

# **John and Abigail Adams In Times of Challenge**

Two Lesson Plans:

*“The Decisive day is Come....”* The Battle of Bunker Hill  
and  
*“’Tis a pestilence that walketh in Darkness...”* The Smallpox  
epidemic during the American Revolution

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## Introduction

Between 1762 and 1801, John and Abigail Adams wrote more than 1,100 letters to each other. During those thirty-nine years, they experienced some of the most important events in American history: the American Revolution, the creation of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, and America's development as a new nation. John Adams was politically and personally involved in all of these events, and Abigail shrewdly observed and commented on them in her letters to her husband.

By reading these letters one recognizes many aspects of their relationship: their love for each other and their children; their reliance upon friends and relatives; Abigail's day-to-day struggles and John's political challenges; and their on-going discussions of social, political and economic events. Among the many things that these letters have to offer, that most history textbooks do not, is a *human voice*. By reading these letters we can begin to grasp how challenging life was. They are personal narratives that expose the everyday realities confronting Abigail Adams as she cared for her children during extremely difficult times. Two events in particular - the Battle of Bunker Hill and the smallpox epidemic - left a great impact upon John and Abigail Adams.

These lesson plans, which were created at the Massachusetts Historical Society, examine life in Boston, Massachusetts during the American Revolution. They do not attempt to cover aspects that have already been adequately addressed in textbooks, but seek to explore some topics that students are not usually exposed to. The lessons are designed to be taught in an interdisciplinary fashion, with emphasis on Language Arts and Social Studies skills. Teachers may choose to follow the directions or make modifications if desired.

Both units are based on primary source documents and are intended for students in Grades 9-12. They include assignments and questions for discussion and comprehension. Recognizing that the grammar, syntax, spelling and vocabulary of 18<sup>th</sup> century documents may be unfamiliar to many students, teachers may choose to read the letters aloud and highlight significant sections. In addition to the transcriptions of primary source documents included with each lesson plan, links to digital images of documents located on the Massachusetts Historical Society website have been provided where available.

## Unit 1

*“The Decisive day is Come....”*  
The Battle of Bunker Hill

**Introduction:**

This lesson examines how Abigail Adams depicted life in Boston area during the Siege of Boston and how she described the Battle of Bunker Hill. It is designed to be taught during three class periods.

**Skills Objectives:**

**Students will be able to:**

- 1) read and interpret primary source documents in historical context;
- 2) identify the characteristics of 18<sup>th</sup> century letter writing;
- 3) identify and interpret various forms of 18<sup>th</sup> century media;
- 4) read and analyze a secondary source historical essay by a historian;
- 5) create their own “modern” version of an 18<sup>th</sup> century form of media.

**Content Objectives:**

**Students will be able to:**

- 1) describe and explain why British regulars chose to attack Breed’s Hill;
- 2) explain why the colonists chose to defend and then retreat from Bunker Hill;
- 3) analyze why geography played a key role in the Battle of Bunker Hill;
- 4) interpret and explain why the Battle of Bunker Hill was critical to both the British and the colonists;
- 5) compare the residual impact of the Battle of Bunker Hill to recent events in American history.

**Documents:**

Bernard Bailyn's essay "The Battle of Bunker Hill"

Map "A Sketch of the Action Between the British Forces and the American Provincials"

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 18-20 June 1775

Two engravings: Bernard Roman's *Exact View of The Late Battle at Charlestown* and *View of the Attack on Bunker's Hill*

Broadside "By an Express Arrived at Philadelphia . . ."

Letter from John Quincy Adams to Joseph Sturge, March 1846

### **Learning Activities:**

#### ***Day One:***

1) Set the stage with a discussion of what students know, think they know, and would like to know about the Battle of Bunker Hill and the Siege of Boston. Record answers, thoughts and questions on an overhead or black board.

2) Read Bernard Bailyn's essay "The Battle of Bunker Hill" (<http://www.masshist.org/bh/essay.html>) and pair students together to answer the comprehension questions (Handout 1).

3) **Home work:** Have students study the map "Sketch of the Action Between the British Forces and the American Provincials" (<http://www.masshist.org/bh/sketch.html>) and answer the questions about it (Handout 2)

#### ***Day Two:***

1) Review the map "A Sketch of the Action Between the British Forces and the American Provincials" and connect Bernard Bailyn's essay with the information from the map.

2) Introduce students to Abigail and John Adams and their correspondence during the American Revolution. Point out the characteristics of 18<sup>th</sup> century letter writing, including syntax, grammar, and references to literature and classical history.

3) Connect the art of lettering writing to today's world. Ask students, "When you are writing a note or email to your friends about a big event in your lives or the world, what are the important things that need to be in the letter? Which is more important - the content of the letter, or how the content is delivered to the reader?"

4) Read the letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, June 18-20, 1775 (<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17750618aa> ) aloud in class. Have students answer the questions about the letter in a discussion, individually, in pairs, or for homework (Handout 3).

### ***Day Three:***

1) Introduce students to two sources of visual history: *An Exact View of the Late Battle of Bunker Hill* (<http://www.masshist.org/bh/exactview.html> )and *View of the Attack on Bunker's Hill* (<http://www.masshist.org/bh/view.html> ).Discuss why historians have typically opted for written documents as their primary sources of information.

2) Have students examine the two “views” for several minutes. Ask them to compare and contrast the views and answer the questions about them (Handout 4)

3) Broadside: Explain to students that broadsides were one sided sheets of paper that described news, announcements, and major events. They were an easy way to communicate and a major source of “news” before the telegraph, telephone, radio, and television.

4) Examine the broadside “By an Express Arrived at Philadelphia 18<sup>th</sup> of June . . .” (<http://www.masshist.org/bh/broadside.html>) and answer the questions about it. (Handout 5)

5) Homework: have students create their own broadside of a news event that had a great impact upon their lives. (Handout 6)

### ***Optional Activity:***

#### **John Quincy Adams’s Memory of the Battle of Bunker Hill**

1) Read out loud the letter John Quincy Adams wrote to Joseph Sturge in 1846 (<http://www.masshist.org/bh/jqa.html> ).

2) Ask students what they know about John Quincy Adams.

