, so that my being unacquainted with the Language is not so material in this particular. A woman whose manners are modest and decent cannot fail of having some merit. Emelia on this account strikes where ever she appears, the old Abbes who are Mr. Adamses particular Friends call her une Ange and the Lady with whom I dined at Dr. Franklings, threw her self into a chair with this exclamation, *une Belle figurer* Monsieur Adams. Parissian dress with American neatness gives an advantageous appearance, and as you are a conissure in a Ladys dress I will tell you what it was: a white Lutestring Robe and petticoat, with hair drest and a white Gauze baloon Hat with a dress hankerchif ruffles &c. The Hat worn upon one side to give a little of the parissian appearance of fashion.

I have seen or rather been in company with but few French Ladies. I am going to go dine with my correspondent Madam Grand, when I return I will tell you how I like her. I beg to understand much better than I can speak the language. I venture to

talk with my coiffeur de femme, who is fluent enough as most of those kind of people are. She tells me that I shall Soon <parley fransoize beinny> parlaiz François fort bien, Mais Madomesel ne parler François ni Anglois.

Review Questions

1. What evidence does Abigail offer that she is homesick?
2. What is Abigail's daily life like?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What evidence is there that Abigail's is the life of an upper-class lady?

Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, September 5, 1784

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 446–451

Auteuil near Paris
September 5th. 1784

[...] This I may however say with truth that their Manners are totally different from those of our own Country. If you ask me what is the Business of Life here? I answer Pleasure. The Beau Monde you reply. Ay Madam from the Throne to the footstool it is the Science of every Being in Paris, and its environs. It is a matter of great Speculation to me, when these People labour. I am persuaded the greater part of these people, who crowd the Streets, the publick walks, the Theatres, the Spectacles as they term them, must subsist upon Bread and Water. In London the Streets are also full of People, but their Dress, their Gait, every appearance indicates Business, except upon Sundays, when every Person, devotes the Day, either at Church or in walking, as is most agreeable to his fancy: but here from the gayety of the Dress, and the Places they frequent I judge Pleasure is the Business of Life. We have no days with us, or rather in our Country by which I can give you an Idea of the Sabbath here; except Commencement and Election. Paris upon that Day pours forth all her Citizens into the environs for the purposes of recreation; we have a Beautiful wood, cut into walks, within a few rods of our dwelling, which upon this Day, resounds with Musick and Dancing, jollity and Mirth of every kind. In this Wood Booths are erected, where cake, fruit, and wine are sold. Here Milliners repair with their gauzes ribbons and many others articles in the pedling Stile, but for other purposes I imagine, than the mere sale of their Merchandize, but everything here is a subject of merchandize.

I believe this Nation is the only one in the world who could make Pleasure the Business of Life, and yet retain such a relish for it, as never to complain to its being tasteless or insipid; the Parisians seem to have exhausted Nature, and Art in this Science; and to be triste is a complaint of a most serious Nature.

What Idea my dear Madam can you form of the Manners of a Nation one city of which furnishes (Blush o, my sex when I name it) 52,000 unmarried females so lost to a Sense of Honour, and shame as publickly to enrol their Names in a Notary

Office for the most abandoned purposes and to commit iniquity with impunity: thousands of these miserable wretches perish, annually with Disease and Poverty, whilst the most sacred of institutions is prostituted to unite titles and Estates. In the family of Monsieur Grand, who is a Protestant I have seen a Decorum and Decency of Manners, a conjugal and family affection, which are rarely found, where separate apartments, separate Pleasures and amusements shew the world that Nothing but the Name is united. But whilst absolutions are held in estimation and Pleasure can be bought and sold, what restraint have mankind upon their Appetites and Passions?
[...]

Review Questions

1. According to Abigail, what is the most important pursuit for the French?
2. What evidence does she offer?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How might Abigail's Puritan roots account for her opinion of the French?

Blog Prompt

How do cultural differences affect the Adams family's time in Europe? Cite an example of cultural differences that affect the lives of Americans today.

Abigail Adams 2d to Mercy Otis Warren, September 5, 1784.

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 453 – 454

Auteuil, September 5th, 1784

[...] I hear you inquire, Madam, how I am pleased with this European world; whether my expectations, imagination, and taste, are gratified; and how the variety of objects which are presented to my view, impress my mind. All these questions I can answer, but in a manner, perhaps, that may surprise you, or lead you to think me a very unobserving, and possessed of an uncultivated taste, which has received very little improvement by visiting Europe.

In viewing objects at a distance, we see them through a false medium. As we approach, the disguise wears away, and we often find ourselves disappointed. I have indeed found this observation to be just. The contrast is by no means so remarkable between America and Europe, as is generally supposed. I am happy to assure you, that I give the preference to my own country, and believe I ever shall. In England the similarity is much greater to our own country, than here, and on that account I found it more agreeable. There is the appearance of greater wealth, as is very natural to imagine; but I have seen nothing that bears any proportion to my ideas of elegance, either in their houses,—especially in this country,—or in the appearance of the people.

This day we dined with Madame le Grand, the lady from whom mamma formerly received a letter. It is, I believe, an agreeable family. After dinner it was proposed to go and see the Dauphin, whose palace was but a little distance from the house. However ridiculous I might think it to pay so much obeisance to this infant, I joined

the company. The Palace is by no means an elegant building. There was a garden before it, surrounded by an open fence, and guards placed all around. The Dauphin was playing in the garden, and four ladies attending him. He is a pretty, sprightly child. We had the honour of seeing him, and paying him the compliment of a bow or a courtesy. He was amusing himself with as much ease as any other child of his age would have been. There were, I believe, a thousand persons crowding to take a view of this child, and from them he received every mark of respect and reverence that it was in their power to present. The gardens are only open on Sunday, and no one has an opportunity, on any other day, to see this representative of despotism and monarchy. One cannot but regret, that any people should, either from necessity or choice, be led to pay so much obeisance to a being who may rule them with a sceptre of iron [...]

Review Questions

1. According to Nabby, how does America compare with London and Paris?
2. What is Nabby's impression of the French monarchy?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How does democracy compare with monarchy as a form of government?

Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, June 24, 1785

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 6, p. 186–193

june 24. 1785

London Bath hotel Westminster

My dear sister

Captain Lyde is arrived and I have 3 Letters by him, one from Docter Tufts one from Dr. Welch and one from Mrs. Storer. I will not accuse my dear sister because I know she must have written to me tho I have not yet received it. I know so well how many accidents may prevent for a long time the reception of Letters, that whilst I ask candour for myself, I am willing to extend it to others.

I have been here a month without writing a single line to my American Friends. About the 28th. of May we reachd London and expected to have gone into our old quiet Lodgings at the Adelphia, but we found every hotel full, the Sitting of parliament, the Birth day of the King, and the famous Celebration of the Musick of Handle at Westminster Abbey, had drawn together such a concourse of people, that we were glad to get into Lodgings at the moderate price of a Guiney per day, for two Rooms and two Chambers, at the Bath hotel Westminster Picadily, where we yet are. This being the Court end of the city, it is the resort of a vast concourse of carriages, it is too publick and noisy for pleasure, but necessity is without Law. The Ceremony of presentation, upon one week, to the King and the Next to the Queen was to take place, after which I was to prepare for mine. It is customary upon presentation to receive visits from all the Foreign ministers, so that we could not exchange our Lodgings for more private ones, as we might and should; had we been only in a

private character. The Foreign ministers and several english Lords and Earls have paid their compliments here and all heitherto is civil and polite. I was a fortnight all the time I could get looking of different Houses, but could not find any one fit to inhabit under 200. besides the taxes which mount up to 50 & 60 pounds. At last my good Genius carried me to one in Grovenor Square, which was not let because the person who had the care of it, could let it only for the remaining lease which was one Year and 3 quarters. The price which is not quite 200, the Situation and all together induced us to close the Bargain and I have prevaield upon the person who lets it; to paint two rooms which will put it into decent order so that as soon as our furniture comes I shall again commence house keeping. Living at a hotel is I think more expensive than house keeping in proportion to what one has for their money. We have never had more than two dishes at a time upon our table, and have not pretended to ask any company and yet we live at a greater expence than 25 Guineys per week. The Wages of servants horse hire house meat and provision are much dearer here than in France. Servants of various sorts and for different departments are to be procured, their Characters to be inquired into, and this I take upon me even to the Coachman; you can hardly form an Idea how much I miss my son on this as well as many other accounts. But I cannot bear to trouble Mr. Adams with anything of a domestick kind, who from morning untill Evening has sufficient to occupy all his time. You can have no Idea of the petitions Letters and private applications for a pittance which crowd our doors. Every person represents his case as dismal, some may really be objects of compassion, and some we assist, but one must have an inexhaustable purse to supply them all. Besides there are so many gross impositions practised as we have found in more instances than one, that it would take the whole of a persons time to trace all their stories. Many pretend to have been American soldiers, some to have served as officers. A most glaring instance of falshood however Col. Smith detected in a man of these pretentions, who sent to Mr. Adams from the Kings bench prison and modestly desired 5 Guineys, a qualified cheet but evidently a man of Letters and abilities. But if it is to continue in this way a Galley Slave would have an easier task.

The Tory venom has begun to spit itself forth in the publick papers as I expected, bursting with envy that an American Minister should be received here with the same marks of attention politeness and civility which is shewn to the Ministers of any other power. When a minister delivers his credentials to the king, it is always in his private closet attended only by the minister for Foreign affairs, which is called a private audience, and the Minister presented makes some little address to his Majesty, and the same ceremony to the Queen, whose replie was in these words, "Sir I thank you for your civility to me and my family, and I am glad to see you in this Country," then very politely inquired whether he had got a house yet? The answer of his Majesty was much longer, but I am not at liberty to say more respecting it; than that it was civil and polite, and that his Majesty said he was glad the Choice of his Country had fallen upon him. The News Liars know nothing of the Matter, they represent it just to answer their purpose. Last thursday Col. Smith was presented at Court, and tomorrow at the Queens circle my Ladyship and your Neice make our compliments. There is no other presentation in Europe in which I should feel so much as in this.

Your own reflections will easily [suggest?] the reasons. I have received a very friendly and polite visit from the Countess of Effingham. She calld and not finding me at Home left a Card. I returned her visit, but was obliged to do it by leaving my Card too: as she was gone out of Town. But when her Ladyship returnd she sent her compliments, and word that if agreeable she would take a Dish of tea with me and named her Day. She accordingly came, and appeared a very polite sensible woman. She is about 40, a good person, tho a little masculine, elegant in her appearance, very easy and social. The Earl of Effingham is too well remembered by America to need any particular recital of his Character. His Mother is first Lady to the Queen. When Her Ladyship took leave, she desired I would let her know the day that I would favour her with a visit, as she should be loth to be absent. She resides in summer a little distance from town. The Early is a Member of Parliament which obliges him now to be in town and she usually comes with him and resides at a hotel a little distance from this. I find a good many Ladies belonging to the Southern states here, many of whom have visited me. I have exchanged visits with several, yet neither of us have met. The Custom is however here, much more agreeable than in France, for it is as with us, the Stranger is first visited. The ceremony of presentation here is considered as indispensable. There are four minister plenipotentiarys Ladies here, but one Ambassador and he has no Lady. In France the Ladys of Ambassadors only are presented there. One is obliged here to attend the circles of the Queen which are held in Summer one a fortnight, but once a week the rest of the year, and what renders it exceedingly expensive is, that you cannot go twice the Same season in the same dress, and a Court dress you cannot make use anywhere else. I directed my Mantua Maker to let my dress be elegant but plain as I could possibly appear with Decency, accordingly it is white Lutestring covered and full trimd with white Crape festooned with lilick ribbon and mock point lace, over a hoop of enormous extent. There is only a narrow train of about 3 yard length to the gown waist, which is put into a ribbon upon the left side, the Queen only having her train borne, ruffel cuffs for married Ladies thrible lace ruffels a very dress cap with long lace lappets two white plumes and a blond lace handkerchief, this is my rigging. I should have mentioned two pearl pins in my hair earrings and necklace of the same kind.

