

Lesson Three

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson become friends and work together to win the peace.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Explain what John Adams and Thomas Jefferson thought of each other after drafting *The Declaration of Independence*.
- 2) Explain why John Adams was sent overseas by the Continental Congress.
- 3) Describe that Thomas Jefferson was sent to France to work with Adams to establish treaties of commerce with European nations in order to boost America's fledgling economy.
- 4) Explain that while in Europe John and Abigail Adams became good friends with Thomas Jefferson.

Materials

- 1) **3.1:** Abigail Adams biographical sketch.
- 2) **3.2:** John Adams and Thomas Jefferson letters from 1777.
- 3) **3.3:** John Adams, Abigail Adams, Thomas Jefferson letters from Europe 1785–1787.

Lesson Outline

- Give the class background on Abigail Adams from **3.1**.
- Hand out 1777 letters from **3.2**. Read them as a class. Ask students how Jefferson and Adams viewed each other after having worked together to draft *The Declaration of Independence*. Have students cite evidence of Jefferson and Adams's growing friendship from the letters. Ask the students to give examples of how Adams and Jefferson were working together to help the new nation win the war.
- Divide class up into six groups. Give each group letters from **3.3**.
- Ask students to find evidence of what Adams and Jefferson's mission was in Europe.
- Ask students to find evidence of how the relationship between John and Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson was evolving. When the groups are done reading the letters and taking down the information, call on each group and have them present their findings. (Students will find that the Adamses and Jefferson are becoming very close. This will make the breakup of this relationship later, over partisan politics, seem all the more tragic.)

3.1

Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams was born on November 11, 1744. She had no formal education, but was a prolific reader and writer. She married John Adams in 1764. Because of her husband's frequent absences it fell to Abigail to run the family farm, raise the children and care for her and her husband's large extended family. She also cared for many sick and indigent people in the community. Abigail did all of this while keeping up an extensive correspondence with John, giving him first-hand information of the fighting around Boston during the early stages of the American Revolution, and providing him key political insight and advice.

At the end of the Revolutionary War, Abigail joined her husband in France and later moved with him to London. During John Adams's tenure as vice president and president, Abigail divided her time between the Adams family farm in Quincy and the seat of government in Philadelphia, New York, and finally Washington DC.

Abigail Adams died in 1818.

3.2

Jefferson and Adams Correspondence

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, May 16, 1777
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 4–5

Williamsburgh May 16. 1777

DEAR SIR

Matters in our part of the continent are too much in quiet to send you news from hence. Our battalions for the Continental Service were some time ago filled as rendered the recommendation of a draught from the militia hardly requisite, [...]. I am Dear Sir
Your friend and servt:

TH: JEFFERSON

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 26, 1777
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 5–6

Philadelphia May 26. 1777

MY DEAR SIR

I had this Morning, the Pleasure of your Favour of the Sixteenth inst, by the Post; and rejoice to learn that your Battallions, were so far fill'd, as to render a Draught from the Militia, unnecessary. It is a dangerous Measure, and only to be adopted in great Extremities, even by popular Governments. [...] We want your Industry and Abilities here extreamly. Financiers, We want more than Soldiers. The worst Enemy, We have now is Poverty, real Poverty in the Shape of exuberant Wealth. Pray come and help Us, to raise the Value of our Money, and lower the Prices of Things. Without this, We cannot carry on the War. With it, We can make it a Diversion. [...] I am, Sir your Friend and most obedient Servant,

JOHN ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 21, 1777
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 7–8

Albemarle in Virginia. Aug. 21. 1777

DEAR SIR

Your favor of May 26. came safely to hand. I wish it were in my power to suggest any remedy for the evil you complain of. Tho' did any occur, I should propose it to you with great diffidence after knowing you had thought on the subject yourself. There is indeed a *fact* which may not have come to your knolege, out of which perhaps some little good may be drawn. [...] I speak of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. The little states of Italy you know have had long peace and shew no disposition to interrupt that peace shortly. The Grand Duke being somewhat avaritious in his nature has availed himself of the opportunity of collecting and hoarding what money he has been able to gather. I am informed from good authority [...] that about three years ago he had ten millions of crowns lying dead in his coffers. Of this it is thought possible as much might be borrowed as would amount to a million of pounds lawful money. At any rate the attempt might be worth making. [...] Your friend and serv.,