3) Have students complete the questions about John Quincy Adams and his memories of the Battle of Bunker Hill (Handout 7).

## **Handout 1**

## **“The Battle of Bunker Hill”**

### **by Bernard Bailyn**

"The story of Bunker Hill battle," Allen French wrote, "is a tale of great blunders heroically redeemed." The first blunder was the decision of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety to fortify Charlestown heights and attempt to hold it against the British, cooped up in Boston after their withdrawal from Lexington and Concord. The ultimate aim was, in the abstract at least, sensible enough: to tighten the encirclement of Boston by commanding the heights both north and south of the town—Dorchester as well as Charlestown—and to deny those commanding hills to the British. But in fact the Americans did not have guns capable of reaching Boston effectively from Bunker Hill. And in addition, forces installed there were almost certain to be cut off since the British warships controlled Boston harbor and its confluence with the Charles River, and could easily keep the slim neck that joined Charlestown to the mainland under heavy fire. Nor, once committed, did the American commanders choose their ground wisely. The high point of the mile-long Charlestown peninsula was Bunker Hill—it rose 110 feet, and adjoined the only route of retreat, the roadway back to Cambridge. But the spot chosen for fortification was not Bunker Hill but Breed's Hill, only 75 feet high and 600 yards farther from the neck, controllable from the higher ground at its rear and isolated from the sole route of retreat. And even in the best positions the ill-equipped, altogether untrained troops of the New England army could hardly be expected to hold out against sustained attacks by British regulars led by no less than four general officers experienced in warfare on two continents.

That for two and a half hours of intense battle, greatly outnumbered, they did just that—held out until, their powder gone and forced to fight with gun butts and rocks, they were bayoneted out of the stifling, dust-choked redoubt they had thrown up on Breed's Hill—was the result not only of great personal heroism but also of the blunders of the British. In complete control of the sea, they could have landed troops on the north side of Charlestown neck and struck the rebels in the rear while sending their main force against them face-on. But in an excess of caution they chose instead to land at the tip and march straight up against the fortified American lines. Such strategy as they had was confined to sending a single column along the thin strip of beach on the north shore of Charlestown peninsula hoping to reach the rear of the entrenchments by land and thus begin an overland encirclement. But this effort was doomed from the start. A delay in beginning the attack gave the Americans time to throw a barrier across the beach and to place behind it a company of New Hampshire riflemen capable of stopping the encircling column. The British attack therefore was altogether a frontal one, two ranks moving on a front almost half-a-mile long toward the set battle line, a line formed on the Boston Bay side by the deserted houses of Charlestown, the redoubt on Breed's Hill, its breastwork extension and a fortified rail fence, and completed on the far beach by the New Hampshiremen and their barricade.

No one of the thousands who crowded the housetops, church steeples, and shore batteries of Boston to watch the spectacle ever forgot the extraordinary scene they witnessed. June 17, 1775, was an absolutely still, brilliantly clear summer's day. Viewers in Boston only half a mile away could make out the stages of the battle clearly. The first assault was begun by the column of light infantry on the far beach, the American left flank, and was followed by the cannonading of Charlestown on the right flank, which set the town in flames; then came the slow forward movement of the main battle line: two ranks of scarlet-clad grenadiers and light infantrymen, almost 2,000 in all, marching in full kit—pounds of knapsacks, blankets, food, and ammunition—across irregular fields of knee-deep grass broken by fences and low stone walls. The American troops—no more than 1,500 men at any time, at the end only half that—held their fire until the first British line was within 150 feet of the barricades; when they fired it was almost at point-blank range, and the result was slaughter. The British front line collapsed in heaps of dead and wounded—"as thick as sheep in a field." General Howe's entire staff was wiped out in the main attack against the rail fence. Great gaps appeared in the once parade-perfect ranks, and the survivors spun back.

But they were professional soldiers, led by experienced and determined officers with reputations to make. They quickly regrouped for the second attack, directed now squarely at the redoubt and breastwork. Again the Americans withheld fire until the last moment, and again when it came it tore the line of upright marching men to shreds: "an incessant stream of fire poured from the rebel lines," a British officer wrote, "it seemed a continued sheet of fire for near thirty minutes." The forward units fell back against the second line moving up, then turned and fled back down the hill. Some of Howe's remaining officers begged him then to break off the attack and review the situation. Instead, he called for reinforcements, ordered his troops to throw off their heavy equipment, stationed his artillery where it could rake the whole American line, and called for a third assault—a bayonet charge against the central barricades. Again the advancing line was thrown back by the defenders' fire, and again great gaps were torn in the marching ranks. But this time the fire was less intense and it could not be sustained. The 700 exhausted defenders had been sent no reinforcements; they had no supplies except what they had carried with them the night before. As the third charge neared the line of fortification their powder ran out, and though they fought desperately with everything they could lay hands on, they could no longer force the British back. Grenadiers and light infantrymen poured over the parapets and through the thin barricades, and dove into groups of defenders. The Americans turned and fled up over and around Bunker Hill to the roads that led to safety. So the battle came to an end.

Heroes on both sides redeemed, perhaps, the blunders. The American hero was above all William Prescott, in command in the redoubt, whose nerve held throughout, who steeled the small band of armed farmers, and somehow made them into an effective fighting force. Miraculously, he survived, though Joseph Warren—physician, orator, liberal spokesman, writer, who had been appointed major general but who chose to fight as a private soldier in the redoubt—was killed in the final charge. A half dozen others—John Stark, Henry Dearborn, Seth Pomeroy, and Andrew McClary—would be remembered for their valor and leadership. And the commanding officer throughout the engagement, the venerable Israel Putnam, though his original battle plan had been ill-conceived, though he failed to resupply or reinforce the defenders at the barricades, though indeed he was unable to induce the hundreds of men who watched the action from Bunker Hill and from the roadways a mere 1,000 yards from the battle to come to the aid of the defenders—"Old Put" too would be honored in the end.