thursday morning

My Head is drest for St. James and in my opinion looks very tasty. Whilst Emelias is undergoing the same operation, I set myself down composedly to write you a few lines. Well methinks I hear Betsy and Lucy say, what is cousins dress, white my Dear Girls like your Aunts, only differently trimd, and ornamented, her train being wholly of white crape and trimd with white ribbon, the peticoat which is the most showy part of the dress coverd and drawn up in what is called festoons, with light wreaths of Beautifull flowers. The Sleeves white crape drawn over the silk with a row of lace round the Sleeve near the shoulder an other half way down the arm and 3d. upon the top of the ruffel little flower[s] stuck between. A kind of hat Cap with 3 large feathers and a bunch of flowers a wreath of flowers upon the hair. Thus equipd we go in our own Carriage and Mr. A and Col. Smith in his. But I must quit my pen to put myself in order for the ceremony which begins at 2 oclock. When I return I will relate to you my reception, but do not let it circulate as there may be persons

eager to Catch at every thing, and as much given to misrepresentation as here. I would gladly be excused the Ceremony.

fryday morning

Congratulate me my dear sister it is over. I was too much fatigued to write a line last evening. At two a clock we went to the circle which is in the drawing room of the Queen. We past through several apartments lined as usual with Spectatirs upon these occasions. Upon entering the antiChamber, the Baron de Linden the Dutch Minister who has been often here came and spoke with me. A Count Sarsfield a French nobleman with whom I was acquainted paid his compliments. As I passt into the drawing room Lord Carmathan and Sir Clement Cotterel Dormer were presented to me. Tho they had been several times here I had never seen them before. The sweedish the polish ministers made their compliments and several other Gentleman, but not a single Lady did I know, untill the Countess of Effingham came who was very civil. There were 3 young Ladies daughters of the Marquiss of Lothan who were to be presented at the same time and two Brides. We were placed in a circle round the drawing room which was very full, I believe 200 person present. Only think of the task the Royal family have, to go round to every person, and find small talk enough to speak to all of them. Tho they very prudently speak in a whisper, so that only the person who stands next you can hear what is said. The King enters the room and goes round to the right, the Queen and princesses to the left. The Lord in waiting presents you to the King and the Lady in waiting does the same to her Majesty. The King is a personable Man, but my dear sister he has a certain Countenance which you and I have often remarked, a red face and white eye brows, the Queen has a similiar countenance and the numerous Royal family confirm the observation. Persons are not placed according to their rank in the drawing room, but tranciently, and when the King comes in he takes persons as they stand. When he came to me, Lord Onslow said, Mrs. Adams, upon which I drew of my right hand Glove, and his Majesty saluted my left cheek, then asked me if I had taken a walk today. I could have told his Majesty that I had been all the morning prepareing to wait upon him, but I replied, no Sire. Why dont you love walking says he? I answered that I was rather indolent in that respect. He then Bow'd and past on. It was more than two hours after this before it came my turn to be presented to the Queen. The circle was so large that the company were four hours standing. The Queen was evidently embarrassed when I was presented to her. I had disagreeable feelings too. She however said Mrs. Adams have you got into your house, pray how do you like the Situation of it? Whilst the princess Royal looked compassionate, and asked me if I was not much fatigued, and observed that it was a very full drawing room. Her sister who came next princess Augusta, after having asked your neice if she was ever in England before, and her answering yes, inquired of me how long ago, and supposed it was when she was very young. And all this is said with much affability, and the ease and freedom of old acquaintance. The manner in which they make their tour round the room, is first the Queen, the Lady in waiting behind her holder up her train, next to her the princess royal after her princess Augusta and their Lady in waiting behind them. They are pretty rather than Beautifull, well shaped with fair compexions and a tincture of the kings countenance. The two sisters look much alike. They were both drest in lilack

and silver silk with a silver netting upon the coat, and their heads full of diamond pins. The Queen was in purple and silver. She is not well shaped or handsome. As [to] the Ladies of the Court, Rank and title may compensate for want of personal Charms, but they are in general very plain ill shaped and ugly, but dont you tell any body that I say so. If one wants to see Beauty they must go to Ranaleigh, there it is collected in one bright constellation. There were two Ladies very elegant at court Lady Salsbury and Lady Talbot, but the observation did not in general hold good that fine feather make fine Birds. I saw many who were vastly richer drest than your Friends, but I will venture to say that I saw none neater or more elegant, which praise I ascribe to the taste of Mrs. Temple and my Mantua Maker, for after having declared that I would not have any foil or tinsel about me, they fixd upon the dress I have described. Mrs. Temple is my near Neighbour and has been very friendly to me. Mr. Temple you know is deaf so that I cannot hold much conversation with him.

The Tories are very free with their compliments. Scarcly a paper excapes without some scurrility. We bear it with silent Contempt, having met a polite reception from the Court. It bites them Like a serpent and stings them like an adder. As to the success the negotiations may meet with time alone can disclose the result, but if this nation does not suffer itself to be again duped by the artifice of some and the malice of others, it will unite itself with America upon the most liberal principals and sentiments.

Captain Dashood came why I have not half done. I have not told your Aunt yet that whilst I was writing I received her thrice welcome Letters, and from my dear cousins too, Aunt Shaw and all, nor how some times I laught and sometimes I cry'd, yet there was nothing sorrowfull in the Letters, only they were too tender for me. What not time to say I will write to all of them as soon as possible. Why I know they will all think I ought to write, but how is it possible? Let them think what I have to do, and what I have yet to accomplish as my furniture is come and will be landed tomorrow. Eat the sweet meats divide them amongst you, and the choisest sweet meat of all I shall have in thinking that you enjoy them.

I hope you have got all my Letters by my son from whom I shall be anxious to hear.

Adieu adieu.

Esther is well, John poorly. Do not any of you think hard of me for not writing more, my pen is good for nothing. I went last Evening to Raneleigh, but I must reserve that story for the young folks. You see I am in haste, believe me most tenderly yours

A. Adams

[...]

