

Abigail Adams, the Writer:
“My pen is always freer than
my tongue.”

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Table of Contents

Introduction to Project	3
Background Information on Abigail Adams.....	5
Unit Plan	8
Lesson Plan #1: Introduction to Abigail Adams.....	10
Lesson Plan #2: John and Abigail in Love	11
Lesson Plan #3: Abigail’s Daily Life.....	12
Lesson Plan #4: Abigail as a Letter Writer.....	13
Lesson Plan #5: Abigail as Political and Historical Observer	14
Lesson Plan #6: Abigail as Feminist.....	15
Lesson Plan #7: Abigail in Childbirth	16
Lesson Plan #8: Abigail in Mourning.....	17
Lesson Plan #9: Abigail at Seventeen.....	18
Lesson Plan #10: Abigail and Her Sisters.....	19
Lesson Plan #11: Abigail and Mercy.....	20
Lesson Plan #12: Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson	21
Lesson Plan #13: Abigail as Mother (Part I)	22
Lesson Plan #14: Abigail as Mother (Part II)	23
Lesson Plan #15: Modern Day Editing.....	24
Lesson Plan #16: Socratic Seminar.....	25
Handouts:	
Independent Reading Assessment.....	27
Web Quest.....	28
“To My Dearest Friend”	32
“I Have a Large Share of Grandmother Eves Curiosity”	34
Poem	35
Poetry Analysis	36
Childbirth in Literature	37
Mourning Tone	39
Abigail’s Message on Life	40
Tone!	41
Nabby versus Tommy.....	42
One Page Reflections.....	44
Field Trip to Adams National Park.....	45
Rubric for Creative Journal.....	46
Rubric for Compare and Contrast Composition	47
Rubric for Film Presentation.....	48
Vocabulary Quiz	49
Transcribed Letters: marked by lesson, date and correspondents.....	50
Works Consulted.....	72

Introduction to the Project

My quest as an English teacher, particularly when I teach American literature at the tenth grade level, is to seamlessly incorporate history into the seminal literary works of our nation. Amidst sundry sources and textbooks, I have found a dearth of anthologized colonial prose written by women. American literature textbooks frequently include a letter by Abigail Adams, yet these letters are largely atypical of Mrs. Adams's writing; they lack the depth of emotion and insight found in her letters to her husband and others. On the other hand in the eleventh grade, the most popular piece of literature I teach hails from a similar time period as Abigail Adams: *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. My adolescent students can relate this story to their own lives. Therefore, because American Literature curricula lack prose by women, I wanted to develop a unit for the tenth grade that incorporates primary sources by women. The Adams Teacher Fellowship enabled me to design and implement a women-centered unit, focusing on an influential historical and literary foremother: Abigail Adams.

The project revolves around the question: What was life, particularly the writing life, like for an American woman before, during, and after the founding of our nation? I draw upon Mrs. Adams's correspondence and diaries to create a living text for my students. To introduce students to Abigail Adams, I begin the unit with the thorough young-adult biography, *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution* by Natalie S. Bober. This book provides us with the historical context to appropriately examine the lives of women at the time of the American Revolution.

Subsequently, we explore the primary documents Mrs. Adams wrote and received during her time. I have generated a reading packet of primary documents that illustrate the "sphere of domesticity" experienced by American women at the birth of our nation. Likewise, I have created lesson plans and ancillary materials for the various letters.

Why is it necessary to study Mrs. Adams and the role of 18th century women? This project offers students a more profound historical, cultural, and ethical sense of the role of women in America. However, this unit does not end at reading. We incorporate writing and technology as well. Students create a diary as if they existed during this time period. They use Mrs. Adams's papers as a resource to generate what essentially would be a work of historical fiction: historical in terms of the cultural and social aspects of the time, but fictional in terms of the lives led by their characters. Students craft several pieces of "correspondence" to insert in the diaries that indicate more about women during this time. Also, since students learn by doing, this unit includes a field trip to the Adams Homestead at the Adams National Historic Park in Quincy, Massachusetts. When we visit, we envision ourselves as 18th century citizens, not as modern-day tourists. This visit will also offer fodder for their historical diaries.

Furthermore, students write an essay comparing their lives as a New Englander to the lives of 18th century New Englanders. The culmination of the study of Mrs. Adams, her life, and her times includes a film production by the students. Small groups of students film "historical" scenes representing the life of Mrs. Adams. They write a script, design a set, and film themselves as 18th century figures.

Ultimately, I hope this unit demonstrates to students the importance of recognizing the lives and words of our founding mothers, even in our 21st century.

Logistical Notes

This unit was designed for a high school American Literature course, typically taught in tenth or eleventh grade with sixteen 45-minute lesson plans, plus supplementary independent projects. Modifications can be made for length of classroom time or for other grade levels. Though I have numbered them for the sake of organization, the lessons really do not depend upon a specific order, and can, therefore, be used individually or as a unit. The lessons also serve as a conduit to gather research for the long-term projects. Furthermore, since the project was funded, designed, and implemented in Massachusetts, I have incorporated the *Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Frameworks*. Lastly, for citations and references, as an English teacher, I followed the Modern Language Association's guidelines for citation.

Background on Abigail Adams and her Correspondents

In addition to the information below, please consult the following websites:

“John and Abigail Adams.” *American Experience*.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/adams/index.html>

The Adams Papers. Massachusetts Historical Society. http://www.masshist.org/adams_editorial/

Abigail and John Adams

Married in 1764, Abigail Smith (1744-1818) of Weymouth, Massachusetts became Abigail Adams, and of her many epistles, most were addressed to her husband John Adams (1735-1826). John Adams, the second president of the United States, was a Harvard-trained lawyer, yet after their marriage he and Abigail ran the family farm in Braintree (now Quincy), a farm he inherited from his father. Abigail and John Adams wrote over 1,100 letters during their courtship and marriage, between the years of 1762-1801, when they experienced lengthy separations from each other. John was frequently away on legal and government business: as a lawyer, as part of the Continental Congress, and as an ambassador.

Their letters demonstrate the finest epistolary writing in the world. The majority of the letters in the Adams Family Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society are the recipient’s copy. Abigail, in particular, disliked keeping a record book, a practice followed by many of her contemporaries wherein the writer copied his or her letter in a book before sending it to the correspondent.

In their correspondence, Abigail and John often wrote with nicknames. Most frequently, they addressed each other as “Much Loved Friend” or “My Dearest Friend.” In the beginning of their courtship, John writes to her as “Miss Adorable”; they also use the names “Diana” and “Lysander.” However, in the 1770s, Abigail begins signing many of her letters as “Portia,” another classical allusion “after the long-suffering, virtuous wife of the Roman statesman Brutus” (McCullough 26).

Throughout all of her letters, Abigail impresses the reader with her style. Ironically, she received no formal education. Her knowledge came from reading many classics, including Shakespeare, Addison, Pope, Franklin and the Bible. Learning was important to her. Likewise, she sought to run the family farm as efficiently and effectively as possible. She churned her own butter, and did many household tasks required of an 18th century woman. In addition, due to her husband’s frequent travels, Abigail steered the family’s financial business as well.

Although John Adams was Abigail’s most significant correspondent, she wrote to many individuals. The list below is only a small sampling of her epistolary friends.

Isaac Smith, Jr. (1749-1829) wrote to Abigail at age thirteen asking to correspond with her. As a doting cousin, she obliged him; however, Isaac was a Loyalist and left for England during the American Revolution.

Mary Smith Cranch (1741-1811) was Abigail's sister and friend; they seemed to have a very strong relationship and relied upon each other for guidance and assistance in times of trial.

Elizabeth Smith Shaw (1750-1815) and Abigail had a sisterly relationship; however, from the letters, we can infer that her relationship was not as strong as that with Mary Smith Cranch.

Abigail Adams Smith (1765-1813), also known as Nabby, had a good relationship with her mother and was full of companionship and friendship, particularly since Nabby was Abigail's only daughter to see adulthood. She married William Stephens Smith and gave birth to four children. Unfortunately, Nabby passed away from cancer with her parents at her bedside.

John Quincy Adams (1767-1848) was Abigail's oldest and most successful son. As a young boy he spent a great deal of time traveling, mostly with his father, so his letters to his mother are numerous. He continued his travels throughout adulthood but did attend Harvard College. He followed in his father's footsteps as president of the United States from 1825-29, but is perhaps most famous for his legal defense of the slaves on the *Amistad* in front of the Supreme Court. He is also known for incredible brilliance but great lack of social diplomacy, a shortcoming tempered by his wife, Louisa Catherine Johnson.

Charles Adams (1770-1800), Abigail's second son, accompanied his father and older brother to Europe; although he studied at Harvard like his father and brother, his excess combined with his alcoholism led to his early death. He married Sarah Smith and had two daughters.

Thomas Boylston Adams (1772-1832) was the youngest of the Adams children and also attended Harvard; few letters exist from the 18th century between Abigail and Thomas Boylston. He married Ann 'Nancy' Harrod.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) corresponded regularly with both Abigail and John Adams until the early 19th century when Jefferson and Adams became embroiled in a rancorous political relationship. However, the correspondence resumed in 1812, and Jefferson wrote an eloquent tribute to John upon learning of Abigail's death. Both he and John died on July 4th, 1826, fifty years after the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814) wrote numerous letters to Abigail. She also wrote poetry and dramas, and her writing style tended to be ornate. In terms of politics, she was not as strong as Abigail on the role of women's rights. She ignored Abigail's sentiment to "remember the ladies" (Roberts 50). Their friendship deteriorated in 1805 when Mercy attacked John's political role in a book she published; however, at the end of their lives, Abigail repaired this relationship and resumed correspondence.

General Note on 18th Century Letters:

The letters included in this unit are either online or transcribed at the end of this packet. Each lesson plan contains links to the letters, which are posted on the Massachusetts Historical Society's website, where a transcribed copy and digital image are available. In the digital image, students and teachers will notice the unusual depiction of the letter "s" as "f," known as the "swash S." This was a common practice used during the colonial period. Therefore, for historic interest, I

encourage teachers and students to utilize both the transcription **and** the digital image of the original. However, some letters are not available online and have been transcribed. In these transcriptions, I have retained the original spelling and grammar of the authors. In fact, in both the online transcriptions and the transcriptions contained in this packet, readers will note the errors in orthography and mechanics. This indicates the lack of a single authoritative dictionary or style manual in the 18th century. Likewise, due to handwriting, decay of time and the editorial changes made by Adams descendants, some of the words are illegible or inaccurate in their current state.

On a final note, while observing the dates of the letters and their responses, we must keep in mind that the letters took a long time to reach their destination, and in fact, sometimes never reached the destination at all. This would be particularly troublesome if the sender mailed a packet of letters to the recipient, as was commonly done. Therefore, when Abigail or John write that they have not received a letter for several weeks or months, it does not necessarily mean that the correspondent was neglecting his or her epistolary relationship, but rather, the letters had difficulty arriving.

Historical Notes on Literacy in New England:

According to Cremin, a noted historian of American education, education and literacy expanded in the years building up to the American Revolution “because of a growing participation in public affairs” (545). Education and literacy would enable colonial citizens to read pamphlets and other propaganda to join against England. Adult males in America were around 70-100 percent literate compared to 48 percent in the English countryside and 74 percent in English urban areas (Cremin 546). Indeed, the Massachusetts Historical Society was founded in 1791, an indication of the importance of learning, for its founders actively sought to preserve history for the benefit of future generations.

Some women were able to read and write, some only to read, and some were only able to make their mark. Abigail Adams was exceedingly literate. Since she was of the upper echelon of society, most of her female peers would have been literate and well read (Roberts 12). A select few would even have attended school (12). In fact, for its time period, New England was remarkably literate. In a case study of the Upper Valley of the Connecticut River during the colonial and revolutionary eras, literacy rates varied between 60 percent and 90 percent for women (Gilmore 121). These rates “were even more striking in the comparative context of North Atlantic civilization. In fact, as with males, women in the Upper Valley were second to Sweden within the North Atlantic in the achievement of literacy through 1830” (121).

As the Revolution began to spread, so did the support for female education. Dr. Benjamin Rush, a patriot and signer of the Declaration of Independence, was a proponent of female education, for he realized, along with John Adams, that the education of men begins at home with their mothers (Roberts 251). Therefore, women must possess knowledge to share that knowledge with their sons. By 1790, women like Judith Sargent Murray from Massachusetts illustrated that the mythological gap in intelligence between men and women was merely a result of the differences in education between men and women, and was not a biological state (252). Though Abigail exuded brilliance as a writer and a thinker, she was by no means the only woman or person championing learning, particularly in the highly literate society of 18th century New England.

American Literature Unit Plan
Abigail Adams, the Writer:
“My pen is always freer than my tongue.”
 ~Abigail Adams to John Adams, 22 October 1775

Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Frameworks:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/0601.pdf>

- 2.6 Analyze differences in responses to focused group discussion in an organized and systematic way.
- 5.30 Identify, describe, and apply all conventions of Standard English.
- 8.32 Identify and analyze the point(s) of view in a literary work.
- 8.33 Analyze patterns of imagery or symbolism and connect them to themes and/or tone and mood.
- 9.6 Relate a literary work to primary source documents of its literary period or historical setting.
- 9.7 Relate a literary work to the seminal ideas of its time.
- 11.5 Apply knowledge of the concept that the theme of meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, and provide support from the text for the identified themes.
- 11.6 Apply knowledge of the concept that a text can contain more than one theme.
- 13.25 Analyze and explain the structure and elements of nonfiction works.
- 19.24 Write well-organized stories or scripts with an explicit or implicit theme and details that contribute to a definite mood or tone.
- 19.27 Write well-organized research papers that prove a thesis statement using logical organization, effective supporting evidence, and variety in sentence structure.
- 19.30 Write coherent compositions with a clear focus, objective presentation of alternate views, rich detail, well-developed paragraphs, and logical argumentation.
- 26.6 Identify the aesthetic effects of a media presentation and identify and evaluate the techniques used to create them.
- 27.7 Develop and apply criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the presentation, style, and content of films and other forms of electronic communication. (Department of Education)

Goals:

- 1) To supplement the dearth of anthologized prose by colonial American women.
- 2) To analyze epistolary form.
- 3) To explore Abigail Adams’s writing and relate her themes and struggles to our times.
- 4) To engender a creative composition set in the era of Mrs. Adams.
- 5) To utilize the resources of the Internet.
- 6) To write an analytical essay assessing the differences between 18th and 21st century life.
- 7) To create a film/media presentation from script through set, production, and acting.
- 8) To identify tone, figures of speech, diction, and satire in non-fiction writing.
- 9) To analyze how our relationships of spouse, sibling, child, parent, and friend compare and contrast with that of the 18th century.