For generals William Howe, Henry Clinton, and John Burgoyne the battle was an introduction to years of frustration and defeat in the American war. Howe's personal courage had been clearly demonstrated but so too had his excessive caution, his inflexible commitment to formal battle tactics, and his entire lack of a killer instinct, which would have impelled him forward to overtake the fleeing Americans and to assault the weakly held American headquarters in Cambridge. Clinton too, hastily mobilizing reinforcements and charging with them in the third assault, had shown decision and courage, and his initial proposals for encircling the peninsula by sea had been the soundest strategy of the day. But his voice was not decisive, and his role was secondary throughout. As for Burgoyne, playwright, politician, man of style and spirit—"Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne had watched the battle from the Boston battery and wrote descriptions of it, memorable in themselves, that suggest something of the mentality that would account for the strategy and failure of Saratoga.

Half of the British forces had been casualties; perhaps a third of the 1,500 Americans engaged had been killed, wounded, or captured. What did the battle prove? It proved that raw, untrained American troops could fight, and fight well—but only if they had to; that success would come to the British only if they responded flexibly and imaginatively to the unorthodox demands of warfare in colonial territories 3,000 miles from home; and finally, that if the still disunited, still legally British states of America were to fight with any hope of success a continental war against the greatest military power on earth, a leader of great personal force and of great military and political skill would have to be forthcoming.

Memorials of the battle abound. Among the most vivid are the documents on display in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society (through September 2000) and reproduced here in the Society's first "on-line" exhibition [ <http://masshist.org/bh/index.html> ]. **Abigail Adams's letter** to her husband John conveys the feelings and observations of an eyewitness. The letter of **Peter Brown**, a private soldier "hearty in the cause" who fought with **Prescott** in the redoubt, is the fullest description that survives of a participant in the ranks. The engraved "views" and maps of the battle and of Warren's death convey not





11) Describe how the three Americans below fought and will be remembered in the battle.

a) William Prescott

b) Joseph Warren

c) Israel Putnam

12) Describe how the three British Generals viewed the battle and how their decision-making effected its outcome.

a) William Howe

b) Henry Clinton

c) John Burgoyne

13) What did the battle prove?

14) What did the battle foreshadow?

## Handout 2

### “A Sketch of the Action Between the British Forces and the American Provincials”

<http://www.masshist.org/bh/sketch.html>

**Directions:** Study the map and answer the following questions:

- 1) What two rivers are labeled on the map?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) How are the colonists labeled on the map?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What locations are labeled in the town of Boston?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) What information does the key present?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) How does this information relate with Bernard Bailyn’s essay, *The Battle of Bunker Hill*?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) What is the best source for history? Maps? Views? Broadsides? Historical essays? Letters? Artifacts?

## Handout 3

*“The Decisive day is Come....”*  
The Battle of Bunker Hill

**Directions: Read the letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams (18-20 June 1775) and answer the questions that follow.**

**Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 18-20 June 1775**

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17750618aa>

*Sunday June 18 1775*

*Dearest Friend*

*The Day; perhaps the decisive Day is come on which the fate of America depends. My bursting Heart must find vent at my pen. I have just heard that our dear Friend Dr. Warren is no more but fell gloriously fighting for his Country -- saying better to die honourably in the field than ignominiously hang upon the Gallows. Great is our Loss. He has distinguished himself in every engagement, by his courage and fortitude, by animating the Soldiers and leading them on by his own example. A particuliar account of these dreadful, but I hope Glorious Days will be transmitted you, no doubt in the exactest manner.*

*The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Trust in him at all times, ye people pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us. -- Charlestown is laid in ashes. The Battle began upon our intrenchments upon Bunkers Hill, a Saturday morning about 3 o'clock and has not ceased yet and tis now ~~illegible~~ 3 o'clock Sabbath afternoon.*

*Tis expected they will come out over the Neck to night, and a dreadful Battle must ensue. Almighty God cover the heads of our Country men, and be a shield to our Dear Friends. How ~~many have~~ fallen we know not -- the constant roar of the cannon is so ~~illegible~~ [distressing] that we can not Eat, Drink or Sleep. May we be supported and sustained in the dreadful conflict. I shall tarry here till tis thought unsafe by my Friends, and then I have secured myself a retreat at your Brothers who has kindly offerd me part of his house. I cannot compose myself to write any further at present. I will add more as I hear further.*

*Tuesday afternoon [20 June]*

*I have been so much agitated that I have not been able to write since Sabbath day. When I say that ten thousand reports are passing vague and uncertain as the wind I believe I speak the Truth. I am not able to give you any authentick account of last Saturday, but you will not be destitute of inteligence. Coll. Palmer has just sent me word that he has an opportunity of conveyance. Incorrect as this scrawl will be, it shall go. I wrote you last Saturday morning. In the afternoon I received your kind favour of the 2 june, and that you sent me by Captn. Beals at the same time. -- I ardently pray that you may be supported thro the arduous task you have before you. I wish I could contradict the report of the Doctors Death, but tis a lamentable Truth, and the tears of multitudes pay tribute to his memory. Those favorite lines ~~of~~ Collin continually sound in my*

*Ears*

*How sleep the Brave who sink to rest,  
By all their Countrys wishes blest?  
When Spring with dew'ey fingers cold  
Returns to deck their Hallowed mould  
She their shall dress a sweeter Sod  
Than fancys feet has ever trod.  
By fairy hands their knell is rung  
By forms unseen their Dirge is sung  
[There] Honour comes a pilgrim grey  
To Bless the turf that wraps their Clay  
And freedom shall a while repair  
To Dwell a weeping Hermit there.*

*I rejoice in the prospect of the plenty you inform me of, but cannot say we have the same agreeable view here. The drought is very severe, and things look but poorly.*

*Mr. Rice and Thaxter, unkle Quincy, Col. Quincy, Mr. Wibert all desire to be rememberd, so do all ~~the rest of our the~~ family. Nabby will write by the next conveyance.*

*I must close, as the Deacon [waits]. I have not pretended to be perticular with regard to what I have heard, because I know you will collect better intelligence. The Spirits of the people are very good. The loss of Charlstown affects them no more than a Drop in the Bucket. -- I am Most sincerely yours,*

*Portia*

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 18-20 June 1775 [electronic edition] *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams>

## Questions

- 1) What is the date of the letter?
- 2) How does Abigail address her husband John?
- 3) In what ways does Abigail immediately command the reader's attention in the first paragraph?

- 4) Who died on the battle field?
  