Review Questions

1. For what major event is Abigail preparing?
2. What are Abigail's concerns about establishing her household in London?
3. How does the Tory party treat the Adamases while in London?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Describe Abigail's reaction to her reception by the King and Queen?
2. What do you think the formal reception was like for the royal family?

Blog Prompt

Imagine that you had the opportunity to meet the King and Queen of England. What would you want to talk about and why?

Abigail Adams 2d to John Quincy Adams, January 24, 1786

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 7, p. 12–29

Tuesday, 24th [January 1786]

[...] This day the Parliament meets and the King delivered his speech from the Throne. Sir Clement Cottril Domir [*Dormer*] Master of the ceremonies, sent your Mamma word that if she wished to see this ceremony he would secure her places. But we had engaged company to dine and feared we should be detained too late, but we might have gone for his Majesty came out at half after three. Our Company were Mr and Mrs West Mr West Junr Mr Trumble, who has finished his battle of Bunkers Hill, and I assure you it is a most terrible thing if the expression may be allowed to express, a good performance. I went to see it the other Morning and I was frozen, it is enough to make ones hair to stand on End. The moment of the Piece is when General Warren is slain and the scene, is dreadfully beautiful, or rather dreadfully expressive. It is to be engraved, and will secure to him immortal reputation. He is now upon the Dath of Montgomory. Mr and Miss Hamilton Miss Hollowell, and a Mr Ansty an Englishman, a Lawyer and a Member of Parliament, who is appointed to go out to America to assertain the claims of the Royalists. He was introduced to Pappa by My Lord Carmarthen and Pappa has given him letters to the Governors of all the states, and others to Members of Congress. He has called upon Pappa once before but I did not then see him and today was the first time and without Hessitation I can say that he is the handsomest, politest best bred Englishman I have yet seen. In short I doubted whether he really was an Englishman his manners were perfectly easy and polite and he was the admiration of the Company. I was sorry that I had not any letter written for you to forward by him as he intends visiting Boston soon after his arrival. Your Mamma has written by him to your Aunt Cranch. If I had have thought more of it I would have at least given him a Letter of introduction to you, for I really think him a *Phenominon*. His family live at Bath and he leaves London on sunday, for thence and goes in the Packet which will sail the first Wednesday in Februry. Mr Humphrys and Mr Smith finished our circle. These gentlemen however we call a part of our own family for they dine with us, every day when [they are] not otherwise engaged. I often wish for you my brother to make a sixth, at Table and in every scene. I miss you and wish for you, but to no purpose. I have not had a game of romps since the 12th of *May* and doubt whether I ever shall again. We amuse ourselves with battledoors, Chess, Cards, and &c. Mr Humphries is having his last Poem published if he should present one to me I shall forward it to you. He says that he likes Engld better than he expected he has met with no incivilities of any kind, and

he finds them a civiler People than he expected. He now waits for Mrs Siddons to appear and hear the debates in Parliament before he makes his exit. Pappa tells him he shall be quite in the depths when he goes—and sometimes proposes to him in jest that they should go together to Algiers to make a Treaty. Mr Barclays movements are so slow that it does not appear that he will get there before next summer, he was appointed in October, and he had not left Paris the beginning of January. Lamb and Randall, are I suppose nearly arrived, at Algiers, but from all accounts there does not seem to be much prospect of their succeeding, from the total incapacity of the former. Indeed all who are concerned in the affair, fear that this effort will be ineffectual which is very unfortunate. Pappa says, that he suspects that the Emperor of Morocco, will suppose his dignity insulted by receiving only persons deputized by those who Congress Commissioned, and he does not know but he shall have to go himself in the spring if this should be the case. I confess I am not sure that he would not go. I have offered to accompany him but you know I did to Madrid, but I suspect I shall see no more of the One than the other. This however is *entree Nous* [...]

Review Questions

1. How was Nabby affected by viewing Trumbull's Battle of Bunker Hill?
2. What is Nabby's impression of Mr. Antsy? What does it tell you about her impression of Englishmen in general?
3. With what treaty is John Adams concerned, and how does Nabby propose to help?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What does this letter tell you about the relationship between Nabby and her brother John Quincy?

Abigail Adams 2d to John Quincy Adams, February 9, 1786

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 7, p. 33–46

N 12

Feb. 9th. [1786] Thursday

This my Brother is the day appropriated for the celebration of the Queens Birth day. It really comes in June but as the Kings is in that Month they defer its celebration to this season. Kings and Princess you know may do any thing which their power will permit with impunity. But to tell you—at 2 o'clock we were dressd, Mamma in a satin of the new fashiond Colour which is Called the spanish fly, trimed with Crepe and Gold fringe. My dress was pink sattin trimmed with Crepe and silver fringe and some *Persons of taste* told me that tho they saw more expensive and more superb dresses at Court they did not see one, more elegant and neat than my Ladyships. Now who you think this was. *Why Mr Humphryes—and for all the World his taste is excellent.* At two o'clock, Mamma and myself got into the Carriage, and proceeded, on our way to st James's. The Curiosity of People was so great having never seen anything of the kind before. That the road from, Piccadilly to the Pallace was so obstructed by Carriages full of People to look at the Ladies who might pass on their Way, that there was no such thing as getting through. So we went through st James park and found no