Formative Assessments:

- 1) Nightly reading
- 2) One page response papers
- 3) Class discussion and activity
- 4) Epistolary Analysis handout

Summative Assessments:

- 1) Historical diary
- 2) Comparison/contrast essay
- 3) Vocabulary quiz
- 4) Film production

Methods:

- 1) Choral reading
- 2) Acting out of scenes
- 3) Group work analyzing quotes and notes
- 4) Informal presentations based on small-group discussion
- 5) Teacher-led inquiry into the text via questioning
- 6) Independent reading and research

Materials:

- 1) Enclosed course packet which includes transcriptions or links to the 39 full-text letters used; excerpts from six other letters are included on handouts or lesson plans
- 2) Dictionary
- 3) Internet and computer lab for Web Quest
- 4) Smart Board: used daily for group work and whole group instruction.
- 5) *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution* by Natalie S. Bober

Literary and Historical Terms:

“Sphere of domesticity”

Orthographic

Circa

Theme

Figures of speech (allusion, metaphor, etc.)

Satire/sarcasm

Diction

Images

Tone/mood/audience

Epistle/epistolary form

Questions to ask ourselves throughout the unit:

How was Mrs. Adams indicative of her era? How was she significant? What was the role of women during the American Revolution?

What is American about her letters? What is American literature?

What is the subtext of her letters?

LESSON PLAN #1: Introduction to Abigail Adams

[1] Curriculum framework(s): 26.6 Identify the aesthetic effects of a media presentation and identify and evaluate the techniques used to create them. 9.7 Relate a literary work to the seminal ideas of its time. 27.7 Develop and apply criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the presentation, style, and content of films and other forms of electronic communication.

[2] Goal of the lesson: To introduce students to Abigail Adams through discussion and web inquiry.

[3] Expected student outcomes: Students will be able to describe Mrs. Adams and identify key events in her life.

[4] Assessment of expected student outcomes: Students will complete the Web Quest handout, and teacher will check for understanding.

[5] Instructional procedures: 45 minutes

Introduction (10 minutes): Students will respond in their journals to the following phrases: “Abigail Adams,” “American Revolution,” “Women’s Roles,” “18th century.” Then the teacher will lead students in sharing their responses to these linked words. Teacher clarifies.

Instruction/learning activities (30 minutes): Students complete the Web Quest after the teacher introduces them to the various websites relating to Abigail Adams. Teacher circulates in the room.

Closure (5 minutes): Students complete an exit ticket answering: What was the most astonishing aspect of Abigail Adams’s life? They may also hand in their Web Quest questions if complete.

Learning reinforcement /homework: Students will complete the Web Quest handout if they have not yet done so. They must read and annotate two letters for the first lesson, listed under “Material and resources” below.

Accommodations/modifications to meet diverse student needs: Students will have access to larger font if needed. Students who possess the need will be paired with a partner to aid him or her. Teacher’s circulation allows for further modifications if necessary to either challenge or aid students.

[6] Material and resources:

- 1) Background material on Abigail Adams
- 2) Classroom handouts of the Web Quest (page 28)
- 3) A computer lab and computer for each student
- 4) Letter from John Adams to Abigail Smith, 4 October 1762,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17621004ja>
- 5) Letter from Abigail Smith to John Adams, 11 August 1763,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17630811aa> .

LESSON PLAN #2: Abigail and John in Love

[1] Curriculum framework(s): 2.6 Analyze differences in responses to focused group discussion in an organized and systematic way. 8.33 Analyze patterns of imagery or symbolism and connect them to themes and/or tone and mood. 13.25 Analyze and explain the structure and elements of nonfiction works.

[2] Goal of the lesson: To analyze the “love letter” in the 18th century.

[3] Expected student outcomes: Students will be able to read and respond to 18th century documents on love.

[4] Assessment of expected student outcomes: Class discussion and participation.

[5] Instructional procedures: 45 minutes

Introduction: Remind students of the great love between Abigail and John Adams. These are some of their earliest letters. Get their reactions from reading the night before.

Activities: First lead a discussion on the following questions:

- i. What do you notice about the original letters (pull up the digital image from the websites listed below)?
- ii. What is typical/atypical about their letters? Are their love letters like today’s?
- iii. What can we infer about the authors?
- iv. What vocabulary should we notice? (“indisposed”)

N.B. “Aurelia” is the pseudonym of Mary Smith Cranch, Abigail’s sister (Hogan interview). Then have students complete an Epistolary Analysis handout in groups.

Closure: Have students report back with their findings from the handout.

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

Modifications: Group work will help diverse learners. The graphic organizer also aids students with difficulty.

[6] Material and resources:

- 1) Letter from John Adams to Abigail Smith, 4 October 1762,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17621004ja>
- 2) Letter from Abigail Smith to John Adams, 11 August 1763,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17630811aa>
- 3) Smart Board
- 4) Epistolary Analysis handout (page 30)

LESSON PLAN #3: Abigail's Daily Life

[1] **Curriculum framework(s):** 9.6 Relate a literary work to primary source documents of its literary period or historical setting.13.25 Analyze and explain the structure and elements of nonfiction works.

[2] **Goal of the lesson:** To observe the sundry activities of daily life for Abigail Adams.

[3] **Expected student outcomes:** Students will be able to compare and contrast their lives to that of Mrs. Adams, in terms of daily activity.

[4] **Assessment of expected student outcomes:** Students will hand in the questions after their small group inquiry about Mrs. Adams.

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

Introduction: Go over the Epistolary Analysis handout.

Activities: Post these questions on the Smart Board, and have students answer in both oral and written form.

- i. Go over vocabulary: “ardently,” “miserly,” “metropolis,” “regulars,” “cloister,” “melancholy.”
- ii. What is the significance of the salutation? The conclusion?
- iii. What happened on August 10th? What is Abigail’s reaction to this date?
- iv. What is Abigail’s tone at the start of the 1774 letter? Does it change? Explain.
- v. What is Abigail’s tone at the start of the 1775 letter? Does it change? Explain.
- vi. How would you classify Abigail after reading these two letters? Support.
- vii. Does Abigail accept that her husband must be away from her? What is her rationale? And what does this show about her?
- viii. What is her view on the city versus the country?
- ix. How do Abigail’s struggles indicate her “human” or “realistic” side?
- x. What are the benefits or limitations of the epistolary form?

Closure: Share findings from questions and give most significant point at the end of class as an Exit ticket.

Homework: Work on projects and use today’s lesson in particular for the development of the essay. Also, read and complete an Epistolary Analysis of the next letters in the unit.

Modifications: Use of graphic organizer. Teacher assistance and guided learning during question and discussion.

[6] **Material and resources:**

- 1) Epistolary Analysis handout (page 30)
- 2) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 16 October 1774,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17741016aa>
- 3) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 12 November 1775,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17751112aa>

LESSON PLAN #4: Abigail as Letter Writer

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

[2] **Goal of the lesson:** To observe the qualities of writing that Abigail and John valued, particularly in the letter, the form they mastered.

[3] **Expected student outcomes:** Students will be able to outline successful strategies for letter writing. They will respond to what they view as significant.

[4] **Assessment of expected student outcomes:** Successful completion of handout and questions.

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

Introduction: Students share their observations from the Epistolary Analysis.

Activities: Students work individually or in pairs on the handout entitled “To My Dearest Friend.”

Closure: Students read their letter aloud to a partner or to the class as a whole.

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

[6] **Material and resources:**

- 1) “To My Dearest Friend” handout (page 32)
- 2) Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 7 July 1776
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760707jasecond>
- 3) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 23 September 1776
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760923aa>

LESSON PLAN #5: Abigail as Political and Historical Observer

[1] **Curriculum framework(s):** 8.32 Identify and analyze the point(s) of view in a literary work.
13.25 Analyze and explain the structure and elements of nonfiction works.

[2] **Goal of the lesson:** To illustrate the political viewpoints of Abigail Adams.

[3] **Expected student outcomes:** Students will be able to understand the political significance of Abigail's era.

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

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

Vocabulary: ignominiously; propagated; extirpated.

Activities: Questions for letters in this lesson may be done either individually or in groups.

- 1) What is Abigail's view on slavery? Why is that significant?
- 2) How does Abigail tie politics and family into her letters?
- 3) In the letter of 2 March 1776, how do you imagine her daily life was impacted by news that her husband might be on a ship to England (and he hadn't told her this)?
- 4) What is her view on Tories? Support.
- 5) What details in the letters indicate that Abigail is experiencing war? Focus in particular in the letter of 18-20 June 1775. (N.B. This letter refers to Bunker Hill Day, and the death of their close family friend Dr. Joseph Warren).
- 6) What is telling about her query regarding "the load of Guilt upon their souls?"
- 7) What does Abigail's letter demonstrate about the emotions of civilians during war?
- 8) Assess her military strategy questions to her husband. What does this show about Abigail?
- 9) Notice she quotes Shakespeare (*Julius Caesar*) in the midst of her turmoil and concern about the war in 1776. What is the significance of quoting Shakespeare, and why does she quote him?
- 10) What is her attitude toward wartime casualty? Support.
- 11) Note in the 1776 epistle her closing remarks and random thoughts to her husband about the children and the apology for her "incorrect Letter." What is your response to these?
- 12) What hallmarks these letters as epistles from the 18th century? On the other hand, how might her concerns be similar to those concerns we have today?

Homework: Read the next letters in the unit, and complete an Epistolary Analysis.

[6] **Material and resources:**

- 1) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 22 September 1774
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17740922aa>
- 2) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 18-20 June 1775
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17750618aa>
- 3) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 2-10 March 1776
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760302aa>

LESSON PLAN #6: Abigail as Feminist

[1] **Curriculum framework(s):** 8.32 Identify and analyze the point(s) of view in a literary work.
8.33 Analyze patterns of imagery or symbolism and connect them to themes and/or tone and mood.

[2] **Goal of the lesson:** Students will be able to understand Abigail's views on women's rights, and will assess the role women played in history, comparing to current status.

[3] **Expected student outcomes:** Students will be able to respond to the most famous letter of Abigail Adams.

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

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

Vocabulary: pusillanimity (pusillanimity); impunity.

Activities: Have students write a response in their journals to the term: "Sphere of Domesticity." Then introduce them to this quote by Cokie Roberts: "Despite their lack of legal rights, many pre-Revolutionary women still ruled the roost. There was an elaborate view of 'spheres.' The men were in the world, while a woman's place was the house, the 'domestic sphere'" (14). Ask students for an elaboration of how Abigail rules "the roost." What details in her letter indicate this? (Notice details of her caring for the many sick, taking care of the farm, clothing, soap making). Ask students to respond to her many laborious tasks. How does this depict women in the late 18th century?

Next, focus on "Remember the Ladies," Abigail's letter of 31 March 1776. Although Abigail is famous for her demands for women's rights, she was not the only one of her class and era to feel this way. Analyze what she means to say from "I long to hear that you have declared an independence.... Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness." This passage is probably her most immortal piece of prose. Have students complete handout "*I have a large share of Grandmother Eve's curiosity*." As they complete the sheet, individually discuss with students the English law that governed Abigail's life: A woman was dependent upon her father or her husband for all legal transactions. Luckily for Abigail, she had favorable relationships with both. Ask them what the implications of this are for 18th century women and discuss the law's legacy. Ask students to respond with their reactions to the passage...are men "Naturally Tyrannical?" Why might she have written this? How is her plea different from other ideas in the women's movement?

Closure: To conclude in whole group discussion, ask students what a 21st century politician's spouse might write to his or her partner? What political issues do you think are central to our families? (Notice how Abigail controlled/led the family in her era, so consider how family authority appears in our current era).

[6] **Material and resources:**

- 1) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March-5 April 1776
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17760331aa>
- 2) Handout "*I have a large share of Grandmother Eve's curiosity*" (page 34)

LESSON PLAN #7: Abigail and Childbirth

[1] Curriculum framework(s): 8.33 Analyze patterns of imagery or symbolism and connect them to themes and/or tone and mood. 9.6 Relate a literary work to primary source documents of its literary period or historical setting.

[2] Goal of the lesson: To illustrate the difficulties of childbirth through prose and poetry and to compare the emotions exhibited in the two literary forms.

[3] Expected student outcomes: Students will be able to complete a Poetry Analysis handout as well as a chart comparing Abigail Adams and Mrs. Jane Turell.

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

[5] Instructional procedures: 45 minutes

Vocabulary: sublinary (sublunary); travail.

Activities: Share the quote Abigail wrote to John on 10 July 1777 while in labor and experiencing contractions: “I must lay my pen down this moment, to bear what I cannot fly from—and now I have endured it I reassume my pen and will lay by all my own feelings and thank you for your obligeing Letters.”

After discussing the Epistolary Analysis, introduce students to Jane Turell’s poem. Have them complete a Poetry Analysis and then the Childbirth handout. Discuss findings as a whole class.

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

[6] Material and resources:

- 1) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 9 July 1777,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17770709aa>
- 2) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 16 July 1777,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17770716aa>
- 3) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 23 July 1777,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17770723aa>
- 4) Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 28 July 1777,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17770728ja>
- 5) Poem by Mrs. Jane Turell (page 35)
- 6) Poetry Analysis handout (page 36)
- 7) Childbirth in Literature handout (page 37)

LESSON PLAN #8: Abigail in Mourning

[1] Curriculum framework(s): 8.32 Identify and analyze the point(s) of view in a literary work. 8.33 Analyze patterns of imagery or symbolism and connect them to themes and/or tone and mood.

[2] Goal of the lesson: To illustrate the role of illness and death in the 18th century and to notice the author's tone in such emotional states.

[3] Expected student outcomes: Students will be able to complete a theme and tone chart based on Abigail's letters expressing grief.

