

Whose Revolution?

STUDENT HANDOUT

Power, Equality, and the Limits of Representation

What's inside?

- Expert Annotations on Abigail Adam's 1776 letter to John Adams, "Remember the Ladies"
- Student Questions – Close Reading, Complex Thinking
Epistolary (Letter Writing) Analysis Tables – Historical Context, Argument Identification, Independent Research, & Citing Evidence

While the materials in this handout do not explicitly address the four core ethnic groups included in CA Ethnic Studies, the lesson works as a skills-orienting and inquiry-driven activity that prepares students to ask questions that are foundational to Ethnic Studies coursework: *What is power? Who critiques power? How and why? What happens when they do?* These materials cover topics related to high school English Language and Literature, U.S. history (Colonial and Revolutionary), and Women's History.

Support Note: *If you are teaching these materials in Los Angeles County and would like an ES Resources representative to assist with your planning or classroom application, please email contact@ESResources.org.*

Born during "King George's War"; 1754-63 = French and Indian War, Treaty of Paris; 1765 = Stamp Act ("No Taxation w/out Representation"); March 1770 = Boston Massacre; 1773 = Boston Tea Party; 1775 = Lexington and Concord

Rhetorical device $\Rightarrow$ allusion / ~~an~~ antiphrasis (metaphor or symbols to rep. opposing actors, values, or stances) $\rightarrow$ juxtaposition

"Allusion" = a reference to a well-known person or event that carries meaning.

"Fiend" = an enemy in the worst sense, like a Satanic evil spirit, a cruel, wicked, or malicious foe.

"It under our own vine" = from religious scripture; Washington and Abigail Adams both used this imagery, and it's also in the play, Hamilton!

Founders Online

ABIGAIL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS, 31 MARCH 1776

Abigail Adams to John Adams (1744-1818) (1785-1826) = John Quincy Adams (6th president) was their son
 (first VP of USA) 3rd president
 Braintrust March 31 1776

"Adverse" and wife of $\rightarrow$ first VP of USA
 (wish you would ever write me a Letter half as long as I write you) and tell me if you may where your Fleet are gone? What sort of Defence Virginia can make against our common Enemy? Whether it is so situated as to make an able Defence? Are not the Gentry Lords and the common people (vassals) are they not like the uncivilized Natives Britain represents us to be? I hope they Ruffel Men who have shewen themselves very savage and even Blood thirsty; and not a specimen of the Generality of the people - one they representative?
 (Who's thing? George Washington then - symbol of American independence - in end of coming in end of coming)

I am willing to allow the Colony great merit for having produced a Washington but they have been shamefully duped by a

Dunmore. = the last royal Governor of Virginia colony $\rightarrow$ ironic
 I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for Liberty cannot be Equally Strong in the Breasts of those who

have been accustomed to deprive their fellow Creatures of theirs. Of this I am certain that it is not founded upon that generous and christian principle of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us. (this is irony about the British, not slavery, right?)
 Do not you want to see Boston? I am fearful of the small pox, or I should have been in before this time. I got Mr. Crane to go to our House and see what state it was in. I find it has been occupied by one of the Doctors of a Regiment, very dirty, but no other damage has been done to it. The few things which were left in it are all gone. Cranch has the key which he never delivered up. I have wrote to him for it and am determined to get it cleand as soon as possible and shut it up. I look upon it a new acquisition of property, a property which one month ago I did not value at a single Shilling, and could with pleasure have seen it in flames any, girl! (sarcasm) Town = fresh, fiery, passionate confident, no longer suddenly unexpectedly, or

The Town in General is left in a better state than we expected, more owing to a precipitate flight than any regard to the inhabitants, tho some individuals discovered a sense of honour and justice and have left the rent of the Houses in which they were, for the owners and the furniture unhurt, or if damaged sufficient to make it good. = moral, empathy, respect, humanity
 Others have committed abominable Ravages. The Mansion House of your President is safe and the furniture unhurt whilst both the House and Furniture of the Solicitor General have fallen a prey to their own merciless party Surely the very Friends feel a Reverential awe for Virtue and patriotism, whilst they Detest the paricide and traitor.

I feel very differently at the approach of spring to what I did a month ago We knew not then whether we could plant or sow with safety, whether when we had toiled we could reap the fruits of our own Industry, whether we could rest in our own Cottages, or whether we should not be driven from the sea coasts to seek shelter in the wilderness, but now we feel as if we might sit under our own vines and eat the good of the land.

I feel a gaiety de Coar 4 to which before I was a stranger I think the Sun looks brighter, the Birds sing more melodiously, and Nature puts on a more cheerful countenance We feel a temporary peace, and the poor fugitives are returning to their deserted habitations.

Tho we felicitate ourselves, we sympathize with those who are trembling lest the Lot of Boston should be theirs. But they cannot be in similar circumstances unless pusillanimity and cowardise should take possession of them. They have time and warning given them to see the Evil and shun it - I long to hear that you have declared an independency - and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the

Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation. (sarcasm) OK, BADDIE $\rightarrow$ hey, now! 70 years before suffragette movement about achieving before the women's liberation movement (feminism)

"Civil" + Friends + "Christian principle" $\rightarrow$ strong feeling about the women's liberation movement (feminism)

Values, judgement, decency, & morality

"pusillanimity" $\Rightarrow$ faint-heartedness, cowardice. Founding fathers loved this word... (synonym w/ coward.)