- 5) Can you tell anything about Abigail's attitudes toward the colonists from this letter?
  
- 6) Touchstones are tangible and intangible things in life to which we turn in times of crisis. They help to comfort us and give us strength to deal with our struggles in challenging times. From the letter that you just read, what are the "touchstones" in Abigail Adams' life that give her strength and comfort?
  
- 7) How does Abigail describe Charlestown?
  
- 8) Why can't they "eat, drink or sleep?"
  
- 9) In addition to the battle, what other potential problems does Abigail face?
  
- 10) Is this a good historical source? Why or Why not? What does this letter offer to the reader?

#### **Handout 4**

***Exact View of The Late Battle at Charlestown  
and  
View of the Attack on Bunker's Hill***

**Directions:**

- 1) Look at the two “views” or engravings of the Battle of Bunker Hill.
- 2) Compare and contrast each “view” in the chart below.
- 3) Answer the comprehension questions.

***View of the Attack***  
**<http://www.masshist.org/bh/view.html>**

Study the engraving and describe what you see:

People:

Events:

Objects:

***Exact View of Bunker Hill***  
**<http://masshist.org/bh/exactview.html>**

Study the engraving and describe what you see.

People:



2) Point out at least three examples in the broadside where you can tell from what point of view the author is coming from. Is it a Loyalist or a Colonist point of view?

3) According to the broadside, what happened when General Pomeroy gave an order?

4) Is this a piece of propaganda? Why? Why not? Point out three examples from the text to support your answer.

5) Compare this information to the other sources that you have read about the Battle of Bunker Hill. What are the similarities and differences between this broadside, the maps, the views, the letter, and Bailyn's essay?

## Handout 6

### **Broadside Assignment**

What is a broadside?

A broadside is a type of newspaper, usually a single sheet, that was posted in a public place to describe important events of the day. They were a common form of "mass" communication during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Broadside described local and national events,

announcements, governmental proclamations, plays, and even satires.

**Directions:**

- 1) Read the broadside account of the Battle of Bunker Hill: *By an Express arrived at Philadelphia on Saturday evening, last we have the following account of the battle at Charlestown, on Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, Instant.* (<http://masshist.org/bh/broadside.html>)
- 2) Create your own Broadside of a news event that has had great impact upon your life.

## Handout 7

### **Letter from John Quincy Adams to Joseph Sturge, March 1846**

*“The year 1775 was the eighth year of my age -- Among the first fruits of the War, was the expulsion of my father's family from their peaceful abode in Boston, to take refuge in his and my native town of Braintree -- Boston became a walled and beleaguered town -- garrisoned by British Grenadiers with Thomas Gage their commanding General, commissioned Governor of the Province -- For the space of twelve months my mother with her infant children dwelt, liable every hour of the day and of the night to be butchered in cold blood, or taken and carried into Boston as hostages, by any foraging or marauding detachment of men, like that actually sent forth on the 19th. Of April, to capture John Hancock and Samuel Adams on their way to attend*



5) What does John Quincy Adams's description of his mother say about the role of women in colonial America?

6) How does Adams describe conditions in Boston and the British? What is the difference between memory and enhanced memory? Is this depiction actual memory or enhanced memory?

## Unit 2

*“Tis a pestilence that walketh in Darkness...”*

### The Smallpox epidemic during the American Revolution

**Introduction:** This lesson examines the small pox epidemic in Boston during the American Revolution. It looks at how John and Abigail Adams viewed and interpreted the epidemic that was raging around them. It is designed to be taught during two class periods.

#### **Skill Objectives:**

**Students will be able to:**

- 1) read and interpret primary source documents in historical context;
- 2) identify the characteristics of 18<sup>th</sup> century letter writing;
- 3) write a coherent essay comparing the 18<sup>th</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century attitudes toward smallpox;
- 4) work cooperatively to read, analyze and discuss John and Abigail Adams's letters.

**Content Objectives:****Students will be able to:**

- 1) identify and explain why smallpox was such a major health issue in 18<sup>th</sup> century America;
- 2) identify and explain why some people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were fearful of inoculation and others were not;
- 3) compare contemporary news and concerns about smallpox with 18<sup>th</sup> century concerns;
- 4) understand why small pox was such a concern for 18<sup>th</sup> century individuals.

**Documents:**

Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 10 August 1776

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 12 August 1776

Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 26 June 1776

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 13-14 July 1776

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 29 July 1776

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 30-31 July 1776

Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 13 April 1777

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 16-18 March 1776

**Learning Activities:*****Day One:***

- 1) Write out the words: “A pestilence that walketh in Darkness” on the black board or overhead and have students “free” write for 3 to 5 minutes.
- 2) Write out students’ thoughts and ideas on the board.
- 3) Introduce students to smallpox and ask them what they know about it, what they think they know and what they would like to know.
- 4) Connect smallpox to contemporary society by raising such questions as the current threat of a smallpox epidemic and the complications of inoculating the general American public. What are the positives and negatives of the issues?
- 5) Tell students that they are going to be reading the letters of John and Abigail Adams in which they discuss the smallpox epidemic in 18<sup>th</sup> century America. Provide the students with the letter from John to Abigail on 10 August 1776 and the letter from Abigail to John on 12 August 1776 (Handout 8) and have them answer the comprehension questions for home work.

***Day Two:***

- 1) Explain to students that by the time John and Abigail Adams were writing these letters, Boston had a long history with smallpox epidemics. Describe the role of Cotton Mather and his learning from a black slave about inoculation and the subsequent controversies.
- 2) Describe how John Adams’s relative Dr. Zabdiel Boylston had been a proponent of inoculation and introduced it to Great Britain.
- 3) Discuss the dangers and fears of inoculation among the 18<sup>th</sup> century public. Describe how this opposition was frequently grounded in religion and the apprehension that it would further the disease.
- 4) Divide the class into five groups and provide each group with a handout containing an Adams letter and questions relating to it. (Handouts 9A-E.)
- 5) Tell the students to read the letters together and to be prepared to describe the content of the letter to the class and to answer the assigned questions.
- 6) Provide students with large sheets of poster paper to write out their answers.

**Optional Activity:****The Evacuation of the City of Boston**

- 1) Describe George Washington's success at fortifying Dorchester Heights and the subsequent alarm expressed by the British staff.
  