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

[5] Instructional procedures: 45 minutes

Vocabulary: affliction; perilous; fortitude.

Activities: Note again to the students the ubiquity of illness and death in colonial America due to the lack of early diagnosis and effective treatment of sundry illnesses. Have students look at theme and tone in class, and pay particular attention to Abigail's feelings on death as she writes about her mother's death in 1775 and her father's death in 1783. Even though she saw and experienced death a great deal, she did not write about death with detachment. Have students complete the tone and theme worksheets, but make sure to illustrate the following in a whole group discussion:

- 1) What is the difference between Abigail's reaction to her mother's death and her father's death? Why is it so?
- 2) Note when she writes to John, "My pen is always freer than my tongue. I have wrote many things to you that I suppose I never could have talk'd." (22 October 1775). Why does she write this, and how does it apply to our lives?

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

[6] Material and resources:

- 1) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 25 September 1775,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17750925aa>
- 2) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 1 October 1775,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17751001aa>
- 3) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 9 October 1775,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17751009aa>
- 4) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 22 October 1775,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17751022aa>
- 5) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 25 October 1775,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17751025aa>
- 6) Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 20 September 1783,
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17830920aa>
- 7) Mourning Tone and Theme handouts (Page 39 and Page 40)

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) Transcribed letter in packet, Abigail Smith to Isaac Smith, Jr., 7 February 1762 (pages 50-51).
- 2) Markers/crayons and paper to illustrate aphorism.

LESSON PLAN #10: Abigail and Her Sisters

[1] Curriculum framework(s): 9.6 Relate a literary work to primary source documents of its literary period or historical setting. 11.5 Apply knowledge of the concept that the theme of meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, and provide support from the text for the identified themes. 11.6 Apply knowledge of the concept that a text can contain more than one theme.

[2] Goal of the lesson: To acquaint students with themes important to Abigail in her life.

[3] Expected student outcomes: Students will be able to define vocabulary as well as select themes from non-fiction sources.

[4] Assessment of expected student outcomes: Appropriate completion of in class assignment.

[5] Instructional procedures:

Vocabulary: fulsome; camblet (camlet); viz.; visage; prudence; acquiesce (acquiesce); indellible (indelible); opulence; visisitdues (vicissitudes).

Activities: Students will have read the packet of letters for this lesson the previous night; after a preliminary discussion of theme and its role in non-fiction, introduce students to the Theme handout for this lesson. They should focus on themes particularly relating to lives of women; encourage students to focus on marriage, family life, parenthood, or grandparenthood, since Abigail touches upon all of these issues and offers some clear themes on these topics. For background on the letters to Mary Smith Cranch and Elizabeth Smith Shaw, note the following: Abigail rose at 5am (ironically she says in the first letter that she is lazy compared to Mary rising at 4 am). Also, note the simile in the second letter. From the third letter for this lesson, notice John's P. S. to the letter to Mary. Likewise, in the fourth letter to Elizabeth, explain that Abigail's niece (her brother's child) was staying with Elizabeth because their brother was often incompetent. In terms of the "nephew leaving" in this same letter, mention that this refers to John Quincy Adams as he departs with his father for Europe. Lastly, in the fifth letter, note Abigail's opinions as a grandmother, and on second marriages. She speaks rather candidly in this letter. Use the background information to guide students towards the themes.

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

[6] Material and resources:

- 1) Five transcribed letters in packet (pages 51-58):
 - Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 15 July 1766
 - Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 6 October 1766
 - Abigail and John Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 12 January 1767
 - Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Smith Shaw, March 1778
 - Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 28 April 1787
- 2) Handout on Theme (page 40)

LESSON PLAN #11: Abigail and Mercy

[1] Curriculum framework(s): 8.32 Identify and analyze the point(s) of view in a literary work. 8.33 Analyze patterns of imagery or symbolism and connect them to themes and/or tone and mood.

[2] Goal of the lesson: To illustrate the different tone and point of view Abigail uses in her letters to Mercy Otis Warren, perhaps indicating what scholars note was Abigail's insecurity towards Mercy.

[3] Expected student outcomes: Students will be able to illustrate how an author's tone can change, depending on the audience.

[4] Assessment of expected student outcomes: Completion of the Tone handout and in-class discussion.

[5] Instructional procedures: 45 minutes

Vocabulary: debar; propensity; intimation; illicit; beset; machinations; calumny; dissimulate; complacency.

N.B. "Lovelace" is an allusion to Samuel Richardson's popular novel, *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady*. Lovelace is a reprobate and seduces Clarissa, the young protagonist, and causes her tragic death. Therefore, Abigail uses Lovelace to describe a cad (Hogan interview).

Activities: Students will have read the letters the previous night and completed an Epistolary Analysis for them.

These letters are particularly engaging, since Abigail's writing style becomes much more flowery and much more self-deprecating. Many scholars of Mrs. Adams have remarked upon this tendency in Abigail's letters to Mercy, largely because Mercy, the older woman, was known for her accomplishments as a writer. Nonetheless, Abigail's direct style, traditionally found in her letters, has received laurels for its simple, yet elegant form of prose.

After leading students in a brief discussion about these letters, have them discuss in small groups (or with partners) the specifics of Mercy's writing, and complete the handout on "Tone"; have them share their findings according to class discussion rules.

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

[6] Material and resources:

- 1) Three letters from Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, dated 16 July 1773, 27 April 1776, and 28 February 1780 (pages 58-62).
- 2) Use previous letters (selected at teacher discretion) to illustrate the significant change in Abigail's tone when she writes to Mercy.
- 3) Tone handout (page 41).

LESSON PLAN #12: Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson

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

[2] Goal of the lesson: To illustrate the literary, yet practical, conversation between two extremely historic figures.

[3] Expected student outcomes: Students will be able to express the importance of the epistolary form in their own communication.

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

[5] Instructional procedures: 45 minutes

Vocabulary: expostulated; arrearages.

Activities: Students will have read the letters and completed an Epistolary Analysis of them on the previous night.

Up until this point, we have been reading and using the letters for the application of literary terms. In this lesson, begin with a discussion about what these letters reveal. Ask what role that the letters serve. Have students indicate that from these letters they can infer that Jefferson's daughter Mary spent time with Mrs. Adams and had previously lived with her Aunt Elizabeth Wayles Eppes. In a teacher led discussion, note the strong opinions expressed in these letters, both on the political spectrum as well as Mrs. Adams's opinion on Thomas Jefferson's library. After analyzing the letters, brainstorm about the uses of letters. Why would such important people as Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson have found a need for letter writing? Have the students select two famous individuals and create letters or emails between the two. This can be done in groups or individually. For instance, students may choose Paris Hilton and Scooter Libby; George Bush and Hillary Clinton; Josh Beckett and Chris Rock (whomever: the sky is the limit). Just as Abigail was caring for Jefferson's daughter, have one of the dynamic duo caring for a child, pet, baseball glove, etc. The letters will be collected and assessed. Students may use the language and diction of the appropriate celebrity; however, the length requirement is 250 words per letter/email.

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

[6] Material and resources:

Transcribed letters (pages 62-64):

- 1) Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, 1 July 1787
- 2) Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 6 July 1787

LESSON PLAN #13: Abigail as Mother (Part 1)

[1] Curriculum framework(s): 8.32 Identify and analyze the point(s) of view in a literary work.
 11.5 Apply knowledge of the concept that the theme of meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, and provide support from the text for the identified themes.
 11.6 Apply knowledge of the concept that a text can contain more than one theme.
 13.25 Analyze and explain the structure and elements of nonfiction works.

[2] Goal of the lesson: For students to see that in writing to different children, a parent may change his or her point of view, depending upon the audience. Also, to demonstrate that in a letter, there can be many themes about life, much in the same way a parent wishes to impart many morals to a child.

[3] Expected Student outcomes: Students will be able to compare and contrast audience for tone and to identify themes.

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

[5] Instructional procedures: 45 minutes

Vocabulary: malevolent; insidious.

Background: Please note that Abigail was writing to Nabby (Abigail 2d) when Nabby was visiting Mercy Otis Warren. Secondly, in the letter to Thomas, Abigail was in London and her son was studying at Harvard.

Journal prompt: In family life, are children all treated the same, or are some siblings treated differently than others?

Activities: As in previous lessons, students will have read the two letters and completed an Epistolary Analysis for them. Lead the class by discussing observations of this analysis and the differences between her daughter and her son. Are there differences in the way in which she treats her son versus her daughter? Since students will have already completed a theme analysis and a tone analysis, divide the class into two groups: One group will compare and contrast themes, and one group will compare and contrast tones. Next, the groups will teach each other. Then they will hypothesize about a difference in tone and look for an explanation of what this says about family life. Return to the journal prompt. In contemporary family life, are children all treated the same, or are they treated differently?

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

[6] Material and resources:

1) Transcribed letters (pages 64-66):

Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams 2d, February 1779

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, 15 March 1787

2) Tone and Theme charts for the Nabby /Tommy letters (pages 42-43)

LESSON PLAN #14: Abigail as Mother (Part II)

[1] Curriculum framework(s): 8.32 Identify and analyze the point(s) of view in a literary work.
 11.5 Apply knowledge of the concept that the theme of meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, and provide support from the text for the identified themes.
 11.6 Apply knowledge of the concept that a text can contain more than one theme.
 13.25 Analyze and explain the structure and elements of nonfiction works.

[2] Goal of the lesson: To continue illustrating different tone for different audience, but to also consider what the reply of such a letter might be.

[3] Expected student outcomes: Students will be able to respond to the letters as either John Quincy or Charles, and they will respond in journal form and letter form, thereby illustrating the difference the audience makes. For instance, if your mother reads the letter, the response may be different than if no one reads the letter.

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

[5] Instructional procedures: 45 minutes

Activities: Ask students to respond to the following quote from Abigail in a letter to John Adams on 10 December 1779 (*Adams Family Correspondence* 3:242): “My dear sons, Little do they know how many veins of their Mothers Heart bled when she parted from them. My delicate Charles, how has he endured the fatigues of his voyage? John is a hardy Sailor, seasoned before, I do not feel so much for him.”

After discussing the Epistolary Analysis, have students (either individually or in groups) respond as either John Quincy or Charles to one letter Mrs. Adams wrote. Have them write a letter back to their mother, but then have them write a journal entry on the letter. Have them discuss either the similarities or differences in the responses of the letters, and ask them why. Prod them to discover that our audience can impact what we say and how we say it.

Journal prompt: Using one of the letters Abigail writes to her sons, write a response to Mother Adams. How would you reply to her in a letter? Your other option is to write a journal entry. In a diary or journal, are we sometimes are freer with our emotions? Respond to this question. Discuss your feelings towards her and her instructions and messages. (Either response must be at least 250 words)

[6] Material and resources:

Transcribed letters (pages 66-71):

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 10 June 1778

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 29 September 1778

Abigail Adams to Charles Adams, 19 January 1780

Abigail Adams to Charles Adams and John Quincy Adams, 22 July 1780

Abigail Adams to Charles Adams, 26 May 1781

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 26 May 1781

LESSON PLAN #15: Modern Day Editing

[1] **Curriculum framework(s):** 5.30 Identify, describe, and apply all conventions of Standard English.

[2] **Goal of the lesson:** To have students improve their use of Standard English by analyzing Mrs. Adams's words. To have students note the difference between 18th century mechanical conventions and 21st century conventions.

[3] **Expected Student outcomes:** Students will be able to edit a letter of Abigail Adams.

[4] **Assessment of expected student outcomes:** Using the proofreading marks universal in Standard English.

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

Activities: Have students edit the letters of Abigail Adams using the conventions of Standard English and standard editorial proofreading marks. In many ways this activity will mimic peer-editing activities done in class.

[6] **Material and resources:** Select sundry letters of Abigail Adams and ensure students have red pens available for correcting.

LESSON PLAN #16: Socratic Seminar

[1] **Curriculum framework(s):** 2.6 Analyze differences in responses to focused group discussion in an organized and systematic way.

[2] **Goal of the lesson:** To have students share their thoughts on Abigail Adams

[3] **Expected student outcomes:** Students will be able to discuss the writing of Abigail Adams.

[4] **Assessment of expected student outcomes:** Successful completion of the Socratic seminar.

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

Activities: Have students follow the procedures of a Socratic seminar, with an inner circle and an outer circle, with a leader, and with sundry questions from basic reading comprehension to open-ended and critical thinking questions.

[6] **Material and resources:** Students must bring in their copies of letters, and they must bring in questions to lead the discussion.

Handouts for the Unit

Independent Reading Assessment

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks:

5.30 Identify, describe, and apply all conventions of Standard English.

8.32 Identify and analyze the point(s) of view in a literary work.

8.33 Analyze patterns of imagery or symbolism and connect them to themes and/or tone and mood.

9.6 Relate a literary work to primary source documents of its literary period or historical setting.

11.5 Apply knowledge of the concept that the theme of meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, and provide support from the text for the identified themes.

11.6 Apply knowledge of the concept that a text can contain more than one theme.

13.25 Analyze and explain the structure and elements of nonfiction works.

You must read *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution* by Natalie S. Bober. This young-adult biography thoroughly details Abigail’s life and times. After reading the book, you must answer the following questions. They will be collected for a grade. Please answer each question with a typed paragraph response (5-7 well-written sentences).

- 1) Learning, letter writing, and literacy were always central to Abigail. Use specific examples from the book to illustrate this facet of her character.
- 2) Clearly Abigail and John were central to each other. How does Bober indicate that their relationship was truly a partnership from courtship to death?
- 3) For a large portion of their marriage Abigail and John were apart. How does Abigail’s separation from her husband indicate that she was a strong and capable woman—from financial affairs to child rearing? Be specific, and consider the small pox inoculation.
- 4) Based on the observations and accounts in Bober’s book, explain how Abigail compares and contrasts with other women in her time period.
- 5) Assess the role of Abigail as a mother. What were her challenges? Her accomplishments?
- 6) How did Abigail fit politics into her life? Would you characterize her as a politician? Why or why not?
- 7) What is the literary and historical value to Bober’s book? Does either the literary or historical value play a more significant role?
- 8) A theme is an author’s message or insight into life. Offer a theme for the biography. Explain.

