

LESSON PLAN #9: Abigail at Seventeen

[1] **Curriculum framework(s):** 13.25 Analyze and explain the structure and elements of nonfiction works.

[2] **Goal of the lesson:** To illustrate that a young person of seventeen possesses mature insights into life.

[3] **Expected student outcomes:** Students will be able to identify and comprehend aphorisms in a letter.

[4] **Assessment of expected student outcomes:** Successful completion of class assignment.

[5] **Instructional procedures:** 45 minutes

Vocabulary: temperance.

Activities: After discussing the Epistolary Analysis sheet, begin a discussion of what an aphorism is. Indicate that this particular letter contains many aphorisms about life, and Abigail wrote this letter when she was seventeen. Have students work either individually or in pairs at selecting a line from the text to illustrate as an aphorism in their own right. They must quote and cite the letter on their paper, but they must also depict a visual rendition of what Abigail says on letter writing, learning, youth, values, happiness, and life in general. Teacher will circulate to ensure variety of aphorisms. If there is time, students may present these illustrations to the class.

Homework: Read the next letters in the unit and complete an Epistolary Analysis handout for them.

Accommodations/modifications to meet diverse student needs: This assignment is particularly beneficial for the tactile and visual learner since the students will be rendering illustrations of the aphorisms contained in the work.

[6] **Material and resources:**

- 1) Letter from Abigail Smith to Isaac Smith, Jr., 7 February 1762
- 2) Markers/crayons and paper to illustrate aphorism.

Student Name _____ Date _____

Epistolary Analysis

Date of letter(s)	Location of letter writer
Sender	Recipient

Topic of letter(s)	
Theme(s) of the letter(s)	
Significant quotes	
Historical details in the letter(s)	

Allusions, metaphors, similes and other figures of speech (give examples)	
Tone	
Images	
Diction	
Evidence of sarcasm or satire	
Vocabulary words	

Letter from Abigail Smith to Isaac Smith, Jr., Her Cousin in Boston, 7 February 1762

Weymouth Febry. 7th 1762

Dear Cousin,

It has not been thro' neglect that I have not before now answered your epistle, nor thro indifference, I know the worth of a good letter too well, to treat it with indifference -- as to your request of entering into a correspondence with me, I freely consent to it—there was no need my cousin of a complement to intice me, into what I was before so well inclined to.

I am far from advising you to [illegible] me as a moddle for letter writing; Im sensible yt Im a very incorrect writer, & therefore by no means proper to be coppied after; but I would recommend to you in Pope's letters, in them you'll find Ease freedom and correctness,—you need not have made any excuse as to yr stile, I think you write very well. & tis with pleasure that I behold your growing genious. —but remember my cousin that superior talents call for a superior exercise of every endowment, go on improve your mind in useful knowledg, & now in the Spring of life lay up a store against the winter of age. Youth is the best season wherein to acquire knowledge, tis a season when we are freest from care, the mind is then unincumberd & more capable of receiving impresion's than in an advancd age.—in youth the mind is like a tender twig, which you may bend as you please, but in age like a sturdy oak & hard to move. It behoves us therefore to lay a good foundation, or we cannot expect any permanent satisfaction; our store must consist of Wisdom virtue & their fruits which are knowledg temperance the necessary ingrediant of happiness. —but above all things, we should remember our creator in the Days of our youth & consecrate the first & best of our Days to him, “when we enjoy Health of body, strength of mind, & vigor of Spirits, then is the Heart a noble sacrifice, & best worthey of being presented to the great Creator of heaven & Earth.” -- Life at the longest is but short, but a moment when compair'd to Eternity, then how diligent ought we to be, working whilst the day lasts that when the Evening of Life steals upon us, & the night of Death is ready to overwhelm us, we may have the testimony of a good concience, leave the world in peace, be acquitted by the judge of all the Earth, & receiv'd to never ending happiness, & shine forth: as the stars for ever & ever—

That this happiness may be your portion is Dear Cousin the sincere wish of your affectionate friend

Nabby Smith

PS

*remember my duty to your
pappa & mamma love to cousins*