- 2) Describe the harshness of the previous winter for the American troops, and why this was a much needed psychological and military victory.
  
- 3) Have students read the letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 16-18 March 1776 and answer the questions relating to it (Handout 10).
  
- 4) Have students illustrate a political cartoon of the evacuation of Boston based on Abigail Adams's letter (Handout 11).

**Handout 8****Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 10 August 1776 [excerpt]**

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760810ja>

*I am happy to think that you, and my oldest son, are well through the distemper, and have sufficient Receipts. Nabby, I believe is also through. The Inflammation in her Arm, and the single Eruption, are nearly as much Evidence, as I had to shew -- and I have seen Small Pox enough since I had it, to have infected 100 Armies. Tommy, I shall hear by next Post, is happily recoverd of it, I think. Charley, my dear Charley! I am sorry, that it is still pretty clear, that you have not taken it. But never fear, you will have it.*

*This Suspence and Uncertainty must be very irksome to you. But Patience and Perseverance, will overcome this, as well as all other Difficulties. Dont think of Time, nor Expence. 1000 Guineas is not worth so much as security to a Wife, a good one I mean, and four Children, good ones I mean, against the small Pox. It is an important Event in a Mans Life, to go thro that distemper. It is a very great Thing, for a whole Family, to get well over it.*

*At the same Time that I am in a State of suspence, Uncertainty and Anxiety about my best, dearest, worthyest, wisest Friend, in this World, and all my Children, I am in a State of equal Suspence, Uncertainty, and Anxiety about our Army at N. York and Ticonderoga, and consequently about our Country and Posterity. The Lives of Thousands, and the Liberties of Millions are as much in Suspence, as the Health of my family. But I submit to the Governance of infinite Wisdom.*

Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 10 August 1776 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

### **Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 12 August 1776 [excerpt]**

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760812aa>

*Yours 30 of July reachd me by Saturdays post, and found me with Johnny and Tommy quite Recoverd from the small Pox. When I first came to Town I was made to believe that the small pox was a very light disorder, and one might pass through it with little or no complaints. Some such instances no doubt there are, and Light it is in comparison of the Natural way, or what it formerly was. As I never saw the disease before I have with those much more experienced been deceived in it now.*

*Nabby was the first person who had complaints of our number, hers came on about the 8th day attended with a voilent pain in a tooth which she had which was defective. She was cold and shivery, then a voilent Heat insued; the doctor supposed it the Symptoms of the disorder, a day or two after she had 3 Eruptions upon one of her Eyes. I thought it *did* not appear like what I had seen which they calld small pox, however I submitted my judgment to those who knew better. But when I found some who were innoculated at the same time failing, I requested the dr. to innoculate her again. Symptoms she has had very severely and very diffirent from what she had before and small pox in plenty, she can reckon 500 allready. She is cleverly only soar, I am much better satisfied now, and we rejoice when we can reckon a hundred. I believe I mentiond to you my Aunts Little Daughter having recoverd of it, but there again we were deceived, the child has been ill these 3 Days and now is broke out with small pox. -- Here I have been a month Last fryday, and for ought I see must be for this fortnight to come. I have broke through my resolution of not having Charles innoculated again. I saw I must tarry for Nabby long enough to make an other trial upon him, and have accordingly done it. -- We clear of some this week. Sister Betsy and her Neice, Mr. Tufts, Betsy Cranch and Johnny are going tomorrow. My affairs at home which for 3 weeks I laid asleep, wake up now, and make me anxious to get there. I fear they will go to ruin. My Expences here too for so long atime will be much more than I expectd for I thought to be at home in a month at ~~furthes~~ furthest. -- Lucy Cranch who I mentiond having taken the Distemper in the Natural Way is cleverly -- pretty full and large.*

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 12 August 1776 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>



6) What options would Abigail Adams have in trying to avoid small pox? Are there any? If so, what are they?

### Handout 9A (Group 1)

#### Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 26 June 1776

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760626ja>

*I have written so seldom to you, that I am really grieved at the Recollection. I wrote you, a few Lines, June 2 [John to Abigail, 02 June 1776] and a few more June 26. These are all that I have written to you, since this Month began. It has been the busyest Month, that ever I saw. I have found Time to inclose all the News papers, which I hope you will receive in due Time.*

*Our Misfortunes in Canada, are enough to melt an Heart of Stone. The Small Pox is ten times more terrible than Britons, Canadians and Indians together. This was the Cause of our precipitate Retreat from Quebec, this the Cause of our Disgraces at the Cedars. -- I dont mean that this was all. There has been Want, approaching to Famine, as well as Pestilence. And these Discouragements seem to have so disheartened our Officers, that none of them seem to Act with Prudence and Firmness.*

*But these Reverses of Fortune dont discourage me. It was natural to expect them, and We ought to be prepared in our Minds for greater Changes, and more melancholly Scenes still. It is an animating Cause, and brave Spirits are not subdued with Difficulties.*



4) In the last paragraph, what does John Adams wish for? In what style of writing does he convey this?

## Handout 9B (Group 2)

### Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 13 – 14 July 1776

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760713aa>

*Boston July 13, 1776*

*I must begin with apologising to you for not writing since the 17 of June. I have really had so many cares upon my Hands and Mind, with a bad inflammation in my Eyes that I have not been able to write. I now date from Boston where I yesterday arrived and was with all 4 of our Little ones inoculated for the small pox. My unkle and Aunt were so kind as to send me an invitation with my family. Mr. Cranch and wife and family, My Sister Betsy and her Little Neice, Cotton Tufts and Mr. Thaxter, a maid who has had the Distemper and my old Nurse compose our family. A Boy too I should have added. 17 in all. My unkles maid with his Little daughter and a Negro Man are here. We had our Bedding &c. to bring. A Cow we have driven down from [Braintree] and some Hay I have had put into the Stable, wood &c. and we have really commenced housekeepers here. The House was furnished with almost every article (except Beds) which we have free use of, and think ourselves much obliged by the fine accommodations and kind offer of our Friends. All our necessary Stores we purchase jointly. Our Little ones stood the operation Manfully. Dr. Bulfinch is our Physician. Such a Spirit of inoculation never before took place; the Town and every House in it, ~~as~~ are as full as they can hold. I believe there are not less than 30 persons from Braintree. Mrs. Quincy, Mrs. Lincoln, Miss Betsy and Nancy are our near Neighbours. God Grant that we may all go comfortably thro the Distemper, the phisick part is*

bad enough I know. I knew your mind so perfectly upon the subject that I thought nothing, but our recovery would give you equal pleasure, and as to safety there was none. The Soldiers innoculated privately, so did many of the inhabitants and the paper currency spread it everywhere. I immediately determined to set myself about it, and get ready with my children. I wish it was so you could have been with us, but I submit.