Vocabulary Portfolio:

In addition to completing the above questions, please create a vocabulary portfolio. Select 15 unfamiliar words from the biography. For each word, quote the sentence with a citation. Then define the word and use it in a sentence of your own with context clues.

Portrait from the
Massachusetts Historical
Society



Web Quest: Abigail Adams American Literature

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks: 26.2 Students will identify the aesthetic effects of a media presentation and identify and evaluate the techniques used to create them. 9.7 Students will relate a literary work to the seminal ideas of its time. 27.7 Develop and apply criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the presentation, style and content of films and other forms of electronic communication.

Curriculum Design: Content-based and inquiry design

To gather information on Mrs. Adams we will visit the following web sites:

- <http://www.masshist.org/adams/>
- <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/letter/>
- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/adams/peopleevents/index.html>

Outcome: Students will gain knowledge of Abigail Adams, her life, her family and her era. Students will answer the following questions:

- 1) Where and when was Abigail Smith Adams born? Where and when did she die?
- 2) Describe Abigail's education.
- 3) When and where was John Adams born? When did he and Abigail marry?
- 4) How many letters did Abigail and John write to each other? Why so many? What were some of the topics of the letters? How did they address their letters to each other?

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	

“To My Dearest Friend”

Letter writing was central to the relationship of John and Abigail Adams as well as to their relationships with other family and friends. They lived in a time when a journey to Europe took months, when Braintree to Boston was a sizable distance, and when photographs and videos were inventions of the future. Therefore, letters were one of the few tangible links to far-off loved ones.

Looking at the letters of 7 July 1776 from John to Abigail, and the 23 September 1776 letter from Abigail to John, answer the following questions on epistles and epistolary form.

- 1) How does John distinguish the difference between the sundry styles of prose? What is particularly significant about letters?

- 2) How does this letter from John contrast to earlier love letters? What does his tone seem to indicate in this letter?

- 3) What classical letters did John consult? Why do you think he encouraged Abigail to read them as well?

- 4) What are several ways John believes writing can be improved?

- 5) According to John, what should a child’s literary and written education consist of? What is your reaction to his demands—do you agree or disagree?

- 6) In Abigail’s letter, why do you think she finds such solace in writing letters to her husband?

“I have a large share of Grandmother Eves curiosity”

Abigail Adams to John Thaxter, 15 February 1778

(*Adams Family Correspondence*, 2:392)

In the same letter to John Thaxter, Abigail writes:

Every assistance and advantage which can be procured is afforded to the sons, whilst the daughters are totally neglected in point of Literature . . . Why should the Females who have a part to act upon the great Theater, and a part not less important to Society, (as the care of a family and the first instruction of Children falls to their share, and if as we are told that first impressions are most durable), is it not of great importance that those who are to instill the first principals should be suiteably qualified for the Trust, ... (2:391).

Clearly Abigail possessed strong views on the subject of women. Using the above quote as well as her letters (in particular her 31 March 1776 letter to John Adams), illustrate how she felt about women's issues and what the historical implications are for her time period and ours.

Quote from Mrs. Adams	The Significance of the Issue

Poem by Mrs. Jane Turell

Published by Rev. Ebenezer Turell

In *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Pious and Ingenious Mrs. Jane Turell...*(103-104)

Phæbus has thrice his Yearly Circuit run,
The Winter's over, and the Summer's done;
Since that bright Day on which our Hands were join'd,
And to *Philander* I my All refign'd.

Thrice in my Womb I've found the pleasing Strife,
In the first Struggles of my Infant's Life:
But O how soon by Heaven I'm call'd to mourn,
While from my Womb a lifeless Babe is torn?
Born to the Grave 'ere it had seen the Light,
Or with one Smile had chear'd my longing Sight.

Again in Travail Pains my Nerves are wreck'd,
My Eye balls start, my Heart-strings almost crack'd;
Now I forget my Pains, and now I press
Philander's image to my panting Breast.
Ten Days I hold him in my joyful Arms,
And feast my Eyes upon his Infant Charms,
But then the King of Terrors does advance,
To pierce its Bosom with his iron Lance.
Its Sould releas'd, upward it takes its Flight,
Oh never more below to bless my Sight!
Farewell, Sweet babes, I hope to met above,
And there with you sing the Redeemer's Love.

And now, O gracious Saviour, lend thine Ear,
To this my earnest Cry and humble Prayer,
That when the Hour arrives with painful Throws,
Which shall my Burden to the World disclose;
I may Deliverance have, and joy to see
A living Child, to Dedicate to Thee.

N.B. *Phæbus*: refers to Apollo. *Philander*: means "lover" according to the frequent error of 17th century poets ("Philander").

Jane Colman Turell (1708-1735) was born in Massachusetts and married Rev. Ebenezer Turell in 1726. She gave birth to four children, only one of whom outlived her, but who never saw adulthood. Her poem makes reference to her first pregnancy - a stillbirth - and her second pregnancy, after which her ten-day-old baby died. She wrote this poem when she was pregnant for the third time (Howard Adams 1491-1492).

Poetry Analysis

Title	Author	Structure of Poem
Diction		
Images: 1) 2) 3)		
Sound Devices: 1) 2) 3)		
Sense Devices: 1) 2) 3)		
Mood:	Tone:	
Topic of Theme:		
Theme:		

Childbirth in Literature

In the letters of both Abigail and John Adams, as well as the poem by Jane Turell, we see haunting examples of this experience in literature. During the 18th century, maternal mortality in New England was decreasing, and, in fact, was lower than the maternal death rates in England. However, there still were numerous infant deaths, and many went unrecorded. In fact, some scholars surmise that there was a 10 percent infant mortality rate in this time period (Wertz 19).

Answer the following questions on the poem and letters.

<p>1) What similarities in tone and theme appear in the Adamses' letters and in Turell's poem?</p>
<p>2) What are the differences expressed by the two women? How might their family life have contributed to this?</p>
<p>3) Even though both of these women are writing about hauntingly tragic events, their writing styles still maintain composure and eloquence. Find evidence of strong written expression in the letters and poem. Why might the authors have maintained such literary attention despite their sorrows? What does this reveal about these women?</p>
<p>4) How does John Adams react to the stillbirth of his daughter? What does his letter reveal about him?</p>

5) Women had little remedy for the difficulties of childbirth in the 18th century. How might this experience have shaped the words of Abigail and Jane?

6) What is the effect of the baby's death on Nabby?

7) How might we react in the 21st century to infant mortality? Have some things changed? Or have they stayed the same?

Mourning Tone

Tone is the speaker's or narrator's attitude conveyed in writing. In Abigail's letters to John about the deaths of her father and mother, they convey a particular tone indicating grief. Illustrate how Abigail's tone expresses her grief (and remember that grief can appear in the guise of many different emotions).

Quote	Tone/ Emotion Conveyed	What this Reveals about Abigail

Abigail's Message on Life

Theme is the author's message about life; most often applied to fiction or poetry, we can also apply it to non-fiction. Using Abigail's letters, find evidence of themes in her writings. As always, be sure to support that theme with direct quotes where applicable.

Theme	Quote/Evidence to Support Theme

TONE!

Tone is the speaker's or narrator's attitude conveyed in writing. In her letters to Mercy Otis Warren, Abigail possesses a unique tone. Compare her letters to other correspondents with those to Mrs. Warren. Begin by comparing and contrasting the Epistolary Analysis for your letters.

	In Letters to Mrs. Warren	In Letters to Others
Word Choice		
Allusions and Quotations of Poetry		
Apologies/self-deprecation		
Style and Language		

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Based on the above chart, what can you infer about the differences between Mrs. Adams as a correspondent to Mercy and as a correspondent to her other family/friends.
- 2) Why do you think there is a distinction in tone in her letters?
- 3) When would we have cause in the 21st century to use distinctions in tone? Why? Look at both oral and written communication.
- 4) What can tone illustrate about how we feel towards our audience?
- 5) How does Abigail feel towards her different audiences?
- 6) Do you believe tone can convey a sense of power? Explain.
- 7) How can tone be used to our benefit or to our disadvantage?

Nabby versus Tommy**Round: Tone**

Tone and Evidence of Tone In Abigail's Letter to Nabby	Tone and Evidence of Tone In Abigail's Letter to Tommy

Nabby versus Tommy**Round: Theme**

Themes (and Support) In Abigail's Letter to Nabby	Themes (and Support) In Abigail's Letter to Tommy

One-Page Reflections

A supplement to the lesson plans includes one-page reflections. Each reflection must be typed in MLA format. Students must use one brief quote from the letters to support their point.

Reflection Prompts

- 1) Abigail clearly expresses a mind of her own. Select one instance where she demonstrates that she has a mind of her own, and indicate how she conveys that to the reader. What does this trait illustrate her as a thinker and as a writer?
- 2) Many would argue that Abigail and John's correspondence epitomizes the love letter. Do their letters live up to the expectations of love letters? Or do they defy expectations as love letters?
- 3) What is the significance of the letter as a literary form? How are letters able to communicate emotion in ways that a novel, poem, play or essay cannot?
- 4) What role does politics play in Abigail's time? What does her continual mention of politics indicate about her intellectual life?
- 5) Abigail's letter "Remember the Ladies" is often quoted to champion the feminist cause. In other letters, does Abigail show this same concern for women's rights? Why/why not?
- 6) What would you say is central to Abigail's life? In other words, what does she value most? Explain.
- 7) Based on what you know about Abigail through her letters, respond to this quote from a 10 April 1782 letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams: "Desire and Sorrow were denounced upon our Sex; as a punishment for the transgression of Eve. I have sometimes thought that we are formed to experience more exquisite Sensations than is the Lot of your Sex. More tender and susceptible by Nature of those impression[s] which create happiness or misery, we Suffer and enjoy in a higher degree. I never wonderd at the philosopher who thanked the Gods that he was created a Man rather than a Woman." (*Adams Family Correspondence*, 4:306)
- 8) Based on what you know about Abigail through her letters, respond to this quote from a 9 December 1781 letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams: "Yet I have pride, I know I have a large portion of it." (4:258)
- 9) Why might Abigail have written to her husband, "we imagine that will facilitate peace—and who is not weary of the war" (25 October 1782 5:23) and to John Thaxter, "We are tired of the war, and wish for an honorable peace" (26 October 1782 5:27)?
- 10) Compare and contrast Abigail Adams to the characters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

Field Trip to Adams National Historical Park

<http://www.nps.gov/adam/>

As you explore the grounds where Mr. & Mrs. Adams lived in Quincy, take notes on the following questions.

- 1) When did they live at the two different locations? Why did they move?
- 2) What did the houses/grounds look like during their time period?
- 3) Imagine the significance that fire played in their daily lives, and in the destruction of their daily lives.
- 4) Describe your surroundings at both locations. Can you imagine where the Adamses were during some of their daily activities?
- 5) What was something that the guide said that caught your attention?
- 6) Imagine the distance between Boston and Quincy. Remark upon the historical significance of this.
- 7) Notice and remark upon the size of the rooms and the closeness to the “Coast Road” in the old house.
- 8) Imagine coming to dinner at the Adamses’ house - the large mansion. Notice the china as well as the kitchen utensils. Pick a year, perhaps before the 1800 renovation, and describe dinner at the Adamses’ house.
- 9) React to seeing the bed where Abigail died, the bed Nabby died in, the chair John Adams had a stroke in and the desk where John Quincy had a stroke.
- 10) Comment on the books in the Stone Library.
- 11) Notice the paintings, including the ones where the subjects wear wax make-up. What can you infer from the paintings?

Rubric for Creative Journal

Curriculum frameworks:

5.30 Identify, describe, and apply all conventions of Standard English.

19.24 Write well-organized stories or scripts with an explicit or implicit theme and details that contribute to a definite mood or tone.

You are now living in the late 18th century in Massachusetts during the birth of our nation. Using the information that you gained from our study of Abigail Adams, the colonial era and our field trip to the Adams National Historic Park, please create a journal from that time period. In your journal please describe, in first person, your every day life and the life and times in which you live. Your journal should be dated. You must have at least six entries. In your journal, please insert at least three letters you received from a friend, a neighbor or a business associate, and reflect upon that letter in your journal. The total length of your journal and letters should be between 750-1000 words. Feel free to include drawings (but remember this is prior to digital imaging). You may dip your journal in coffee or burn the edges to make it look old. Have fun and be creative!

If you are stuck, please consider the following questions...

What is your family life like?

What is your age? Your profession (of if you are writing as woman—your husband's)?

What are you wearing? What are you eating?

What do your children do all day? What are your daily chores?

How important is religion to you?

What are your relationships with your spouse, children and neighbors like?

What concerns you about the political situation in this country?

Feel free to expand on any of these. You may be as imaginative as you like in your story line. But, I should feel as if I am reading a real 18th century journal, so try to mimic their language. Also, please be as historically accurate as possible

This will count for a project grade. Be sure to pre-write and revise.

I will be grading you on the following:

Format (legible writing, MLA heading)	/5
Creativity: attention to detail	/30
Historical accuracy	/15
18 th century language and style	/15
Grammatical mechanics	/30

Rubric for Compare and Contrast Composition

Curriculum frameworks:

5.30 Identify, describe, and apply all conventions of Standard English.

9.6 Relate a literary work to primary source documents of its literary period or historical setting.

19.30 Write coherent compositions with a clear focus, objective presentation of alternate views, rich detail, well-developed paragraphs, and logical argumentation.

19.27 Write well-organized research papers that prove a thesis statement using logical organization, effective supporting evidence, and variety in sentence structure.

Throughout our unit on Abigail Adams, we have been analyzing her observations about the lives of 18th century women, and what life was like for a family in that time period. As citizens of the 21st century, you have expertise on the lives of women and families for this century. In a well-written essay between 750-1000 words, using sources presented in class as well as two sources you have discovered on your own, compare and contrast the lives of women and families in the late 1700s with those in the 2000s. You must ask yourselves this question: Since 1800 have the lives of women and families completely altered or have they essentially remained the same?