difficulty. Mr Humphryes attended us. Every thing is upon so independant a scale here that the attendance of a Gentleman is Considered almost unpolite. The Ladies, assume all the Roughness, and Assurance necessary to support them upon every occasion, and in General I think they look like Giant apes. But tho we found no difficulty till we got to the 2d room, here commenced such a scene as I was never, Witness to before. Their Majestys had gone in before we arrived. At the dore of the 2d room, I was, struck with the appearance of a figure which at first sight I took to be King Brant or Joseph Brant an Indian Cheif , who has, been here sometime from America. He was engaged against us in the late War. It is a matter of speculation what can be his erand here at present. Some suppose it is to get payd for the scalps he took in the War, and to get Compensation for his services. He has been presented to the King and Queen and has appeared at the drawing Room, in the dress of his Nation with that *pretty plaything his Tommy Hawk* in his hand. The Ladies admired his figure, and saw in his Countenance something Good. He has indeed been noticed by some People of importance. There was a feast made for him by, some Persons of distinction at Which the Company all were drunk, except himself. He observed it would not do for him to Get drunk in this Country, tho it would in his own. But to adone with Joseph Brant after telling you one anecdote more which is that Colln Smith was upon an expedition against him in the Ware when Brant and Butler had like to have been taken. He is celebrated for his Cruelty at Yomen. And to return to the Personage whom I was presented with, it was no less than the Minister from Tripoli, with two pages, dressd in the Habit of his Country a turban upon his Head and his [long?] baird, and his dress otherwise as singular and such a dirty set of creatures I never saw. I was absolutely frightened. He is an addition to the singularity of the Corps diplomattick. I hear the Foreign Ministers donot intend to have any intercourse with him—but more of him by and by. At the entrance of the door of the third apartment where the drawing Room is held, I thought for all the World that I should have been squeezed to death between the post of the door, and half a dozen great Hoops. Indeed you can have no idea at all of the croud. I am sure I never was in such a one before. This you must suppose excellent for the Ladies dresses. [We?] at last got into the room, and situated ourselves, so that the King spoke to us very soon. He has askd me one question for these three Months—(*do you get out much in this weather*) instructive, improving, indeed. After this ceremony was over we attempted to put ourselves in the Way of the Queen, but the room was so croudd that was two Hours before we could find out in what part of it she was. Finally your Mamma was spoken to, and I made my escape as quick as I could. The King was very richly dressd the Queen very plain. The Prince of Waless cloaths were Covered with silver. I dare not venture to say how much I heard they Cost, but I did not think them elegant. The Princesses were not so elegant as many other Ladies, present. The dressing were very various there was no prevailing Colour or fashion, everyone seemd to have exerted their own fancy. But such was the crowd that the floor was covered with fragments of trimming and lookd as if the Ladies had been paling Caps [...]

Review Questions

1. What is Nabby's impression of Chief Joseph Brandt?
2. What does Nabby's tone in this letter imply about her feelings about the royal family particularly and monarchy in general?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why would an American Indian chief seek an audience with the King of England at this time?

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson with a Memorandum of Purchases, February 11, 1786 Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 7, p. 50–52

London Grosvenor Square Febr'y 11 [1786]

Col. Humphries talks of leaving us on monday. It is with regret I assure you Sir that we part with him. His visit here has given us an opportunity of becoming more acquainted with his real worth and merit, and our friendship for him has risen in proportion to our intimacy. The two American Secretaries of Legation would do honour to their Country placed in more distinguished stations. Yet these missions abroad circumscribed as they are, in point of expences, place the ministers of the united States in the lowest point of view, of any Envoy from any other Court, and in Europe every Being is estimated, and every country valued in proportion to their shew and splendor.

In a private Station I have not a wish for expensive living, but whatever my Fair Countywomen may think, and I hear they envy my situation. I will most joyfully exchange Europe for America, and my publick for a private Life. I am really surfeited with Europe, and most Heartily long for the rural cottage, the purer and honester manners of my native Land, where domestick happiness reigns unrivalled, and virtue and honor go hand in hand. I hope one season more will give us an opportunity of making our escape. At present we are in the situation of Sterns's starling.

Congress have by the last dispatches informd this Court that they expect them to appoint a Minister. It is said (not officially), that mr Temple is coldly received, that not an Englishman has visited him, and the Americans are not very social with him. But as Col Humphries will be able to give you every intelligence, there can be no occasion for my adding any thing further, than to acquaint you that I have endeavourd to execute your commission agreeable to your directions. Enclosed you will find the memorandum. I purchased a small trunk which I think you will find usefull to you, to put the shirts in as they will not be liable to get rubd on the journey. If the balance should prove in my favour I will request you to send me 4 Ells of Cambrick at about 14 Liv. Pr Ell, or 15, a pr of black Lace Lappets, these are what the Ladies wear at Court, and 12 Ells of black lace at 6 or 7 Liv. Pr Ell. Some Gentleman coming this way will be so kind as to put them in his pocket, and Mrs Barclay I dare say will take the trouble of purchaseing them for me. For troubling you with such trifling matters is a little like putting Hercules to the Distaff.

My love to Miss Jefferson compliments to Mr Short. Mrs. Siddons is acting again upon the stage and I hope col Humphries will prevail with you to cross the channel to see her. Be assured dear sir that nothing would give more pleasure to your Friends here than a visit from you and in that number I claim the honour of subscribing myself

A. Adams
[...]

Review Questions

1. Why does Abigail feel that the American minister is the least respected at court?
2. What does Abigail miss about her home life in America?
3. What is the relationship between Abigail and Thomas Jefferson?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Compare Abigail's feelings toward Jefferson in this letter with those after the 1800 election.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, June 13, 1786

Adams Family Correspondence, vol. 7, p. 216–217

Grosvenour Square London June 13 1786

And so my Dear son your sister is really and Bona fida married, as fast as the Bishop and a Clerk could tie them, in the ceremony too of the Church of England with all its absurdities about it, and that through necessity, for you know that Such is the liberality of this enlightned Country that the dissenting Clergy are not permitted to Marry. To your Aunt Cranchs Letter I must refer you for particulars.

When I used to visit your Chamber at Autieul, and converse with you, and mutually express our anxiety with respect to future events, neither of us Dreemt of what has now taken place. You was then frequently witness to a regard and attachment, which repeated proofs of neglect, happily I presume for her, finally dissolved. Instability of conduct first produced doubt and apprehension which in silence she Sufferd. Time and reflection dispelld the mist and illusion and has united her to a Gentleman of a very different character, possessing both honour and probity, without duplicity either of mind or manners, esteemed and beloved both in his publick and private Character, and sufficiently domestick to make a worthy woman happy.

