

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:

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

Student Name _____ Date _____

Epistolary Analysis

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

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

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

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 10 June 1778

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 precent, 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 compell'd 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 govern'd it, suffer'd 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 sail'd, 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 ascertain'd 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 assur'd 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 pappa may have to send to me.

"Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams." 10 June 1778. *Adams Family Correspondence: Volume 3, April 1778-September 1780*. Eds. Lyman Henry Butterfield and Marc Friedlaender. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1973.

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 29 September 1778

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 suffer'd 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.

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"Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams." 29 September 1778. Adams Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers. (Microfilm). Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

Letter from Abigail Adams to Charles Adams, 19 January 1780

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 dissappoint 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 papa 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.

"Abigail Adams to Charles Adams." 19 January 1780. *Adams Family Correspondence: Volume 3, April 1778-September 1780*. Eds. Lyman Henry Butterfield and Marc Friedlaender. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1973.

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

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 particuliarly 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

"Abigail Adams to Charles Adams and John Quincy Adams." 22 July 1780. *Adams Papers, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers*. (Microfilm). Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

Letter from Abigail Adams to Charles Adams, 26 May 1781

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 engageing, 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 setled 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

"Abigail Adams to Charles Adams." 26 May 1781. *Adams Family Correspondence: Volume 4, October 1780-September 1782*. Eds. Lyman Henry Butterfield and Marc Friedlaender. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1973.

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 26 May 1781

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, Goverment, 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