TH: JEFFERSON

3.3

John, Abigail Adams, Thomas Jefferson Correspondence in Europe

Introduction

In 1784, Thomas Jefferson was sent on a diplomatic mission to France where he joined John Adams who had already been overseas for five years. Adams had been recently joined by Abigail and their daughter. The family made their home just outside Paris in Auteuil. Jefferson was a frequent visitor. He and John worked closely on forming commercial treaties with the various nations of Europe, and he soon formed a close professional and personal bond with John and Abigail. Nine months after Jefferson's arrival in France, the Adamses were posted to London, where John Adams became the first American minister to the Court of Saint James.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 23, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, page 22

Dessin's Calais May 23. 1785. Monday.

DEAR SIR

We are just arrived, covered with Dust, and we have hired our Boat , to go over tomorrow at ten. No green Peas, no Sallad, no Vegetables to be had upon the Road, and the Sky is still as clear dry and cold as ever. The Flocks of Sheep and herds of Cattle, through the Country, Stalk about the Fields like Drovers of Walking Skeletons. The Sheep are pastured chiefly I think in the plowed grounds, upon the Fibres as I suppose of the Roots of Grass turn'd up by the Plow.

[...] I hope that these rainless, heatless Heavens will convince them that it is abundantly for their good that We should bring and carry freely, our Flour, Wheat, Corn, Rice, Flesh, and Fish for their Soulagement. Yours affectionately,

J. ADAMS

The Ladies Compliments of course.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, May 25, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 22–23

Paris May 25. 1785

DEAR SIR

Your letter of the 22d. from Montreuil sur mer is put into my hands this moment [...]. The departure of your family has left me in the dumps. My afternoons hang heavily on me. I go sometimes to Passy and Mont Parnasse. When they are gone too I shall be ready for the dark and narrow house of Ossian. [...] I have now given you all the news of Paris as far as I know it and after recommending myself to the friendly recollection of the ladies I conclude with assurances of the esteem with which I have the honour to be dear Sir Your affectionate friend and servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

P.S. Send me your address au plutot.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 6, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 28–31

London Bath Hotel Westminster June 6. 1785

DEAR SIR

Mr. Adams has already written you that we arrived in London upon the 27 of May. We journey'd slowly and sometimes silently. I think I have somewhere met with the observation that nobody ever leaves paris but with a degree of tristeness. I own I was loth to leave my garden because I did not expect to find its place supplied. I was still more loth on account of the increasing pleasure, and intimacy which a longer acquaintance with a respected Friend promised, to leave behind me the only person with whom my Companion could associate with perfect freedom, and unreserve: and whose place he had no reason to expect supplied in the Land to which he is destined.

[...] The figure which this city makes in respect to Equipages is vastly superior to Paris, and gives one the Idea of superior wealth and grandeur. I have seen few carriages in paris and no horses superiour to what are used here for Hackneys¹. [...]

I went last week to hear the musick in Westminster Abbey. The Messiah was performd. It was sublime beyond description. I most sincerely wisht for your presence as your favorite passion would have received the highest gratification. I should have

¹ Old time taxicabs.

sometimes fancied myself amongst a higher order of Beings; if it had not been for a very troublesome female, who was unfortunately seated behind me; and whose volubility not all the powers of Musick could still.

[...] Having heard you upon some occasions express a desire to hear from your Friends, even the Minutia respecting their Situation, I have ventured to class myself in that number and to subscribe myself, Sir, your Friend and Humble Servant,

A. Adams

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, June 21, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 33–36

Paris June 21. 1785

DEAR MADAM

I have received duly the honor of your letter, and am now to return you thanks for your condescension in having taken the first step for settling a correspondence which I so much desired; for I now consider it as *settled* and proceed accordingly. I have always found it best to remove obstacles first. I will do so therefore in the present case by telling you that I consider your boasts of the splendour of your city and of it's superb hackney coaches as a flout, and declaring that I would not give the polite, self-denying, feeling, hospitable, goodhumoured people of this country and their amability in every point of view, (tho' it must be confessed our streets are somewhat dirty, and our fiacres rather indifferent) for ten such races of rich, proud, hectoring, swearing, squibbing, carnivorous animals as those among whom you are; and that I do love this *people* with all my heart, and think that with a better religion and a better form of government and their present governors their condition and country would be most enviable. I pray you to observe that I have used the term *people* and that this is a noun of the masculine as well as feminine gender. I must add too that we are about reforming our fiacres, and that I expect soon an Ordonance that all their drivers shall wear breeches unless any difficulty should arise whether this is a subject for the police or for the general legislation of the country, to take care of. [...] I have the honour to be with the most perfect esteem Dr. Madam Your most obedient and most humble servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 7, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 38–39