Your sister was much dissappointed that she did not receive a line from you by dr Gorden and the more so as mr Storer wrote her, that you had received hers by way of Newyork. The Letter to your Pappa gave us great pleasure. We are constantly Solicitious to hear from you, and your Brothers to whom present my Love.

We are anxious to hear whether Newyork can have been so unjust and stupid as to rise without passing the impost. Such is the rumour here. If she has, adieu to publick faith. How is the forfeit to be avoided. I should think Congress would do well to recall all their publick ministers and dissolve themselves immediately. It is too much to be so conspicuously ridiculous. As to this Nation, it regards neither its own interest or that of any other people.

This Letter will go by way of Newyork, or first to Baltimore. Lamb and Randle are upon their return! Alass! Affectionately yours.

A.A.

Review Questions

1. What major event happens in the life of the Adamses?
2. What most bothers Abigail about this event??

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What evidence is there that Abigail is first and foremost a political person?

Blog Prompt

Imagine that your parents were living in London while you were attending school in Boston like John Quincy. What would you want to hear from your mother?

Abigail Adams Smith to Elizabeth Cranch, July 18, 1786

Adams Family Correspondence, vol. 7, p. 261–262

Wimpole Street London July 18th 1786

In your Letter to Mamma my Dear Eliza of — May you are strangely puzzled to know in what manner to address your Cousin. Your suppositions at that time were rather premature, and the Card on which they were founded was from a family by the Name of Smith who have been vastly civil to us since our residence in this Country. But at this period, a Letter addressd to your friend under the title of M[rs] Smith would not be improper, for in truth Eliza, Poor Abby Adams is no more—her friends took Leave of her on the 11th of June—about eight oclock in the Evening, and “twas such a solemn scene of Joy”—&c. She is at this moment settled in Wimpole Street, whare could you look in upon her, you would find her perfectly Contented, and would add to her happiness, which the additional society of a friend will ever do.

If your friend has any cause for anxiety, it arrises, from being obliged to Leave her Parents to whom she finds herself every day more attached, and more and more sollicitious to promote their Happiness. The seperation has but enlarged the scene to them, for we meet every day either with them, or with us, and Harmony and affection preside over our Circle; yet I wish Mamma could call in some one of her young American friends as a Constant Companion; but it is so uncertain how long we may *all* stay in this Country or how soon *we* may return to our own, that it is not possible to make any arangements for the future—all we can do is to wait patiently till the

decisions of others mark out our future destination. In the mean time let is my Dear Eliza alleviate the disagreeables arising from this separation, by a Continuance of this friendly epistolary intercourse. Mrs Hay Carried proofs of my not having forgotten my friends, and you my Eliza was amongst the first in my remembrance. I am fearfull as my Letters were all under Cover to Mr Charles Storer that his absence may occasion thier delay for which I shall be very sorry.

My Letters from my Brother inform me that he is Learning to Play upon the flute which has given me much anxiety, do my Dear Eliza dissuade him from the practice. It is certainly very prejudicial to Health, and tho it may amuse him for the Present, I fear the Consequences. I hope Charles willnot attempt it. It would be more dangerous for him than for my Brother John. We have seen its affects upon the Warrens and I thought your Mamma was so well Convinced of the danger arising from it as to prevent your Brother from the use of it, and I hope She will have an equal degree of influence upon mine.

Remember me to all who inquire after me. Do write me as often as you can find it Convenient and beleive me as sincerely your friend

A. Smith

Review Questions

1. How does Nabby feel about her marriage to Colonel Smith?
2. What is Nabby's concern for her mother?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why might Nabby be so concerned about her brothers learning to play the flute?

Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, August 23, 1786

Adams Family Correspondence, vol. 7, p. 324–325

Amsterdam 23d.

August 1786

My dear

Mr S. and Mr Blount set off tomorrow for London and have engaged to call this Evening for Letters. We have not received a line from you except what these gentlemen brought us, this is the fourth time I have written to you.

If politeness and attention could render a place agreeable, I have had more reason to be pleased with this Country, than any other, that I have visited, and when I get across the water again, I shall not regret the visit I have made here.

These people appear to think of the past, the present, and the future, whilst they do honour to their former Heroes, and patriots, by paintings, sculpture, and monuments, they are establishing wise institutions, and forming the minds and

manners of their youth, that they may transmit to posterity, those rights, and liberties, which they are sensible have suffered infringements, but which they appear determined to regain, and are uniting in spirited and vigorous measures, for that purpose. The death of his Prussian Majesty of which there appears at present no doubt, will diminish the influence of the Court party in this country, already in the wane, as the politicians say. But of this enough. I was at the play the night before last, the Grand Duke and Dutchess, with their Retinue were present, the Dutchess is a fine looking woman. The house is small, but neat well lighted, and I think handsomer than any of the Theatres in England, the actors pretty good. The ladies of this country have finer complexions than the English, and have not spoilt them by cosmeticks. Rouge is confined to the stage here. There is the greatest distinction in points of dress, between the peasantry of the Country and people of distinction, that I have seen in any Country, yet they dress rich and fine in their own way. I went yesterday with a party, to Sardam, by Water about two hours sail. It is a very neat village and famous, for being the place where Czar, Peter the great worked as a Ship Carpenter. It was their annual Fair, at which there was a great collection of people, so that I had an opportunity of seeing the various dresses of different provinces. Mr Willink, told us, that there were several peasants who belonged to Sardam, who owned, a hundred thousand pounds property.

To day we dine with the elder Mr Willink, whose lady speaks English very well, and is a very agreeable woman. And this evening we go with them to a different Theatre. They have three play houses in this place. We are undetermined as yet whether to go to Utrecht on Saturday, or set off for the Hague. We should have gone there to day, but the Grand-duke, had taken the boat, and all the publick houses, there fit to go into, so that we did not wish to fall into his corteg again, if he continues there longer than Saturday we shall return without visiting that province. We shall make no longer stay at the Hague, than to take leave, as I suppose all will be stable there, we are not prepared to go into company. We have determined to return by Helvot, I suppose in Saturday weeks packet, so that I hope to see you by Monday night, or Tuesday at furthest. I have done what you desired, but to very little more advantage than in London.