We will be going through the entire writing process for this essay from planning to publishing, so as you begin brainstorming, consider formulating a thesis revolving around one or more of the following topics:

Household chores	Death
Daily work	Pregnancy and child rearing
Romance/courtship/marriage	Illness
Women's rights	Politics
Writing, reading and correspondence	War
Technology	Slavery

Also, please note that all MLA rules must be followed for citation, pagination and heading. I expect a Works Cited along with your paper. This will receive a separate grade.

I will be grading you on the following:

Format (proper heading, title, typed, double-spaced- Times New Roman 12)	/5
Structure (clear thesis statement; opening and closing paragraph; transitions; topic and conclusion sentences for every paragraph)	/15
Adequate support and explanations with citations	/40
Mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation)	/20
Style (clear writing, strong voice, varied word choice)	/20

Rubric for Film Presentation

Curriculum frameworks:

18.2 Plan and perform readings of selected texts for an audience, using clear diction and voice quality appropriate to the selection, and use teacher-developed assessment criteria to prepare presentations.

19.24 Write well-organized stories or scripts with an explicit or implicit theme and details that contribute to a definite mood or tone.

27.7 Develop and apply criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the presentation, style and content of films, and other forms of electronic communication

We have studied Abigail Adams in sundry ways. We have explored her family, her friendships, her political beliefs, her joys, and her sorrows all through the reflection of her writings. Now it is your turn to turn her letters into life!

First, form groups of three to four people. Select one facet of Abigail's life. It may be something we discussed in class or something you noticed on your own. Use that to focus your script. Then, design and plan a 10-15 minute script that highlights something about Abigail's life. It could be a scene she described in detail in a letter or something that she hinted at in the letter. Your next step is to film this scene. Try and create a "historical setting" and feel free to bring in extras from among your family and friends.

For your final product, you will hand in your video as well as a short paragraph indicating what letter(s) you based this film on. You will then have to view two videos outside of class and respond to them as a film critic.

I will be grading you on the following:

Attention to historical detail	/40
Creativity in writing	/30
Seriousness of acting	/15
Quality of scenery	/15

Have fun and enjoy!

Name _____ **Vocabulary Quiz on Abigail Adams**

Write the definition after the vocabulary word, and on the reverse side, use #s 1-5 in sentences with context clues.

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1) machinations | 21) illicit |
| 2) propagated | 22) dissimulate |
| 3) ardently | 23) arrearages |
| 4) acquiesce | 24) insidious |
| 5) pusillanimity | 25) camlet |
| 6) sublunary | 26) melancholy |
| 7) fortitude | 27) debar |
| 8) temperance | 28) ignominiously |
| 9) metropolis | 29) beset |
| 10) miserly | 30) visage |
| 11) impunity | 31) prudence |
| 12) affliction | 32) indelible |
| 13) regulars | 33) opulence |
| 14) cloister | 34) propensity |
| 15) extirpated | 35) intimation |
| 16) travail | 36) indisposed |
| 17) perilous | 37) calumny |
| 18) fulsome | 38) expostulated |
| 19) viz. | 39) malevolent |
| 20) vicissitudes | 40) complacency |

Transcribed Letters

The letters in this section have been copied from the published *Adams Family Correspondence*, or transcribed from microfilm. In the transcribed letters, I have tried to preserve the authors' original words, spelling and grammar; however, in some cases they were illegible. I have indicated that by attempting to decipher the word and putting brackets around it, or in other cases putting "illegible" in brackets. In keeping with MLA format, I have provided the date, the author and the catalogued title of the letter; refer to the Works Consulted for further information.

For Lesson #9: Abigail at Seventeen

1) Abigail Smith to Isaac Smith, Jr., Her Cousin in Boston

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 genius. —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 ingrediants 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 worthy of being presented to the great Creator of heaven & Earth." --Life at the longest is but short, but a moment when compar'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*

For Lesson #10: Abigail and her Sisters

1) Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch

Braintree july 15.1766

My Dear Sister

Tomorrow being Commencment, suppose this will not fail thro want of a conveyance. I therefore set, to tell you that I was much obliged by your kind Letter. When ever I receive a Letter from you it seems to give new Springs to my nerves, and a brisker circulation to my Blood, tis a kind of pleasing pain that I feel, and I some how, or other catch the infection which you speak of, and I feel so glad that I can scarcely help feeling sorry. These seem to be odd, tho I believe they are very natural Sensations.

You ask me if I will not come and tarry a Week with you. I have been Scheeming of it this forghtright, and this was the week we pitch'd upon but some difficulties arose, then we talked of keeping Thanksgiving with you, but farming and the Courts come so thick upon us, that we cannot bring that to bear, for next week the Superior Court sets, the inferiour is adjourn'd to the week after. So that there is no opportunity till the week after that, and then I hope there will not any more Mountains arise to hinder me. Mole hills I always Expect to find, but them I can easily surmount.

As to Sister Betsy, poor Girl her heart is with you, but when her Body will be, is uncertain, for one while her cough is too bad, then it is too hot weather. O you know how it always was. Dont you remember the time when I wanted to go to Commencment.—These matters you know we always wish'd were otherways. I desire to be very thankful that I can do as I please now!!! I have had upon a visit here, from Saturday till tuesday Mr. Samll. Adams and wife, and indeed Sister they are a charming pair. In them is to be seen the tenderest affection towards each other, without any fulsome fondness, and the greatest Complaisance, delicacy and good breeding that you can immagine, yet seperate from any affectation—in them you might see those Lines of Thomson verified

*“There, friendship full exerts her softest power,
Perfect Esteem, enliven'd by desire,
Ineffable, and Sympathy of Soul
Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
With boundless confidence.”*

Had you been at Germantown, you should have been an Eye Witness of what I have told you. How often do I think, now if She was but there, I would run away and see her.

“How Blessings brighten as they take their flight.”

Dont you begin to think of comeing this way. And my Dear Betsy, I am affraid she will forget me. The weather will be so hot that I cannot think of bringing Nabby with me. Poor Rogue She has

been very poorly these 3 or 4 Days, cutting teeth I believe. Her cough too is bad again. —Well tis time for me to think of drawing to a close, for tis pretty late, but I assure you I shall not follow your practise of rising by 4 oclock. It does not agree with my inclination to Laziness.

Your Stockings will send the first good opportunity, Love to Mr. Cranch. I have a little business for him, haveing broke the Spring of our timepiece. Mr. Adams sends Love to you and yours. So does your Truly affectionate Sister,

Abigail Adams

2) Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch

Braintree Octobr. 6. 1766

Dear Sister

I wrote to you a week ago, and sent my Letter part of the way, but like a bad penny it returnd, to me again. This I write in hopes that it will reach you this week by Sister.

Your Letter I received and it gave me both pleasure and pain, it rejoiced my heart to hear from you, and it pained me to hear how Ill Mr. Cranch had been, and how low he still was. Many are the afflictions of the righteous was a text which immediately occurred to my mind. I was in hopes that in leaving Braintree he would have left all his troubles behind him, but alass change of place has not yet had the desier'd effect.

O my Dear Sister I mourn every day more and more the great distance between us. I think Well now if She was but at Germantown I would run away and see her. I think I could come as often again as I used to. However as it is I please myself with the thoughts of seeing you in November, and hope I shall not be dissappointed, for I long to see you all; my Dear Betsy, what would I give to hear her prattle to her Cousin Nabby, to see them put their little arms round one an others necks, and hug each other, it would really be a very pleasing Sight, to me. —But to leave these little charmers-methinks your S[ale]m acquaintance have a very odd kind of politeness. By what I have heard of them, they have well learnt the lesson of Iago, to Rodorigo, “put money in thy purse.” It is the Character of the whole people I find, get what you can, and keep what you have got. My advice to you is among the Romans, do as the romans do. This is a selfish world you know. Interest governs it, there are but very few, who are moved by any other Spring. They are Generous, Benevolent and Friendly when it is for their interest, when any thing is to be got by it, but touch that tender part, their Interest, and you will immediately find the reverse, the greater half the World are mere Janases.

I want to know how you make out, how business is with you, whether you have a Sufficent Supply? -&c.

As for News I know of none. We do pretty much as We used to of old. Marry and give in Mariage, encrease and multiply all in the old fashioned way. Parson Weld has an other son, Ludovicus by Name. Your friends here are all in good Health. Grandfather is much as he used to be. I saw Mrs.Eunice a Sunday, She told me that She left you well, and that Mr. Cranch (which I could scarcely credit) was leaner than ever. My Good Man is so very fat that I am lean as a rale. He is such an Itinerant, to speak [. . .] that I have but little of his company. He is now at Plymouth, and Next week goes to Taunton.—But tis dinner time, and I must bid you good by, may be I shall find time to add more than that I am your affectionate Sister,

Abigail Adams

3) Abigail and John Adams to Mary Smith Cranch , January 12, 1767

Braintree Jana'ry 1767

Dear Sister

Mr. Etter was so good as to come this morning and inform me that his Sons would go to Salem tomorrow. By them I gladly embrace this Opportunity of inquiring after the welfare of you and your family. It has been a very long time since I heard any thing from you; the roads have been so block'd up with Snow here; that I assure you I have not been to Weymouth since mother came from Salem. They were all well to Day, father dined here, Sister Betsy had an ague in her face which has been very troublesome to her. —I imagine the Winter will seem very long to you, not being able to see your Friends from this way and scarcely to hear from them. They have all round made you a visit and retired to their abiding places waiting, hoping and Expecting that when the Spring returns, you will return their visits. Thus I reckon Febry., March, April, May, and then I hope to see you again in this Cottage of our own, where we have heretofore sat, and had sweet communion to gether. With what a painful pleasure do I recollect those hours of social chat? and how earnestly do I wish for the continuance of them? But alas where are they—fled “in the Dark backward, and abyss of time.”

How does our Dear Brother, how would the Sight of his Grave, Yet chearful countenance Gladen my Heart? And my Little Betsy, how does She. How every word and action of these little creatures, twines round ones heart? All their little pranks which would seem ridiculous to relate, are pleasing to a parent. How vex'd have I felt before now upon hearing parents relate the chitt chat of little Miss, and Master said or did such and such a queer thing—and this I have heard done by persons whose good Sense in other instances has not been doubted. This tho really a weakness I can now more easily forgive, but hope in company I shall not fall into the same error.

As for New's we have not any but what tis like you see in the publick papers, where A B and C are drawn up in Battle array against P&c. As for Domestick News, I mean such as family News, we have none, unless it would be so to tell you that we have 2 horses, 3 cows, 2 Yearlings, 20 Sheep, 1 cock and no hens. Mem'one peice and a material one I had like to have omitted, viz. that the camblet has been done these 3 weeks but how to get it to you now I know not. I shall send it to unkle Smiths as the likelyest way to find a conveyance. Dawson has damaged it something [. . .] for which I am very sorry, but if you want any thing for Strength I believe I may warrant this. Pray be so good as to write by Mr. Etters Sons how you and Brother, Betsy and all do? My good Man would send his Love to you all only he sets by reading news paper politicks, and is so taken up with them (being just come in) that he cannot think of better matters. He would take it as a favour if Mr. Cranch would write to him, for at all times it delights him to hear of your Health and happiness as much as it does Your Truly affectionate Sister,

Abigail Adams

P.S. I will send my Love. What care I for News Paper Politicks?—Since last May, my Heart has been at Ease. At Ease I say, and the Governor and all his Friends and Enemies together cant trouble it. —What would I give to have Brother Cranch's long Visage along Side of my short one, with a Pipe in each, talking about this and that and 'tother?

da da yrs,

J.A.

4) Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Smith Shaw

[Braintree, March 1778]

I was meditating a Letter to my dear Sister when her agreeable favour reachd my Hands. Tho my own felicity is over cast, I can rejoice in that of my Friends and tis with pleasure I hear of your Health and happiness which are very dear to me.

The Scene which I have had to pass through, and in which you so kindly sympathize has put to the full proof all my fortitude and patriotism, and required the aid and assistance of a still nobler motive to bear up and support the pained anxious mind.

*“Religion noble comfort brings
Disarms our Greifs or blunts their Stings.”*

Known only to my own Heart , is the Sacrifice I have made, and the conflict it has cost me. Call'd by the unanimous voice of his Country to an Embassy important to America and attended with much greater difficulties than tis prudence to represent—willing to resign all his domestick felicity and to devote fame, fortune and life to the Service of his Country, he bid defiance to ease, affluence and the allurements of ambition on the one hand and pushd forward against the threats of Calamity on the other. Satisfied as I was that his integrity and abilities were calculated to do essential Service at this critical season, I was determind to resign my own personal felicity and happiness and at all Events to bring my mind to acquiese in the cruel Seperation from the dearest conexion on Earth—a connexion formed early in life, matured by age and strengthend by the virtues of a Heart all my own, a Seperation for an unlimited time, if it should please Heaven to preserve his life—seldom like to hear from him, unable to afford him any assistance in case of sickness, exposed to the Dangers of the Sea, to the open assaults of Enemies, and O Good Heaven, perhaps to the dark assassin and secret Murderer.

In this conflict my Heart has sufferd a distress which words cannot discribe and which nothing could alleviate but a confidence in that Being without whose notice not a sparrow falls to the ground.

The infamous attack upon the life of a Man so respectable as Dr. Franklin is a convincing proof that no regard is paid even to venerable age dignified by virtue, and distinguished by abilities which do honour to humane Nature.

*For Nought avails the virtues of the Heart
Nor tow'ring Genious claims its due reward
From Britains Fury as from Deaths keen dart
No Worth can save us and no fame can guard.*

Tis with a double edg I feel the weapon that pirced the Bosome of a Franklin. Nor can I refrain from imprecating the just vengance of Heaven upon the base and diabloical Counsels of a Nation who have not only deprived individuals of happiness, but by their cruelty, Rage and rapine laid waste oppulent cities, populus Towns, fruitfull villiges and pleasent Feilds, but

reduced to misery and famine the widow, the Fatherless and the orphan. No former achievements of Glory, illustrious deeds nor high renown can wipe out the indelible stains dyed with Rivers of American Blood, and shed by the hands which ought only to have been lifted for her protection.

But I quit the subject and return to my own private affairs. I am endeavouring to put the Farm I am in possession of out of my Hands which will relieve me from a load of care, and be more Beneficial to my Interest I believe than to struggle along as I have done from year to year. If I effect this I hope to be more at leisure to visit my Friends. One of the first visits will be to Haverhill.