Paris July 7. 1785

DEAR SIR

This will accompany a joint letter inclosing the draught of a treaty, and my private letter of June 22, which has waited so long for a private conveyance. We daily expect from the Baron Thulemeyer the French column for our treaty with his sovereign. In the mean while two copies are preparing with the English column which Doctr. Franklin wishes to sign before his departure, which will be within four or five days. The French, when received, will be inserted in the blank column of each copy. As the measure of signing at separate times and places is new, we think it necessary to omit no other circumstance of ceremony which can be observed. That of sending it by a person of confidence and invested with a character relative to the object, who shall attest our signature here, yours in London and Baron Thulemeyer's at the Hague, and who shall make the actual exchanges, we think will contribute to supply the departure from the usual form in other instances. [...] I shall be happy to receive your corrections of these ideas as I have found in the course of our joint services that I think right when I think with you. I am with sincere affection Dear Sir Your friend and servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 24, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 43–44
*Footnote 35 reads, "Italicized passages were written in code."

Grosvenor Square July 24th. 1785

DEAR SIR

I have a letter from the Baron De Thulemeier of the 19th. and a Copy of his Letter to you of the same date. I hope now in a few Day's to take Mr. Short by the hand in Grosvenor Square and to put my hand to the treaty. I think no time should be lost. We will join Mr. Dumas with Mr. Short in exchange if you please.

[...]

The Britons Aliens Duty is a very burthensome Thing, and they may carry it hereafter as far upon Tobacco, Rice Indigo and twenty other Things, as they do now upon oil. To obviate this, I think of substituting the words "natural born Citizens of the United States," and "natural born subjects of Great Britain," instead of "the most favoured Nation." You remember We first proposed to offer this to all Nations, but upon my objecting that the English would make their ships French or Sweedish or Dutch etc. to

avail themselves of it, without agreeing to it, on their Part, we altered it to the footing of "Gentis Amicissimae ["of the most-favored nation"]." But if the English will now agree to it, we shall secure ourselves against many odious Duties, and no ill Consequence can arise. It is true the French Dutch Sweeds and Prussians will of Course claim the Advantage, but as they must in return allow Us the same Advantage, so much the better. Let me know if any Objection occurs to you.

There is a Bill before Parliament to prevent smuggling Tobacco, in which the restrictions are very rigorous, but cannot be effected. Two thirds of the Tobacco consumed in this Kingdom, I am told is Smuggled. How can it be otherwise, when the impost is five times the original Value of the Commodity. If one Pound in five escapes nothing is lost. If two in five, a great profit is made.

The Duty is 16d. pr. pound and tobacco sells for three pence. Yet all applications for lowering the Duty are rejected. Yours most affectionately,

JOHN ADAMS

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, August 4, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 48–49

Grosvenor Square Augt. 4. 1785

MY DEAR SIR

[...] Pray send me the Arret² against English Manufactures and every other new Arret, which may any Way affect the United States. It is confidently given out here that our Vessells are not admitted into the French W. Indias. Has there been any new Arret, since that of August 1784? Can you discover the Cause, of the great Balance of Exchange in favour of England, from Spain, Holland, etc. as well as America? And whether this Appearance of Prosperity will continue? I think that at the Peace, the British Merchants sent their Factors abroad with immense quantities of their Manufactures, the whole Stock they had on hand. These Factors have sold as they could, and brought Remittances especially Bills of Exchange as they could, i.e. very dear, so that the loss on the Exchange is that of the British Merchant, and consequently that this appearance is not so much in favour of England. Spain I expect will follow the Example of France in prohibiting Brit. Manufactures, [...]

I am my dear Sir, with Sincere Esteem your Friend,

JOHN ADAMS

² A French governmental order to stop something. In this case the importation of English goods.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 10, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 52–53

Paris Aug. 10. 1785.

