

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:

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

Student Name _____ Date _____

Epistolary Analysis

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

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

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

Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, 1 July 1787

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

"Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams." 1 July 1787. *Adams Family Correspondence: Volume 8, March 1787-December 1789*. Eds. Margaret A. Hogan, et al. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2007.

Letter from Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 6 July 1787

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 comeing 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