Our Worthy parent was well this day and in good Spirits. The Roads have been so bad that I have not been to Weymouth since I saw you. I have but a few inducements to encounter difficulties to visit a place which has but one link left of a chain which once bound me to it.

Remember me in affectionate Terms to Mr. S[ha]w, who I dare say from the sympathick Soul he possesses has participated in my anxiety—and to my Little Neice who I compassionate that she has not a Father whom she can Honour. I thank my Sister for her Remembrance of a Nephew who I hope will never disgrace his parents or bring shame upon his relations. He maintained a manly firmness at parting tho his Sister and Brothers burst into Tears. I need not add that the Mothers Heart is dissolved at the recollection, yet what ever it pleases Heaven to allot me the knowledg of your happiness will always give joy to Your Sister,

AA

5) Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch

London April 28th 1787

My dear sister

I have now to acknowledge your kind favour of April 7th by Captain Folger—I have already written to my Neices and informed them of the addition to my family—you will rejoice with me that an event which as a parent so nearly concernd me, is so happily over, and that the mother and Child are both finely. indeed I never saw a healthier Lad in my life. he has not even had those complaints incident to children, which I partly attribute to the care of the nurse who leaves all to Nature without even tea drink or doses of any kind. she has been a Nurse 21 years & never had a child with a soar mouth. She washes little master with cold water from the day of his Birth, & is exceedingly attentive to Cleanliness. the Nurses here never think of going to Bed during the whole month, they lay themselves down on a settee, or sleep in an easy chair, & I do not see But what they are quite as contented & as Bright as ours, who go to bed & frequently let a poor woman suffer. tis true they do nothing else, but attend to the Lady and Child. the Cook of the family makes all the victuals, & the maid carries it up, and they are well pay'd for their trouble, but still they are the best Nurses I ever saw—how happy would it make me; could my dear sister look in upon us. I have been very unwell all this Spring. a slow intermitting fever, and Billious complaints have greatly afflicted me, I am better than I was a month ago, as the fever has lessend, but still the cause is not wholly removed, and the doctor tells me, it must be a work of time & care; I had similar complaints the spring before I left America, only not to so great a degree. I have not escaped one spring or fall since. the dampness of this climate & the little tendency that there is to perspiration encreases this disorder greatly, I must try a journey soon—

we have accounts by way of New York to the 8th of March, which inform us that General Lincoln had met with more resistance from the insurgents, than we had reason to expect from former accounts, that an engagement had taken place, in which several persons on both sides fell, but we do not learn who, that Shays had got off into Vermont, where it was probable he would meet with protection. I hope these accounts are not well founded. Let not the Patriots of our Country be discouraged or disheartened altho their affairs are much embarrassed. the Country is fruitful in resources, patience perseverance industry and frugality will accomplish great things. our Countrymen create most of the misfortunes they feel, for want of a disinterested Spirit; a confidence in each other, & a union of the whole. it is a great misfortune when one state thwarts the measures of 11 or 12 and thus injures, the credit & reputation of the whole. the situation of our Country greatly damps the pleasure I should feel in anticipating my return to it. you may well suppose that falsehoods in abundance are circulated here, an attempt to publish the Truth; or contradict them, would have no other effect than raising a Nest of wasps & Hornets, & would employ the whole time of one person. an extract of a Letter published from Dr Rush to Dr Price, giving an account of the establishment of 2 or 3 new societies, drew upon the latter so much abuse & Scurrility as would disgrace any people. the writer like an envenomed toad spit forth his poison. there are a set of Refugees residing here, the enormity of whose offenses forbids their ever returning again to America, like Satan they look to the Heights from which they have fallen, with a malice and envy similar to that which the arch Fiend felt when he beheld the Glory of the new world, and like him they wish to destroy the happiness of its inhabitants. such is Galloway, & Smith who is gone prime minister to Lord Dorchester, a few days before he left the Country, he gave it his solid opinion that, he did not doubt he should live to see America sue to Britain for protection & to be received again by it, he might have added; it should not be his fault if they did not. I hope a watchful Eye will be kept over Lord Dorchester & all his movements—This Government are as much disposed to sow seeds of dissention amongst us as ever, & build wholly upon our splitting to pieces. But I will quit this subject for our own Domestick concerns. you ask my opinion respecting the wives talkd of for our uncles. Second marriages at their age can be considered only as affairs of convenience the heyday of the Blood is tame, and waits upon the judgment, as Hamlet expresses it. the same ardor & passion so suitable in Youth would be ridiculous in age, nor is it improper to consult even Interest as well as convenience. Good dispositions fair Characters and a regard to the station which was formerly held by the parties, ought to be more maturely considered than at an earlier period of Life. young people more easily accommodate themselves to each other, too great a disparity in years often makes second marriages not only Ridiculous but unhappy—I know not the person whom I should like so well or one who would do more credit to the Relation, or discharge the duties of her station with greater honour to herself than the Lady you have mentioned for our good uncle S— She is the only one, which has occurred to my mind, since the decease of our dear Aunt—as to the other Lady of the same Name, I can only say if I was in her situation I would not exchange it for a residence at Weymouth tho I have not a personal knowledge of Mrs W. from the Character which she sustained in this Country, the vicissitudes of fortune which she experienced with great equanimity, the many handsome things I have heard Dr Jeffries say of her, who attended her through a most distressing sickness the perfect Harmony in which she is said to have lived with her former partner, all serves to hold her up to my view as a Lady highly deserving & well calculated for any situation in Life affliction is the best school for wisdom, and knowledge, but wherever my worthy Friends may fix; I most sincerely wish them happy and I am sure they will not give me a Relation whom I cannot respect.—I am very glad that Miss Mayhew has so pretty an addition to her fortune, she did not however stand in need of that recommendation in my Eye to qualify her for a good wife. I

have no doubt she would have shone in that character, and I cannot help thinking that it argues cowardice in the gentlemen that she still remains single. she has a strength of mind, and an understanding, which will always ensure her respect, provided the hereditary talant which she has at Satire; is properly regulated. This I conceive has been the weapon that has terrified all the gentlemen, conscious perhaps how justly it may be levelld against them, but no woman of sense will ever make her Husband an object of Ridicule; for in proportion as she lowers him she lessens herself. neither the Character of Lady G. or miss How, are to be imitated by the Woman of true delicacy of sentiment, but miss Mayhews talant has always been display'd with so much good humour when ever I have been witness to it that I think I could not have been angry, if I had been the subject of it, yet my dear sister I have ever observed that it is a most Dangerous thing for a Female to be distinguishd for any quallification beyond the rest of her sex. Whatever may be her Department, she is sure to draw upon herself the jealousy of the men and the envy of the women, nor do I see any way to remedy this evil but by increasing the number of accomplished women, a monopoly of any kind is always envidious

I have never received a Line from mr Hay since she left England, which I have wonderd at considering the intimacy which subsisted between us when here. I thought her reasons good for chusing to go to America. it was natural for her to wish to be with her relations during the long voyages of captain Hay, rather than to reside at Board abroad. I know she endeavourd to influence him to go with her, but he was in good business here, & saild with more safety in a British Ship, than he could in an American vessel subject to the capture of Algerines as he thought at that time. he was about taking a voyage when she left him, in which he expected to be absent 15 months I think I should have done as she did, if I had been in her place I know Captain Hay met with a dissapointment, by his owners loosing his Reason, by which means captain Hay was detaind here a long time—nor do I know how long he has saild when circumstances are known, it greatly alters appearences

Mrs Elworthy I saw at her House not long ago. She was well then. they live in the city & have but very small appartments not calculated to see company. they are people of Buisness honest industerous & obliging but their whole House is very little larger than your office. mr John Cranch and I have the honour to correspond sometimes, he frequently sends us game from the Country, I inclose a letter from him which I received a few days ago to cousin Betsy. I fear I must acknowledg myself a delinquent with respect to my dear Brother Cranch I received his excellent Letters, and one of them was answerd, but it was at a time when no vessel was going for a long time and I did not think it worth a postage from Newyork so it grew old & out of date—mr Adams is frequently chargeable with omissions to his correspondents, but he has more to plead in his excuse than I have, as his time is occupied in investigating more important Subjects—but when a vessel is near sailing you can hardly form an Idea what a call there is upon my pen and yet I leave some of my much esteemed Friends without a Line. I hope the vessels by which I have written are all safely arrived, and the articles I sent by them. Captain Callihan is so kind as to take a peice of Linnen for Tommys use it is not fine but a good fabrick. Remember me to all our Friends I shall write to several of them if I am able, if not they must attribute it to indisposition, as I am seldom able to set up a whole day at a time; I ride out when the weather permits

Col Smith set of with week to portugal. it is the first seperation even of a day since he was married. Mrs Smith thought it a Sad affliction. She has not been innured like her mamma, and I hope she never may to such long dangerous & painfull seperations. she however behaved well when it came really to the trial, and the little Boy is a great amusement to her. I send the Caps for my worthy parent to whom present my duty & that of her great grandson.

*I fear a little that my Eldest son will be so much of a Book worm & Scholar that he will grow too negligent of those attentions which are due to the World, & which tho they may appear little, & trifling, much of our happiness is found by experience to depend upon them. his cousins must gaurd him against this error—it was a maxim of Epictetus's that it was incumbent on every one to offer libations and sacrifices conformable to the customs of his Country, with purity, and not in a slovenly manner, nor negligently, that is, the muses & graces should join Hands-
adieu my dear sister and believe me with the tenderest sentiments of affection/your
A Adams*

*Remember me affectionately to all my Friends & Neighbours
Esther is well & so is Brisler who is one of the best of Servants; Indeed I know not how I should keep house in this Country without him, on both my Americans I can depend. I never knew them deceive me, but the very best English servants which I have had, & I have been very fortunate, think deception & fibing no harm.*

For Lesson #11: Abigail and Mercy

1) Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren

Boston July 16 1773

Madam

The kind reception I met with at your House, and the Hospitality with which you entertained me, demands my gratefull acknowledgment. By requesting a correspondence you have kindly given me an opportunity to thank you for the happy Hours I enjoyed whilst at your House. Thus imbolden'd I venture to stretch my pinions, and tho like the timorous Bird I fail in the attempt and tumble to the ground yet sure the Effort is laudable, nor will I suffer my pride, (which is greatly increased since my more intimate acquaintance with you) to debar me the pleasure, and improvement I promise myself from this correspondence tho I suffer by the comparison.

I Had a very Hot and unplesent ride the afternoon I left your House. I arrived at my own habitation on Monday, and found my family well. Since my return we have had several fine showers which have, I hope extended, as far as Eel river, and watered with their blessings every sod and plant belonging to my much valued Friends. Air, Sun, and Water, the common blessings of Heaven; we receive as our just due, and too seldom acknowledg our obligations to the Father of the rain; and the Gracious dispencer of every good and perfect gift, yet if but for a very little while these blessings are withheld, or spairingly dealt out to us, we then soon discover how weak, how little and how blind, we are.

When I was at Plymouth Madam you may remember I mentiond Mrs. Seymore upon Education, and upon your expressing a desire to see it, I promised to send it you. I now take the earliest opportunity to comply with your request. Not from an opinion that you stand in need of such an assistant, but that you may give me your Sentiments upon this Book, and tell me whether it corresponds with the plan you have prescribed to yourself and in which you have so happily succeeded. I am sensible I have an important trust committed to me; and tho I feel my-self very uneaquel to it, tis still incumbent upon me to discharge it in the best manner I am capable of. I

was really so well pleased with your little offspring, that I must beg the favour of you to communicate to me the happy Art of “rearing the tender thought, teaching the young Idea how to shoot, and pouring fresh instruction o’er the Mind.” May the Natural Benevolence of your Heart, prompt you to assist a young and almost inexperienced Mother in this Arduous Business, that the tender twigs allotted to my care, may be so cultivated as to do honour to their parents and prove blessing[s] to the rising generation. When I saw the happy fruits of your attention in your well ordered family, I felt a Sort of Emulation glowing in my Bosom, to imitate the

*“Parent who vast pleasure find’s
In forming of her childrens minds
In midst of whom with vast delight
She passes many a winters Night
Mingles in every play to find
What Bias Nature gave the mind
Resolving thence to take her aim
To guide them to the realms of fame
And wisely make those realms the way
To those of everlasting day.*

*Each Boisterous passion to controul
And early Humanize the Soul
In simple tales beside the fire
The noblest Notions to inspire.
Her offspring conscious of her care
Transported hang around her chair.”*

*I must beg your pardon for thus detaining you. I have so long neglected my pen that I am conscious I shall make but a poor figure. To your Friendship and candour I commit this, and would only add my regards to Coll. Warren from his and your obliged Friend & Humble Servant,
Abigail Adams*

2) Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren

Braintree April 27 1776

I set myself down to comply with my Friends request, who I think seem’s rather low spirited.

I did write last week, but not meeting with an early conveyance I thought the Letter of But little importance and tos’d it away. I acknowledg my Thanks due to my Friend for the entertainment she so kindly afforded me in the Characters drawn in her Last Letter, and if coveting my Neighbours Goods was not prohibited by the Sacred Law, I should be most certainly tempted to envy her the happy talant she possesses above the rest of her Sex, by adorning with her pen even trivial occurances, as well as dignifying the most important. Cannot you communicate some of those Graces to your Friend and suffer her to pass them upon the World for her own that she may feel a little more upon an Eaquality with you? —Tis true I often receive

large packages from P[hiladelphi]a. They contain as I said before more News papers than Letters, tho they are not forgotton. It would be hard indeed if absence had not some alleviations.

I dare say he writes to no one unless to Portia oftner than to your Friend, because I know there is no one besides in whom he has an eaque confidence. His Letters to me have been generally short, but he pleads in Excuse the critical state of affairs and the Multiplicity of avocations and says further that he has been very Busy, and writ near ten Sheets of paper, about some affairs which he does not chuse to Mention for fear of accident.

He is very sausy to me in return for a List of Female Grievances which I transmitted to him. I think I will get you to join me in a petition to Congress. I thought it was very probably our wise Statesmen would erect a New Government and form a new code of Laws. I ventured to speak a word in behalf of our Sex, who are rather hardly dealt with by the Laws of England which gives such unlimited power to the Husband to use his wife Ill.