Adieu you cannot want more to see us, than we do to return again to you. Love to both of you. I hope my family in Grosvenor Square, has not increased in my absence. I was not aware of a young cook till the morning I left home. I was then thrown into an astonishment in which I should be glad to be mistaken, but am very sure I am not.
Yours affectionately

A.A.

Review Questions

1. What is Abigail's impression of the Dutch?
2. To what family event is Abigail referring? What is her concern?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How does Abigail's impression of the Dutch compare with her impressions of the English and the French?

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, November 22, 1786

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 7, p. 394–396

London November 22 1786

My dear Son

It is a long time since I received a line from you, or any other of my Friends, nor have we learnt with certainty whether your Brother Tommy was admitted Colledge. [...]

We are still left in the Dark respecting our continuance here. Few decisive measures appear to be taken by Congress upon any Subject, indeed I fear they are so much embarras'd as not to know what to do. I hope according to Parson Moodys doctrine, they will not do, they know not what, which has sometimes been the case. The Treaty between France and England is ratified between the high contracting parties, it must come before Parliament and receive a Sanction there; whether it will meet with much opposition there; time only will determine. What is term'd opposition here, is a very feeble party, who have not purses and consequently not power to carry any points of importance. It is rather Novel for this Nation to Court and cringe to a Country which they have ever affected to Hate and despise, but the Edicts of the King of France totally prohibiting British Manufactories, Effect'd what mr Crawford could not, by three years residence, and I dare Say the united States might have accomplished the Same, if they would all have adopted the Massachusetts Navigation act, and abided by it.

It is a subject of much regret to every Friend of America, and no small mortification to those in publick Character, to see the proceedings of some Counties and Towns, uneasy and wrestless under a Government in which they enjoy perfect freedom, they are taking effectual methods to create themselves a Tyrant e'er long. By wishing to abolish the Senate they are destroying that balance of power by which alone their Liberties are secured to them. The Printers in this Country Eagerly Seize every paragraph of this kind and publish it, which they would not do, if they did not conceive they could injure America by it. They have given us in this days papers the proceedings of the County convention of Hampshire, which are a disgrace to our annals. I have been thinking whether it might not be of use to our Country to have some Such Societys formed as there are in this Country, call'd debating Societies, in which a precedent presides. The Question is published two Days or more before hand, admission is easy, only 6 pence a person, and any person who pleases may enter and speak to the Subject. And these Societies are the resort of all the Young Gentleman who wish to form themselves for publick Speaking; whether for the Law, divinity, or the House of commons. And sometimes Questions are discussed here in a masterly manner. A perfect Stranger has an equal freedom of Speach, with the best known, order and decency must be observed, but no questions are asked, who you are, or from whence you came. I will give you from this Days paper the Question for tomorrow Evening.

“Which of the three publick Characters in the present Situation of this Country, is most qualified by his abilities and integrity to fill the office of Prime Minister, Lord North, mr Fox or mr Pitt.”

This is a question of no small importance and delicacy. I think with judicious management Societies of this kind might be establishd at least in the different universities, and many beneficial consequences result from them.

Your Father is much engaged in a work that may prove of no Small utility to our Country. It is an investigation into the different Forms of Government, both ancient and modern, Monarchical Aristocratical Democratical and Republican, pointing out their happiness or misery in proportion to their different balances. It appears to be a subject in which America is greatly interested, and upon which her future happiness depends. When compleated, he means only to publish a few for the present and those only for himself and Friends, but he is So much Swallowed up in the persuit of his Subject that you must not wonder if you do not receive a line from him. I think he enjoys better Health this fall than I have known him to have for Several years.

Review Questions

1. About what treaty does Abigail inform John Quincy?
2. What solution does Abigail offer for the discord that we now call Shays' Rebellion?
3. According to Abigail, what has John Adams been working on while in London?

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, January 29, 1787

Adams Family Correspondence, vol. 7, p. 455–457

London Janry 29th 1787

My dear sir

I received by Col Franks Your obliging favour and am very sorry to find your wrist Still continues lame. I have known very Salutary effects produced by the use of British oil upon a spraind joint. I have Sent a Servant to See if I can procure some. You may rest assured that if it does no good: it will not do any injury.

With regard to the Tumults in my Native state which you inquire about, I wish I could say that report had exagerated them. It is too true Sir that they have been carried to so allarming a Height as to stop the Courts of Justice in several Counties. Ignorant, wrestless desperadoes, without conscience or principals, have led a deluded multitude to follow their standard, under pretence of grievences which have no existance but in their immaginations. Some of them were crying out for a paper currency, some for an equal distribution of property, some were for annihilating all debts, others complaining that the Senate was a useless Branch of Government, that the Court of common Pleas was unnecessary, and that the Sitting of the General Court in Boston was a grievence. By this list you will see, the materials which compose this Rebellion, and the necessity there is of the wisest and most vigorous measures to quell and suppress it. Instead of that laudible Spirit which you approve,

which makes a people watchfull over their Liberties and alert in the defence of them, these Mobish insurgents are for sapping the foundation, and distroying the whole fabrick at once. But as these people make only a small part of the State, when compared to the more Sensible and judicious, and altho they create a just allarm, and give much trouble and uneasiness, I cannot help flattering myself that they will prove Sallutary to the state at large, by leading to an investigation of the causes which have produced these commotions. Luxery and extravagance both in furniture and dress had pervaded all orders of our Countrymen and women, and was hastning fast to Sap their independance by involving every class of citizens in distress, and accumulating debts upon them which they were unable to discharge. Vanity was becoming a more powerfull principal than Patriotism. The lower order of the community were prest for taxes, and tho possesst of landed property they were unable to answer the Demand. Whilst those who possesst Money were fearfull of lending, least the mad cry of the Mob should force the Legislature upon a measure very different from the touch of Midas.