I received some Letters from you last Saturday Night 26 of June. You mention a Letter of the 16 which I have never received, and I suppose must relate something to private affairs which I wrote about in May and sent by ~~illegible~~ Harry.

As to News we have taken several fine prizes since I wrote you as you will see by the news papers. The present Report is of Lord Hows coming with unlimited powers. However suppose it is so, I believe he little thinks of treating with us as independant States. How can any person yet dream of a settlement, accommodations &c. They have neither the spirit nor feeling of Men, yet I see some who never were call'd Tories, gratified with the Idea of Lord Hows being upon his passage with such powers.

Sunday july 14

By yesterdays post I received two Letters dated 3 and 4 of July and tho your Letters never fail to give me pleasure, be the subject what it will, yet it was greatly heightned by the prospect of the future happiness and glory of our Country; nor am I a little Gratified when I reflect that a person so nearly connected with me has had the Honour of being a principal actor, in laying a foundation for its future Greatness. May the foundation of our new constitution, be justice, Truth and Righteousness. Like the wise Mans house may it be founded upon those Rocks and then neither storms or tempests will overthrow it.

I cannot but feel sorry that some of the most Manly Sentiments in the Declaration are Expunged from the printed copy. Perhaps wise reasons induced it.

Poor Canady I lament Canady but we ought to be in some measure sufferers for the past folly of our conduct. The fatal effects of the small pox there, has led almost every person to consent to Hospitals in every Town. In many Towns, already arround Boston the Selectmen ~~illegible~~ have granted Liberty for innoculation. I hope the necessity is now fully seen.

I had many disagreeable Sensations at the Thoughts of coming myself, but to see my children thro it I thought my duty, and all those feelings vanished as soon as I was innoculated and I trust a kind providence will carry me safely thro. Our Friends from Plymouth came into Town yesterday. We have enough upon our hands in the morning. The Little folks are very sick then and puke every morning but after that they are comfortable. I shall write you now very often. Pray inform me constantly of every important transaction. Every expression of tenderness is a cordial to my Heart. Unimportant as they are to the rest of the world, to me they are every Thing.

We have had during all the month of June a most severe Drouth which cut of all our promising hopes of english Grain and the first crop of Grass, but since july came in we have had a plenty of rain and now every thing looks well. There is one Misfortune in our family which I have never mentiond in hopes it would have been in my power to have remedied it, but all hopes of that kind are at an end. It is the loss of your Grey Horse. About 2 months ago, I had occasion to send



3) How does Abigail describe her accommodations? How does she think the small pox is spreading?

4) What is happening to the hospitals around Boston? What have the Boston selectman done?

### Handout 9C (Group 3)

#### Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 29 July 1776

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760729aa>

*Boston July 29, 1776*

*I write you now, thanks be to Heaven, free from paine, in Good Spirits, but weak and feeble. All my Sufferings produced but one Eruption. I think I can have no reason to be doubtfull with regard to myself as the Symptoms run so high and my Arm operated in the best manner. The small pox acts very odly this Season, there are Seven out of our Number that have not yet had it, 3 out of our 4 children have been twice innoculated, two of them Charles and Tommy have not had one Symptom. I have indulged them in rather freer living than before and hope they will not long remain doubtfull. Mrs. Cranch and Cotton Tufts have been in Town almost 3 weeks and have had the innoculation repeated 4 times and can not make it take. So has Mrs. Lincoln. Lucy Cranch and Billy are in the same State. Becky Peck who has lived in the same Manner with us, has it to such a degree as to be blind with one Eye, swell'd prodigiously, I believe she has ten Thousand. She is really an object to look at; tho she is not Dr. Bulfinches patient. Johnny has it exactly as one would wish, enough to be well satisfied and yet not be troublesome. We are ordered all the Air we can get, and when we cannot walk we must ride, and if we can neither walk nor ride, we must be led. We sleep with windows open all Night, and Lay upon the Carpet or Straw Beds, Mattrass or any thing hard, abstain from Spirit, Salt and fats, fruit we Eat, all we can get, and those who like vegetables unseasond may Eat them, but that is not I. -- This doubtfull Buisness is very dissagreeable as it will detain us much longer, but there are several instances now of persons who thought they had had it, and were recoverd, and lived away freely, and now are plentifully dealt by. Mr. Joseph Edwards wife for one, and queer work she makes of it you may be sure. The Doctors say they cannot account for it, unless the free perspiration throws it off. Every physician has a number of patients in this doubtfull State. Where it does take and the patient lives any thing free, they have a Doze of it. Cool weather is much fitter for the small pox. I have not got rid of any terrors of the small pox but that of not being liable to it again, which you*

*will say is a very great one; but what I mean is that I should dread it more now than before I saw it, were I liable to it. If we consider the great numbers who have it now, computed at seven thousand, 3 thousand of which are from the Country, tis very favorable, tho not so certain as it was last winter with many patients. Mr. Shaw who was innoculated at the same time when I and 3 of my children were out of the same Box, and has lived lower by his account than we have, has a full portion of it for all of us. There is no accounting for it. We did not take so much phisick as many others neither. If this last does not take I shall certainly try them with some wine . . .*

*The Continental Troops are near all gone from this Town, all I believe who are in a Marching State. The small pox has been General amongst them and exceeding favourable.*

*I have requested of Judge Cushing to write you an account of his circuit and he has promised to do it. Both he and his Lady are under inoculation. When I came into Town I was in great hopes that if we did well we should be able to return in about 3 weeks, and we should have been able to have effected it, if it had operated as formerly. Now I fear it will be 5 weeks before we shall all get through but I must not complain. When I cast my eye upon Becky whose Symptoms were not half so high as mine or some of the rest of us, and see what an object she is I am silenced, and adore the Goodness of God towards us.*

*Her Dr. says she is not dangerous. Col. Warren has sufferd as much pain as I did, but has more to shew for it, he is very cleverly spatterd. Mrs. Warren is now struggling with it, to one of her constitution it operates in faintings and langour. It did so upon Betsy Cranch, yet when it found its way through, it operated kindly. -- I believe you will be tired of hearing of small pox, but you bid me write every post and suppose you are anxious to hear how we have it. The next post I hope to tell you that ~~we~~ they all have it, who now remain uncertain.*

*I am at all times and in all States unfeignedly yours.*

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 29 July 1776 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

## **Questions:**

1) Why does Abigail Adams say that the “smallpox acts very oddly this Season?”