DEAR SIR

Your favor of the 4th inst. came to hand yesterday. I now inclose you the two Arrets against the importation of foreign manufactures into this kingdom. The cause of the balance against this country in favor of England as well as it's amount is not agreed on. No doubt the rage for English manufactures must be the principal cause. The speculators in Exchange say also that those of the circumjacent countries who have a balance in their favor against France remit that balance to England from France. If so it is possible that the English may count this balance twice: that is, in summing their exports to one of those states, and their imports from it, they count the difference once in their favour: then a second time when they sum the remittances of cash they receive from France. There has been no arret relative to our commerce since that of Aug. 1784. and all the late advices from the French West Indies are that they have now in their ports always three times as many vessels as there ever were before, and that the increase is principally from our States. [...] Compliments to the ladies and am Dr. Sir Your friend and servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 23, 1786
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 145–146

London july 23. 1786

DEAR SIR

[...] I suppose you must have heard the report respecting Col. Smith—that he has taken my daughter from me, a contrivance between him and the Bishop of St. Asaph. It is true he tendered me a son as an equivalent and it was no bad offer. But I had three Sons before, and but one daughter. Now I have been thinking of an exchange with you Sir. Suppose you give me Miss Jefferson, and in some [fu] ture day take a Son in lieu of her. I am for strengthening [the] federal union.

[...] Be assured you confer a favour upon your Humble Servant,

A ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, August 9, 1786
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 148–149

Paris Aug. 9. 1786.

DEAR MADAM

It is an age since I have had the honor of a letter from you, and an age and a half since I presumed to address one to you. I think my last was dated in the reign of king Amri, but under which of his successors you wrote, I cannot recollect. Ochosias, Joachar, Manahem or some such hard name. At length it is resumed: I am honoured with your favor of July 23. and am at this moment writing an answer to it. [...] This proposition about the exchange of a son for my daughter puzzles me. I should be very glad to have your son, but I cannot part with my daughter. Thus you see I have such a habit of gaining in trade with you that I always expect it. [...] The bottom of my page tells me it is time for me to end with assurances of the affectionate esteem with which I have the honor to be, dear Madam, your most obedient and most humble servant,

TH: JEFFERSON

Note: Jefferson's daughter Polly sailed from Virginia in 1787 to be with her father. The ship docked in England and Abigail Adams took care of Polly until Jefferson could arrange her transportation to Paris.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 26, 1787
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, page 178

London June 26 1787

DEAR SIR

I have to congratulate you upon the safe arrival of your Little Daughter [Polly] whom I have only a few moments ago received. She is in fine Health and a Lovely little Girl I am sure from her countenance, but at present every thing is strange to her, and she was very loth to try New Friends for old. She was so much attachd to the Captain and he to her, that it was with no small regret that I separated her from him, but I dare say I shall reconcile her in a day or two. I tell her that I did not see her sister cry once. She replies that her sister was older and ought to do better, besides she had her pappu with her. I shew her your picture. She says she cannot know it, how should she when she should not know you.

[...] Miss Polly sends her duty to you and Love to her Sister and says she will try to be good and not cry. So she has wiped her eyes and layd down to sleep. Believe me dear Sir affectionately yours etc etc,

A Adams

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 6, 1787
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 183–184

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's³ 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 virginia to come over the ocean to see you, she did think you would have taken the pains to have come here for her, and 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, and the difficulty you had to come and upon the care kindness and attention of Petit, whom I so well knew. But she cannot 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 her, there is no danger. She listend to my admonitions, and attended to my 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, [...]

I am dear sir with Sentiments of Esteem Your Friend and Humble Servant,

A ADAMS

³ Jefferson's servent, sent to pick Polly up and bring her back to France.

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, July 16, 1787
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, page 188

Paris July 16. 1787

DEAR MADAM

I had the happiness of receiving yesterday my daughter in perfect health. Among the first things she informed me of was her promise to you, that after she should have been here a little while she would go back to pay you a visit of four or five days. She had taken nothing into her calculation but the feelings of her own heart which beat warmly with gratitude to you. She had fared very well on the road, having got into favor with gentlemen and ladies so as to be sometimes on the knee of one sometimes of another. She had totally forgotten her sister, but thought, on seeing me, that she recollected something of me. [...] eternal thanks yourself with every sentiment of esteem and regard from Dear Madam your most obedient and most humble servt,

TH: JEFFERSON