By the papers I send you, you will see the beneficial effects already produced, an act of the Legislature laying duties of 15 pr cent upon many articles of British manufacture and totally prohibiting others. A Number of Vollunteers Lawyers Physicians and Merchants from Boston made up a party of Light horse commanded by col Hitchbourn Leit col Jackson and Higgonson, and went out in persuit of the insurgents and were fortunate enough to take 3 of their Principal Leaders, Shattucks Parker and Page. Shattucks defended himself and was wounded in his knee with a broadsword. He is in Jail in Boston and will no doubt be made an example of.

Your request my dear sir with respect to your daughter shall be punctually attended to, and you may be assured of every attention in my power towards her.

You will be so kind as to present my Love to Miss Jefferson, compliments to the Marquiss and his Lady. I am really conscience Smitten that I have never written to that amiable Lady, whose politeness and attention to me deserved my acknowledgement.

The little balance which you Stated in a former Letter in my favour, when an opportunity offers I should like to have in Black Lace at about 8 or 9 Livres pr Ell. Tho late in the Month, I hope it will not be thought out of season to offer my best wishes for the Health Long Life and prosperity of yourself and family, or to assure you of the Sincere Esteem and Friendship with which I am yours &c &c

A. Adams

Review Questions

1. For what reasons are people rebelling in Massachusetts?
2. How does Abigail feel about those responsible for Shays' Rebellion?
3. What are the economic reasons for the uprising?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why might Abigail feel the way she does about those involved in Shays' rebellion?

Abigail Adams to Lucy Cranch, April 26, 1787

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 8, p. 24–27

April 26 1787

my dear Neice

I write you a few lines my dear Lucy to thank you for your kind Letter, and to inform you that I am a *Grandmamma*! my Grandson be sure is a fine boy, & I already feel as fond of him as if he was my own son, nay I can hardly persuade myself that he is not, especially as I have been sick for six weeks, I cannot however Nurse him so well as his mamma, who is already so fond of him.

He was Christened last thursday by dr Price and called William after his pappa. in this Country Children are not carried to church, so we had the Christening in the House and about a dozen of our Friends together upon the occasion. we supped & drank the young Heroes Health & that of our Country and Friends. Mrs Smith dined below with us, the day 3 weeks from her confinement, and I have carried little master to ride 3 or four times already. he is very quiet and good, but his pappa is already obliged to leave him, and yesterday morning very reluctantly set of on a journey to Portugal, in his way to which he takes France & Spain, & will be absent we expect near four Months, but thus it must be with those who are in publick office. as soon as mrs Smith is able we shall make a little excursion into the Country, which I hope will reestablish my Health. My disorder has been long accumulating, & arises from a Billious state of my Blood. it has afflicted me spring & fall for several years, and has at last produced a slow intemitting fever. some days I am able to go out, others not, but it has wholly prevented my attendance upon Routes dinners theatres &c and Lamentable, I have not been able to go to saint James for more than two months. [...]

Review Questions

1. What happy event changes Abigail's life?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Many momentous family events happen while the Adamses are in London; what are these events like for Abigail?

Abigail Adams Smith to John Quincy Adams, February 10, 1788

Excerpted from *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 8, p. 227–231

London Feby 10th 1788

I have now before me your Letter of the 3d of August—which I intend to answer fully and then 2dly to proceed to some points of information—and 3dly to some observations and reflection of my own - [...]

your hopes respecting our Parents returning to America are I think in a fair way to be accomplished—preparations are daily making – for this Event, they have engaged to have their furniture all on Board Calliham’s Ship – in the month of Febuary—they Intend Leaving London after the 24th and to go to Falmouth there they are to be on the 20th of March—Callihan is to take them on Board at Falmouth after the Equinoxial Storm has blown over and thence they proceed in a line direct, to the Harbour of Boston

Congress *not* resolving to keep any Person in a Public Character at this Court—and as *usual* have not taken any resolutions respecting the destination of my friend—it is Concluded that they mean he should return also—at the expiration of his Commission—for which Event we are likewise prepareing and with a very Sincere desire that no impediment may intervene to frustrate our present intention of embarking for America in the April Packett which sails from Falmouth to New York – from which Place I hope my next Letter to you will be dated – and whence I Shall Hope to see you – at some Leisure period – perhaps during the next Winter vacation – when our Brothers will accompany you but this is looking a great way forward – We will defer further particulars till the period approaches - respecting your desire that your father Should determine to Spend the remainder of his days in retirement – I cannot agree with you in this wish – it is in his Power to do His Country Essential Service – by assisting in her Councils—by His opinions, advice, & recommendations,—he has it *I believe* in his Power to do as much perhaps *the most* towards establishing her Character as a respectable Nation – of any Man in America—and Shall he retire from the World and bury himself amongst his Books – and Live only for himself! – No – I wish it not – I have no desire that he should be chosen Governor of the State – let those possess that station who are ambitiously grasping – at the Shadow—which I Consider the Honour attendant upon that office to be—but I do hope—upon the establishment of a New Constitution—to see Him in some respectable and usefull Office under it—the Americans in Europ – say he will be Elected Vice President – besides my Brother independent of other important Considerations – he would not I am well Convinced be Happy in Private Life – you will before he arrives in America – have seen two other Vollumes of His Book – and perhaps you will hear from him a system of Government which you may not expect – he is of opinion that some *new* form of Government for our Country is necessary – he does not wholly approve of the one which has been offered – but he thinks that the People had better adopt it as it is – and then appoint a new Convention to make such alterations as may prove to necessary – He wishes they Had Enlisted the Chief Magistrate to a greater degree of independence, that they had given him the sole

appointment of all Offices – that they had made provision for a Privy Council – either of His own appointment or chosen by the Senate – and some others which you will hear from himself – if the system at present under Consideration is not adopted I am of opinion that he will assist at a future Convention and have a principle Hand in the framing One which may be adopted – most Americans now in Europe are in favour of it – being well Convinced that a Change is absolutely necessary to the respectable Establishment of our Country in the Eyes of Europe – and her importance as a Nation [...]

Review Questions

1. In what ways does Nabby seem ambivalent about returning home?
2. Why is Nabby in disagreement with her brother that their father should retire after his return to America?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why might John Quincy think John Adams should retire upon returning home?