I requested that our Legislators would consider our case and as all Men of Delicacy and Sentiment are averse to Excercising the power they possess, yet as there is a natural propensity in the Humane Nature to domination, I thought the most generous plan was to put it out of the power of the Arbitrary and tyranick to injure us with impunity by Establishing some Laws in our favour upon just and Liberal principals.

I believe I even threatned fomenting a Rebellion in case we were not considerd, and assured him we would not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we had neither a voice, nor representation.

In return he tells me he cannot but Laugh at my Extrodonary Code of Laws. That he had heard their Struggle had loosned the bands of Government, that children and apprentices were dissabedient, that Schools and Colledges were grown turbulant, that Indians slighted their Guardians, and Negroes grew insolent to their Masters. But my Letter was the first intimation that another Tribe more numerous and powerfull than all the rest were grown discontented. This is rather too coarse a complement, he adds, but that I am so sausy he wont blot it out.

So I have help'd the Sex abundantly, but I will tell him I have only been making trial of the Disintresstedness of his Virtue, and when weigh'd in the balance have found it wanting.

It would be bad policy to grant us greater power say they since under all the disadvantages we Labour we have the assendancy over their Hearts

And charm by accepting, by submitting sway.

I wonder Apollo and the Muses could not have indulged me with poetical Genious. I have always been a votary to her charms but never could assend Parnassus myself.

I am very sorry to hear of the indisposition of your Friend. I am affraid it will hasten his return, and I do not think he can be spaired.

“Though certain pains attend the cares of State
A Good Man owes his Country to be great
Should act abroad the high distinguishd part
or shew at least the purpose of his heart.”

Good Night my Friend. You will be so good as to remember me to our worthy Friend Mrs. W—e when you see her and write soon to your

Portia

3) Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren

Febry. 28 1780

How does my Dear Mrs. Warren through a long and tedious Winter? in which I have never been honourd with a single line from her hand. Possibly she may think me underserving of her favours; I will not presume to lay claim to them upon the score of merrit, but surely she should have charitably considered my lonely State, and Brightned the Gloomy hour with the Benign Rays of her Friendship dispenced through her elegant pen.

A Succession of tormenting whitlows has prevented me from inquiring after the Health of my much valued Friend. Those difficulties being now removed I have the pleasure of making that inquiry? and of communicating to her the agreable intelligence I received last week, by a vessel arrived at Newburyport from Corruna in Spain, of the safe arrival of Mr. Adams at that Port, in Eighteen days after he left Boston. I have not as yet, received any Letters, nor any certain account why they made that port, it is rumourd that the vessel sprung a leak.

I suppose he will proceed by land to France tho a journey of 700 miles, from whence I hope soon to be favourd with the certainty of his arrival.

By Capt. Sampson there came two Letters, one from Mr. Lee [and] one from a Mr. Gellee, to Mr. Adams. By Mr. Lee's I find that affairs go on in the old course at Passy. "The Counsel there is composed of the same Honorable Members, says Mr. Lee, as when you left it, with the reinforcement of Samll. Wharton, Samll. Petrie and the Alexanders, a match is concluded between one of the daughters and Jonathan Williams this August and natural family compact will I hope promote the publick as well as private Interests."

There is a party in France of worthless ambitious intriguing Americans, who are diposed to ruin the reputation of every Man whose Views do not coinside with their selfish Schemes. Of this you will be satisfied when I tell you that Mr. Gellee writes thus,

"After your departure reports were circulated here that you were gone to England and that during your Station here, you had entertaind an Illicit correspondence with the British Ministry. It was even published here that Mr. Samll. Adams had headed a conspiracy and contrived to surrender Boston to the English. In vain did I endeavour to shew them the absurdity of the former opinion, by your embarking in the same ship with the Chevalier, but you know the people in this country are in general very Ignorant of American affairs which give designing Men an opportunity to shew their Malignity."

How happy my dear Madam would America have been, had it been her Lot, to have contended only with foreign Enemies, but the rancour of her internal foes have renderd the task of the patriot peculiarly difficult and Dangerous.

I sometimes contemplate the situation of my absent Friend, honourd as he is at present with the confidence of his Country, as the most critical and hazardous Embassy to his reputation, his honour, and I know not but I may add life, that could possibly have been entrusted to him. I view him beset with the machinations of envy, the Snares of Treachery, the malice of Dissimulation and the Clandestine Stabs of Calumny.

Can the Innocence of the dove or the wisdom of a more subtle animal screne him from all these foes? Can the strictest integrity and the most unwearied exertions for the benefit and happiness of Mankind secure to him more, than the approbation of his own Heart.

All other applause without that would be of small Estimation, yet one would wish not to be considered as a selfish, designing, Banefull foe, when they have worn out their lives in the service of their country.

Those who Envy him, his situation see not with my Eyes, nor feel with my Heart. Perhaps I feel and fear too much.

I have heard this winter of a Letter from a Lady to her son containing Strictures upon Lord Chesterfields Letters. I have not been favoured with a sight of it, tho I have wished for it. A collection of his Lordships Letters came into my Hands this winter which I read, and tho they contain only a part of what he has written, I found enough to satisfy me, that his Lordship with all his Elegance and graces, was a Hypocritical, polished Libertine, a mere Lovelace, but with this difference, that Lovelace was the most generous Man of the two, since he had justice sufficient to acknowledge the merrit he was distroying, and died penitently warning others, whilst his Lordship not content himself with practising, but is in an advanced age, inculcateing the most immoral, pernicious and Libertine principals into the mind of a youth whose natural Guardian he was, and at the same time calling upon him to wear the outward Garb of virtue knowing that if that was cast aside, he would not be so well able to succeed in his persuits.

I could prove to his Lordship were he living that there was one woman in the world who could act consequentially more than 24 hours, since I shall dispise to the end of my days that part of his character. Yet I am not so blinded by his abuse upon our sex, as not to allow his Lordship the merrit of an Elegant pen, a knowledge of Mankind and a compiler of many Excellent maxims and rules for the conduct of youth, but they are so poisoned with a mixture of Libertinism that I believe they will do much more injury than benifit to Mankind. I wish my dear Madam you would favor me with a copy of the Letter said to be in your power.

How does that patient sufferer Mrs. Lothrope? She is one of those who is to be made perfect through sufferings, nor will the prediction be unaccomplished in her, my affectionate regard to her, and a tender commiseration for her sufferings.

I spent a most agreable Evening with you not long since in imagination. I hope to realize it in the approaching Spring.

My respectfull regards to Generall Warren, complements to my young Friends from their and your affectionate Friend,

Portia

My Daughter presents her duty and reflects with pleasure upon the winter she so agreably spent with you. She remembers Master George with affection, the other young Gentlemen with complacency.

For Lesson #12 Abigail and Thomas Jefferson

1) Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams

Paris July 1. 1787

A thousand thanks to you, my dear Madam, for your kind attention to my little daughter. her distresses I am sure must have been troublesome to you: but I know your goodness will forgive her, & forgive me too for having brought them on you. Petit now comes for her. by this time she will have learned again to love the hand that feeds & comforts her, and have formed an

attachment to you. she will think I am made only to tear her from all her affections. I wish I could have come myself. the pleasure of a visit to yourself & mr Adams would have been a great additional inducement. but, just returned from my journey, I have the arrearages of 3. or 4. months all crowded on me at once. I do not presume to write you news from America, because you have it so much fresher & frequenter than I have. I hope all the disturbances of your country are quieted & with little bloodshed. what think you of present appearances in Europe? the Emperor & his subjects? the Dutch & their half king, who would be a whole one? in fine the French & the English? these new friends & allies have hardly had time to sign that treaty which was to cement their love & union like man & wife, before they are shewing their teeth at each other. we are told a fleet of 6. or 12 ships is arming on your side the channel; here they talk of 12 or 20, and a camp of 15,000 men. but I do not think either party in earnest. both are more laudably intent on arranging their affairs. —should you have incurred any little expences on account of my daughter or her maid, Petit will be in a condition to repay them. if considerable, he will probably be obliged to refer you to me, and I shall make it my duty to send you a bill immediately for the money.—Count Sarsfeild sets out for London four days hence. at dinner the other day at M. de Malesherbe's he was sadly abusing an English dish called Gooseberry tart. I asked him if he had ever tasted the cranberry. he said, no. so I invited him to go & eat cranberries with you. he said that on his arrival in London he would send to you & demander á diner. I hope mrs Smith and the little grandson are well. be so good as to present me respectfully to her. I have desired Colo. Smith to take a bed here on his return. I will take good care of him for her, & keep him out of all harm. I have the honour to be with sentiments of sincere esteem & respect Dear Madam/ Your most obedient & /most humble servt

Th: Jefferson

2) Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson

London july 6 1787

my dear sir

If I had thought you would so soon have Sent for your dear little Girl, I should have been tempted to have kept her arrival here, from you a secret. I am really loth to part with her, and she last evening upon petit's arrival, was thrown into all her former distresses, and bursting into Tears, told me it would be as hard to leave me, as it was her Aunt Epps. She has been so often deceived that she will not quit me a moment least She should be carried away, nor can I scarcely prevail upon her to see petit. Tho she says she does not remember you, yet she has been taught to consider you with affection and fondness, and depended upon your coming for her. she told me this morning, that as she had left all her Friends in virgina to come over the ocean to see you, she did think you would have taken the pains to have come here for her, & not have sent a man whom she cannot understand. I express her own words. I expostulated with her upon the long journey you had been; & the difficulty you had to come and upon the care kindness & attention of petit, whom I so well knew, but she cannot yet hear me. she is a child of the quickest Sensibility, and the maturest understanding, that I have ever met with for her Years. she had been 5 weeks at sea, and with men only, so that on the first day of her arrival, She was as rough as a little Sailor, and then she been decoyed from the Ship, which made her very angry, and no

one having any Authority over her; I was apprehensive I should meet with some trouble, but where there are such materials to work upon as I have found in her, there is no danger. she listened to my admonitions, and attended to me advice, and in two days, was restored to the amiable lovely Child which her Aunt had formed her. in short she is the favorite of every Creature in the House, and I cannot but feel Sir, how many pleasures you must lose; by committing her to a convent, yet situated as you are, you cannot keep her with you. The Girl she has with her, wants more care than the child, and is wholly incapable of looking properly after her, without Some Superiour to direct her.

As both miss Jefferson & the maid had cloaths only proper for the Sea, I have purchased & m up for them; Such things as I should have done had they been my own; to the amount of about Eleven or 12 Guineys. the particulars I will send by petit.

Captain Ramsey has Said that he would accompany your daughter to paris provided she would not go without him, but this would be putting you to an expence that may perhaps be avoided by petits staying a few days longer. the greatest difficulty in familiarizing her to him, is on account of the language. I have not the Heart to force her into a Carriage against her Will and send her from me, almost in a Frenzy; as I know will be the case, unless I can reconcile her to the thoughts of going and I have given her my word that petit shall stay untill I can hear again from you. Books are her delight, and I have furnishd her out a little library, and She reads to me by the hour with great distinctness, & comments on what she reads with much propriety.

mrs Smith desires to be rememberd to you, and the little Boy his Grandmamma thinks is as fine a Boy as any in the Kingdom—I am my dear sir with Sentiments of Esteem Your Friend and Humble/ Servant

A Adams

For Lesson #13: Abigail as Mother (Part I)

1) Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams 2d

Braintree, [ca. 11] February, 1779

My Dear Daughter

It is with inexpressible pleasure that I enclose to you a letter from your brother, and that I can tell you, that I last night received four letters of various dates from your papa, and one so late as of the 6th of November. I would send forward the letters, but know not how to part with them. Your papa writes that he has enjoyed uncommon health for him, since his arrival in France; that your brother is well, and, what is still more grateful to a parent's ears, that he conducts with a becoming prudence and discretion; that he assiduously applies himself to his books. And your papa is pleased to say, "that the lessons of his mamma are a constant law to him, and that they are so to his sister and brothers, is a never failing consolation to him, at times when he feels more tenderness for them than words can express." Let this pathetic expression of your papa's, my dear, have a due influence upon your mind.

Upon politics, your papa writes thus: "Whatever syren songs of peace may be sung in your ears, you may depend upon it, from me, (who unhappily have been seldom mistaken in my guesses of the intention of the British government for fourteen years,) that every malevolent

passion, and every insidious art, will predominate in the British cabinet against us. Their threats of Prussians and of great reinforcements, are false and impracticable, and they know them to be so; but their threats of doing mischief with the forces they have, will be verified as far as their power."

This we see, in their descent upon Georgia, verified this very hour.

Almost all Europe, the Dutch especially, are at this day talking of Great Britain in the style of American sons of liberty. He hopes the unfortunate event at Rhode Island will not produce any heart-burnings between Americans and the Count D'Estaing, who is allowed by all Europe to be a great and worthy officer, and by all that know him to be a zealous friend of America.

After speaking of some embarrassments in his public business, from half anglicized Americans, he adds, "But from this court, this city and nation, I have experienced nothing but uninterrupted politeness."

I have a letter from a French lady, Madam la Grand, in French—a polite letter, and wrote in consequence of your papa's saying that, in some cases, it was the duty of a good citizen to sacrifice his all for the good of his country. She tells him that the sentiment is worthy of a Roman and a member of Congress, but cannot believe he would sacrifice his wife and children. In reply, he tells her that I possessed the same sentiment. She questions the truth of his assertion; and says nature would operate more powerfully than the love of one's country, and whatever other sacrifices he might make, it would be impossible for him to resign those very dear connections, especially as he had so often given her the warmest assurances of his attachment to them; and she will not be satisfied till she has related the conversation, and appealed to me for my sentiments upon the subject. She is an elderly lady, and wife to the banker, expresses great regard for your brother, of whom she is very fond, says he inherits the spirit of his father, and bids fair to be a Roman like him.

When I have fully translated the letter I will send it forward. I would have written to Mrs. Warren, but have much writing to do, and you may communicate this letter to her, if she can read it; but 'tis badly written, and I have not time to copy.

Let me hear from you soon, who am, at all times, your affectionate mamma,

A.A.

2) Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams

London March 15th 1787

Dear Tommy

I would not omit writing you, because you seem to think you have been agrieved. I do not recollect what I wrote you, but I have Some Idea, that it was an enumeration of the various accidents you had met with, and advising you to more care and attention in future. I had no occasion to chide you for want of application to your studies, because your uncles your Aunts & your Brothers had been witnesses for you, and all of them had Spoken well of you. it has indeed been a great and an abundant pleasure both to your Father & to me to hear the repeated & constant testimony of all our Friends with regard to the conduct of all our Sons, and I flatter myself that what ever else may be our lot & portion in Life, that of undutifull and vicious

children will not be added to it. —Not only youth but maturer age is too often influenced by bad examples, and it requires much reason much experience firmness & resolution to stem to torrent of fashion & to preserve the integrity which will bear the Scrutiny of our own Hearts, virtue like the stone of Sisyphus has a continual tendency to roll down Hill & requires to be forced up again by the never ceasing Efforts of succeeding moralists. if humane nature is thus infirm & liable to err as daily experience proves let every effort be made to acquire strength. nature has implanted in the humane mind nice sensibilities of moral rectitude and a natural love of excellence & given to it powers capable of infinite improvement and the state of things is so constituted that Labour well bestowed & properly directed always produces valuable Effects. the resolution you have taken of persueing such a conduct as shall redound to your own honour & that of your family is truly commendable. it is an old & just observation, that by aiming at perfection we may approach it much more nearly than if we sat down inactive through despair-

you will do well to join the military company as soon as you are qualified. every citizen should learn the use of arms & by being thus qualified he will be less likely to be called to the use of them. War cannot be ranked amongst the liberal arts, and must ever be considered as a scourge & a calamity, & should Humiliate the pride of man that he is thus capable of destroying his fellow creatures—I am glad to find you mending in your hand writing, during the vacancies you & your Brother Charles would do well to attend to that. it is of more importance than perhaps you are aware of, more for a Man than a Woman, but I have always to lament my own inattention in this matter. inclosed you will find a little matter which you will make a good use of. your sister sends her Love and will write you soon. I am my dear Son/most affectionately/Yours

AA

For Lesson #14: Abigail as Mother (Part II)

1) Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams

June [10?] 1778

My Dear Son

Tis almost four Months since you left your Native land and Embarked upon the Mighty waters in quest of a Foreign Country. Altho I have not perticularly wrote to you since yet you may be assured you have constantly been upon my Heart and mind.

It is a very difficult task my dear son for a tender parent to bring their mind to part with a child of your years into a distant Land, nor could I have acquiesced in such a seperation under any other care than that of the most Excellent parent and Guardian who accompanied you. You have arrived at years capable of improving under the advantages you will be like to have if you do but properly attend to them. They are talents put into your Hands of which an account will be required of you hereafter, and being possessd of one, two, or four, see to it that you double your numbers.

The most amiable and most usefull disposition in a young mind is diffidence of itself, and this should lead you to seek advise and instruction from him who is your natural Guardian, and will always counsel and direct you in the best manner both for your present and future happiness. You are in possession of a natural good understanding and of spirits unbroken by

adversity, and untamed with care. Improve your understanding for acquiring usefull knowledge and virtue, such as will render you an ornament to society, an Honour to your Country, and a Blessing to your parents. Great Learning and superior abilities, should you ever possess them, will be of little value and small Estimation, unless Virtue, Honour, Truth and integrity are added to them. Adhere to those religious Sentiments and principals which were early instilled into your mind and remember that you are accountable to your Maker for all your words and actions. Let me injoin it upon you to attend constantly and steadfastly to the precepts and instructions of your Father as you value the happiness of your Mother and your own welfare. His care and attention to you render many things unnecessary for me to write which I might otherways do, but the inadvertency and Heedlessness of youth, requires line upon line and precept upon precept, and when inforced by the joint efforts of both parents will I hope have a due influence upon your Conduct, for dear as you are to me, I had much rather you should have found your Grave in the ocean you have crossd, or any untimely death crop you in your Infant years, rather than see you an immoral profligate or a Graceless child.

You have enterd early in life upon the great Theater of the world which is full of temptations and vice of every kind. You are not wholly unacquainted with History, in which you have read of crimes which your unexperienced mind could scarcely believe credible. You have been taught to think of them with Horrour and to view vice as

a Monster of so frightfull Mein

That to be hated, needs but to be seen.

Yet you must keep a strict guard upon yourself, or the odious monster will soon loose its terror, by becomeing familiar to you. The Modern History of our own times furnishes as Black a list of crimes as can be paralleld in ancient time, even if we go back to Nero, Caligula or Ceasar Borgia. Young as you are, the cruel war into which we have been compelld by the Haughty Tyrant of Britain and the Bloody Emissarys of his vengeance may stamp upon your mind this certain Truth, that the welfare and prosperity of all countries, communities and I may add individuals depend upon their Morals. That Nation to which we were once united as it has departed from justice, eluded and subverted the wise Laws which formerly governd it, sufferd the worst crimes to go unpunished, has lost its valour, wisdom and Humanity, and from being the dread and terror of Europe, has sunk into derision and infamy.

But to quit political subjects, I have been greatly anxious for your safety having never hear of the Frigate since she saild, till about a week ago, a New York paper inform'd that she was taken and carried into Plimouth. I did not fully credit this report, tho it gave me much uneasiness. I yesterday heard that a French vessel was arrived at Portsmouth which brought News of the safe arrival of the Boston, but this wants confirmation. I hope it will not be long before I shall be assertaind of your safety. You must write me an account of your voyage, of your situation and of every thing entertaining you can recollect. Your Sister and Brothers are well. The last desire I would write for them, but I have not time by this opportunity. Your Sister I chide for her negligence in this way. I have wrote several times to your papa, hope the Letters will not Miscarry. Let Stevens know his Mother and Friends are well.

Be assurd I am most affectionately yours.

Mr. Hardwick desired if such a thing as stocking weavers needles are to be had that Stevens or you would procure 2 thousand No. 6 and convey with any thing your pappas may have to send to me.

2) Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams

Sep[tem]ber 29 1778

My Dear Son

Writing is not a la mode de pans, I fancy or sure I should have heard from my son; or have you wrote and have I been so unfortunate as to lose all the Letters, which have been written to me for this five months.

I have sufferd great anxiety on not hearing from your pappa or you. I hope you have not been so unlucky in those Letters Sent to you.

I want to know your Situation, what proficiency you make in the Language, I expect you will write me a Letter en Francois a vous dire le vray, in so long silence commencoit deja a me donner de l'[inquietude].

We have here a large portion of the French Navy, I never wanted to speak the language half so much before, it is difficult holding any intercourse with them. many of the officers appear to be gentlemen of Education—

I wrote you one very long letter hope you received it. You must be very perticular when you write. I think it very hard when a vessel arrives without a letter for me, you know the pleasure I always took in hearing from your pappa in his frequent absence from me, you must think now both he & you are at such a distance from me that letters are more acceptable than ever,

Your friends here are all well, the next opportunity you have for writing you must not forget your grandmamma—Mr. T . . r is at Philadelphia yet, tho he talks of returning this month,

Does the climate of France suit your constitution, you used to be unwell in the Spring & fall, it is very sickly here with the dysentery—

We have heard of the engagement between the French & English Fleets, and are much gratified with the good conduct of our Allies.

After the failure of the late Expedition against Rhoad Island, we were in great apprehension of an attack upon Boston, as the Fleet lay in that harbour, but haveing looked in upon them Lord How thought it best to retire to New York after plundering 9000 sheepe from Martha Vinyard, --

Your Brothers send their Love to you, and thank you for their Letters, will write to you as soon as they are capable of it, Charlly got his pen today and attempted it but could not please himself. I believe I must not write an other letter to Paris till I hear from thence, Be dutifull my deare Son, be thoughtfull be Serious, do not gather the Thorns or the Thistles, but collect such a garland of flowers as will flourish in your native climat, and Bloom upon your Brows, with an unfading verdure.

This will rejoice the Heart & compensate for the continual anxiety of your affectionate.

xxxxxxx .xxxxx

3) Abigail Adams to Charles Adams

Janry. 19 1780

My dear Charles

How does my son after the fatigues of a voyage. A young adventurer indeed, how many times did you wish yourself by mammas fireside. But pappa wrote me that you made as good a sailor as your Brother, flatterd you a little a suppose, But I was very glad to hear you did so well.

I hope before this time that you are safe landed possibly arrived at Paris and placed at school, where I hope you will strive to obtain the Love and good will of every Body by a modest obliging Behaviour. You was a favorite in the Neighbourhood at home, all of whom wonder how Mamma could part with you. Mamma found it hard enough tis true, but she consulted your good more than her own feelings, and hopes you will not dissapoint her hopes and expectations by contracting vices and follies, instead of improveing in virtue and knowledge which can only make you usefull to society and happy to yourself.

You have an opportunity very early in life of seeing a foreign Country and of Learning a Language which if you live may be very serviceable to you, and even at this early period of your life you may form Friendships, if you behave worthy of your country, which will do honour to [you] in future, but in order to [do?] this you must be very attentive to your Books and to every Branch of knowledge and improvement with which your pappa is pleasd to indulge you.

Let your ambition lead you to make yourself Master of what you undertake, do not be content to lag behind others, but strive to excell.

I hope soon to hear of your welfare and happiness which are always near the heart of your ever affectionate Mother.

4) Abigail Adams to Charles Adams and John Quincy Adams

July 22, 1780

My Dear Sons

I must write you a few lines by this opportunity, altho tis a long time since I had the pleasure of hearing from you by your own Hands, you used to be fond of writing & have been very good since your absence, --Letters are always valuable from those we Love, if they contain nothing but an account of their Health. —I cannot but reflect with thankfulness to the Great preserver of my dear absent friends. that I have the pleasure of knowing them alive & well. Whilst I drop a sympathetick with the family of General Palmer & your unkle over the remains of the amiable youth who left them last fall, just reachd the Arms of his Friends, after a long absence, endeared himself to them by his benevolence of Heart his amiable & virtuous manners, was summoned by a violent fever, & cut of in the full bloom of youth—

Your friends here all send their affectionate regard, the domesticks of the family desire to be rememberd to master John & to the Dear Charles—

Tis well he went away, he would have been spoilt by the fondness & carresses of his acquaintance. I hope you both live in Brotherly Love & Friendship, your Brother desires to be

particularly rememberd to you, have not time to write for him- as the person now waits who is to take this from your ever affectionate

Mother AA

5) Abigail Adams to Charles Adams

May 26 1781

My dear Charles

I am sometimes affraid my dear Boy that you will be spoilt by being a favorite. Praise is a Dangerous Sweet unless properly tempered. If it does not make you arrogant, assuming and self-sufficient, but on the contrary fires your Breast with Emulation to become still more worthy and engaging, it may not opperate to your Disadvantage. But if ever you feel your Little Bosom swell with pride and begin to think yourself better than others; you will then become less worthy, and loose those Qualities which now make you valuable. Worthy and amiable as I hope you are, there are still imperfections enough [in] every Humane Being to excite Humility, rather than pride.

If you have made some small attainments in knowledge, yet when you look forward to the immense sum; of which you are still Ignorant, you will find your own, but as a grain of sand, a drop, to the ocean.

If you look into your own Heart, and mind, you will find those amiable Qualities, for which you are beloved and esteemed, to result rather from habit and constitution, than from any solid, and settled principal. But it remains with you to Establish, and confirm that by choise and principal which has hitherto been a natural impulse.

Be modest, be diffident, be circumspect, kind and obligeing. These are Qualities which render youth engageing, and will flourish like a natural plant; in every clime.

I long to receive Letters from you. To hear of your Health and that of your dear pappas, would give me a pleasure that I have not experienced for 8 months.

O My dear children, which shall I fold you to my Bosom again? God only knows and in his own time will I hope return you safe to the Arms of your ever affectionate Mother,

A Adams

6) Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams

May 26 1781

My dear John

I hope this Letter will be more fortunate than yours have been of late. I know you must have written many times since I had the pleasure of receiving a line from you, for this month completes a year since the date of your last Letter.

Not a line from you or my dear Charles since you arrived in Holland, where I suppose you still are.

I never was more anxious to hear yet not a single vessel arrives from that port, tho several are looked for.

I hope my dear Boy that the universal neatness and Cleanliness, of the people where you reside, will cure you of all your slovenly tricks and that you will learn from them industry, oconomy and frugality.

I would recommend it to you to become acquainted with the History of their Country; in many respects it is similar to the Revolution of your own. Tyranny and oppresion were the original causes of the revoult of both Countries. It is from a wide and extensive view of mankind that a just and true Estimate can be formed of the powers of Humane Nature. She appears enobled or deformed, as Religion, Government, Laws and custom Guide or direct her.

Firce, rude, and savage in the uncultivated desert, Gloomy, Bigoted and Superstitious where Truth is veiled in obscurity and mistery. Ductile, pliant, Elegant and refined—you have seen her in that dress, as well as the active, Bold, hardy and intrepid Garb of your own Country.

Inquire of the Historick page and let your own observations second the inquiry, whence arrises this difference? And when compared, learn to cultivate those dispositions and to practise those Virtues which tend most to the Benifit and happiness of Mankind.

The Great Author of our Religion frequently inculcates universal Benevolence and taught us both by precept and example when he promulgated peace and good will to Man, a doctrine very different from that which actuates the Hostile invaders, and the cruel ravagers of mighty kingdoms and Nations.

I hope you will be very particular when you write, and let me know how you have past your time in the course of the year past.

Your favourable account of your Brother gave me great pleasure—not only as it convinced me that he continues to cultivate that agreeable disposition of mind and heart, which so greatly endeared him to his Friends here, but as it was proof of the Brotherly Love and affection of a son, not less dear to his Parents.

Your Brother Tommy has been very sick with the Rhumatism, taken by going too early into water, but which means he lost the use of his Limbs and a fever ensued. He has however happily recoverd, and learnt wisdom I hope by his sufferings. He hopes soon to write you a Letter. He has a good school and is attentive to his Books. I shall write to your Brother, so shall only add the sincere wishes for your improvement and happiness of your ever affectionate Mother,

AA

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