2) Describe how Abigail and her children are living. Point out three examples.

3) According to Abigail, what are the weather conditions that are best for smallpox?

4) What are the doctors saying about the smallpox?

### Handout 9D (Group 4)

#### Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 30 – 31 July 1776

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760730aa>

July 30 1776

*I wrote you by the post, but as Capt. Cuznow [Cazneau] goes to morrow perhaps this may reach [you] first. As to myself I am comfortable. Johnny is cleverly. Nabby I hope has gone thro the distemper, the Eruption was so trifling that to be certain I have had inoculation repeated. Charles and Tommy have neither had Symptoms, nor Eruption. Charles was inoculated last Sabbeth evening a second time, Tommy to Day, the 3 time from some fresh matter taken from Becky Peck who has enough for all the House beside.*

*This Suspence is painfull. I know not what to do with them. It lengthens out the Time which I can but ill afford, and if they can have it, I know not how to quit till I can get them through. Youth youth is the time, they have no pains but bodily, no anxiety of mind, no fears for themselves or others, and then the Disease is much lighter. The poor Doctor is as anxious as we are, but begs us to make it certain if repeated inoculations will do it. There are now several patients who were inoculated last winter and thought they passd through the Distemper, but have now taken it in the natural way.*

*Mrs. Cranch and two of her children are in this uncertain State, with a great number of others which I could mention. Tis a pestilence that walketh in Darkness. Mrs. Warren with whom I was yesterday, lay the whole day in a State little better than nonexistence. I greatly feard she would not survive it, but to day she is revived and many pocks appear upon her. But tis a poor Buisness at the best, where I entertaind one terror before, I do ten now. The Season of the year is very unfit for the Distemper, the Tone of every persons vessels are relaxed, very little Spring in the Air, and the medicine too powerfull for weak constitutions.*

*I hope to be properly thankfull that I and mine are so far so comfortable through -- I think I have all my difficulties to Grapple with alone and seperete from my Earthly prop and Support.*

*I begin to long again for the sweet air of Braintree, and the time to come will be much longer than the time past.*



4) What kind of state is Tommy in?

### Handout 9E (Group 5)

#### Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 13 April 1777

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17770413jasecond>

*April 13, 1777*

*I have spent an Hour, this Morning, in the Congregation of the dead. I took a Walk into the Potters Field, a burying Ground between the new stone Prison, and the Hospital, and I never in my whole Life was affected with so much Melancholly. The Graves of the soldiers, who have been buried, in this Ground, from the Hospital and bettering House, during the Course of the last Summer, Fall, and Winter, dead of the small Pox, and Camp Diseases, are enough to make the Heart of stone to melt away.*

*The Sexton told me, that upwards of two Thousand soldiers had been buried there, and by the Appearance, of the Graves, and Trenches, it is most probable to me, he speaks within Bounds.*

*To what Causes this Plague is to be attributed I dont know. It seems to me, that the Want of Tents, Cloaths, soap, Vegetables, Vinegar, Vaults &c. cannot account for it all.*

*Oatmeal and Peas, are a great Preservative of our Enemies. Our Frying Pans and Gridirons, slay more than the Sword.*

*Discipline, Discipline is the great Thing wanted. There can be no order, nor Cleanliness, in an Army without Discipline. We have at last, determined on a Plan for the Sick, and have called into the Service the best Abilities in Physick and Chirurgery, that the Continent affords. I pray God it may have its desired Effect, and that the Lives and Health of the Soldiers may be saved by it.*

*Disease has destroyed Ten Men for Us, where the Sword of the Enemy has killed one.*

*Upon my Return from my pensive melancholly Walk, I heard a Piece of disagreeable News-That the ship Morris, Captain Anderson from Nantz, with Cannon, Arms, Gunlocks, Powder &c. was chased into Delaware Bay by two or three Men of War -- that she defended herself manfully against their Boats and Barges, but finding no Possibility of getting clear, she run aground. The Crew, and two French Gentlemen Passengers got on shore, but the Captain, determined to disappoint his Enemy in Part, laid a Train and blew up the ship, and lost his own Life unfortunately in the Explosion. I regret the Loss of so brave a Man much more than that of the ship and Cargo. The People are fishing in order to save what they can, and I hope they will save*



## Handout 10

### *The Evacuation of Boston*

#### **Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 16-18 March 1776**

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760316aa>

*[Braintree]* March 16 1776

*I last Evening Received yours of March 8. I must confess my self in fault that I did not write sooner to you, but I was in continual Expectation that some important event would take place and give me a subject worth writing upon. Before this reaches you I imagine you will have Received two Letters from me; the last I closed this Day week; I since that time there has been some movements amongst the Ministerial Troops as if they meant to evacuate the Town of Boston. Between 70 and 80 vessels of various sizes are gone down and lay in a row in fair sight of this place, all of which appear to be loaded and by what can be collected from our own observations and from deserters they have been plundering the Town. I have been very faithless with regard to their quitting Boston, and know not how to account for it, nor am I yet satisfied that they will leave it-tho it seems to be the prevailing opinion of most people; we are obliged to place the Militia upon Gaurd every Night upon the shoars thro fear of an invasion. There has been no firing since Last twesday, till about 12 o clock last Night, when I was waked out of my sleep with a smart Cannonade which continued till nine o clock this morning, and prevented any further repose for me; the occasion I have not yet heard, but before I close this Letter I may be able to give you some account of it.*

*By the accounts in the publick papers the plot thickens; and some very important Crisis seems near at hand. Perhaps providence see's it necessary in order to answer important ends and designs that the Seat of War should be changed from this to the Southeren colonies that each may have a proper sympathy for the other, and unite in a seperation. The Refuge of the Believer amidst all the afflictive dispensations of providence, is that the Lord Reigneth, and that he can restrain the Arm of Man.*

*Orders are given to our Army to hold themselves in readiness to March at a moments warning. I'll meet you at Philippi said the Ghost of Caesar to Brutus.*

*Sunday Noon*

*Being quite sick with a violent cold I have tarried at Home to day; I find the firing was occasioned by our peoples taking possession of Nook Hill, which they kept in spite of the Cannonade, and which has really obliged our Enemy to decamp this morning on board the Transports; as I hear by a messenger just come from Head Quarters. Some of the Select Men have been to the lines and inform that they have carried of [every thing they could possibly] take, and what they could not they have [burnt, broke, or hove into the water. This is I believe fact,]*

*many articles of good Household furniture having in the course of the week come on shore at Great Hill, both upon this and Weymouth Side, Lids of Desks, mahogona chairs, tables &c. Our People I hear will have Liberty to enter Boston, those who have had the small pox. The Enemy have not yet come under sail. I cannot help suspecting some design which we do not yet comprehend; to what quarter of the World they are bound is wholly unknown, but tis generally Thought to New york. Many people are elated with their quitting Boston. I confess I do not feel so, tis only lifting the burden from one shoulder to the other which perhaps is less able or less willing to support it. -- To what a contemptible situation are the Troops of Britain reduced! I feel glad however that Boston is not destroyed. I hope it will be so secured and guarded as to baffel all future ~~attem~~ attempts against it. -- I hear that General How said upon going upon some Eminence in Town to view our Troops who had taken Dorchester Hill unperceived by them till sun rise, "My God these fellows have done more work in one night than I could make my Army do in three months" and he might well say so for in one night two forts and long Breast Works were sprung up besides several Barracks. 300 & 70 teems were employed most of which went 3 load in the night, beside 4000 men who worked with good Hearts.*

*From Pens Hill we have a view of the largest Fleet ever seen in America. You may count upwards of 100 & 70 Sail. They look like a Forrest. It was very lucky for us that we got possession of Nook Hill. They had placed their cannon so as to fire upon the Top of the Hill where they had observed our people marking out the Ground, but it was only to elude them for they began lower upon the Hill and nearer the Town. It was a very foggy dark evening and they had possession of the Hill six hours before a gun was fired, and when they did fire they over shot our people so that they were coverd before morning and not one man lost, which the enemy no sooner discoverd than Bunker Hill was abandoned and every Man decamp'd as soon as he could for they found they should not be able to get away if we once got our cannon mounted. Our General may say with Ceasar veni vidi et vici.*

*What Effect does the Expectation of commisioners have with you? Are they held in disdain as they are here. It is come to that pass now that the longest sword must deside the contest -- and the sword is less dreaded here than the commisioners.*

*You mention Threats upon [Braintree]. I [know of none], nor ever heard of any till you mentiond them.*

*The Tories look a little crest fallen; as for Cleverly he looks like the knight of the woful countenance. I hear all the Mongrel Breed are left in Boston -- and our ~~pe~~ people who were prisoners are put into Irons and carried of.*

*As to all your own private affairs I generally avoid mentioning them to you; I take the best care I am capable of them. I have found some difficulty attending the only Man I have upon the place,*

*being so often taking of. John and Jonathan have taken all the care in his absence, and performed very well. Bass got home very well. My Fathers horse came home in fine order and much to his satisfaction. Your own very poor. -- Cannot you hire a Servant where you are. I am sorry you are put to so much difficulty for want of one. -- I suppose you do not think one word about comeing home, and how you will get home I know not.*

*I made a mistake in the Name of the Grammer -- tis Tandon's, instead of Took. I wish you could purchase Lord Chesterfield's Letters -- I have lately heard them very highly spoken of. I smiled at your couplet of Lattin, your Daughter may be able in time to conster it as she has already made some considerable proficiency in her accidents, but her Mamma was obliged to get it translated.*

*Pray write Lord Sterlings character. I want to know whether you live in any harmony with -- [Most likely Robert Treat Paine] and how you settled matters. I think he seems in better humour.*

*I think I do not admire the Speach from the Rostrum, tis a heavy unelegant, verbose performance and did not strike my fancy at all. I am very sausy suppose you will say. Tis a Liberty I take with you; indulgance is apt to spoil one. Adieu -- Yours most Sincerely.*

*P.S. Pray convey me a little paper. I have but enough for one Letter more.*

*Monday morning*

*A fine quiet night -- no allarms no Cannon. The more I think of our Enemies quitting Boston, the more amaz'd I am, that they should leave such a harbour, such fortifications, such intrenchments, and that we should be in peaceable possession of a Town which we expected would cost us a river of Blood without one Drop shed. Shurely it is the Lords doings and it is Marvelous in our Eyes. Every foot of Ground which they obtain now they must fight for, and [may they purchase it at a Bunker Hill price.]*

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 16 - 18 March 1776 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

## **Comprehension Questions:**

1) Point out three examples of how Abigail Adams describes what is happening in the city of Boston.

2) What is the general mood of the colonists in Boston?

3) What is the view from Pens Hill like?

4) The last paragraph of the letter is very reflective and contains many thoughts in it. Describe how Abigail cleverly used poetic language such as imagery and metaphors to convey her feelings.

5) If you were John Adams, how would you react at receiving such a letter?

## Handout 11

### *Political Cartoon Assignment*

**Directions:**

What is a political cartoon? Political cartoons are illustrations that give the reader a message or convey an opinion about political or social events of the day. They often use humorous metaphors to make their point. Most political cartoons can be found on the editorial pages of newspapers. Look at the *Boston Globe*, *New York Times* or *Boston Herald* for examples.

Using the letter that we have just read, illustrate a political cartoon that depicts the British evacuation of Boston. Your political cartoon can be drawn from the point of view of a loyalist or a colonist.