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That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supream Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

She's saying there's historical precedent of Men of Sense who are not misogynistic

men towards women?

exemption from punishment

But she's also saying men must protect women... by giving them rights/liberty? April 5

Not having an opportunity of sending this I shall add a few lines more; tho not with a heart so gay. I have been attending the sick chamber of our Neighbour Trot whose affliction I most sensibly feel but cannot discribe, striped of two lovely children in one week. Gorge the Eldest died on wednesday and Billy the youngest on fryday, with the Canker fever, a terrible disorder so much like the thr[o]at distemper, that it differs but little from it. Betsy Cranch has been very bad, but upon the recovery. Becky Peck they do not expect will live out the day. Many grown person[s] are now sick with it, in this [street?] 5. It rages much in other Towns. The Mumps too are very frequent. Isaac is now confined with it. Our own little flock are yet well. My Heart trembles with anxiety for them. God preserve them.

Quincy is sick!

is she being literal or sarcastic?

= "our kids"?

I want to hear much oftener from you than I do. March 8 was the last date of any that I have yet had.—You inquire of whether I am making Salt peter. I have not yet attempted it, but after Soap making believe I shall make the experiment. I find as much as I can do to manufacture cloathing for my family which would else be Naked. I know of but one person in this part of the Town who has made any, that is Mr. Tertias Bass as he is calld who has got very near an hundred weight which has been found to be very good. I have heard of some others in the other parishes. Mr. Reed of Weymouth has been applied to, to go to Andover to the mills which are now at work, and has gone. I have lately seen a small Manuscrip de[s]cribing the proportions for the various sorts of powder, fit for cannon, small arms and pistols. If it would be of any Service your way I will get it transcribed and send it to you.—Every one of your Friend[s] send their Regards, and all the little ones. Your Brothers youngest child lies bad with convulsion fits. 5 Adieu. I need not say how much I am Your ever faithfull Friend.

RC (Adams Papers); addressed in an unidentified hand: "To The Honble. John Adams Esqr: In Philadelphia"; franked: "Free"; endorsed: "March 31. April 5. answd Ap. 14th."

She's saying that also as his wife

1. This is probably a slip of the pen for "Crane," AA's agent in Boston mentioned above. (At least two Crane "housewrights" active in Boston at this time are recorded in the Thwing Catalogue, MHI.) AA normally refers to her brother-in-law Richard Cranch as "Mr. Cranch."

2. John Hancock. Called "your president" b/c?

3. Samuel Quincy.

4. AA's spelling of this word is very uncertain.

5. Susanna, daughter of Peter Boylston Adams. She had been born the previous July and died later in the present month.

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Back to top

SOURCE PROJECT	Adams Papers
TITLE	Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March 1776
AUTHOR	Adams, Abigail
RECIPIENT	Adams, John
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CITE AS	"Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March 1776," <i>Founders Online</i> , National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-

Reading Questions

1. Abigail Adams' tone fluctuates between advising, threatening, judgmental, and inspired/hopeful. Find two examples from the letter for each of these tones and rewrite the direct quotes below.

Advising

A.

B.

Threatening

A.

B.

Judgmental

A.

B.

Inspired

A.

B.

Hopeful

A.

B.

2. When Abigail Adams references "poor fugitives," she is describing American patriots / rebels pushed out of areas controlled by the British. Who does she *not* mean?

3. Abigail Adams warned her husband that if men did not allow women civil rights: “we are determined to foment a Rebellion [sic], and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.”
- A. What do you think she meant? Use clues from other lines in the paragraph to explain your answer.
- B. How does Abigail Adams model or invert the arguments of the American Revolutionary cause itself, such as the now famous phrase, *No taxation without representation*?
4. “We knew not whether we could plant or sow with safety.” How does this phrase depict instability during a time of war? Look up any unfamiliar words before you answer.
5. How does Adams depict ideas like place, home, safety, and uncertainty during war in her letter? Find 3 examples from the text and explain.
- A.
- B.
- C.
6. In your opinion, overall which one line best captures the author’s message and why? Explain your reasoning.

Use the Expert Annotator's notes, the Abigail Adams letter, and independent research to complete the tables below.

Historical Context		
	Your Answer In your own words.	Direct Quote Either from the original letter or the Expert Annotator's handwritten notes.
Who wrote this letter?		
What years did the author live?		
During the author's lifetime, what did they live through?		
On what date was the letter written?		
What historical events were happening at the time the letter was written?		
Who received this letter?		
What is the relationship between the writer and the recipient? <i>Do they know each other? Are they strangers? Why does it matter?</i>		
Why was the letter written?		

What does the author not explain because the recipient probably already knew or understood?		
Putting it Together		
	Your Answer In your own words.	Direct Quote Either from the original letter or the Expert Annotator's handwritten notes.
What is the author's central argument? <i>What problem is the author trying to solve?</i>		
What action does the author want? <i>It may be more than one.</i>		
What values, beliefs, or ideals appear to be most important to the author? <i>Is there something the author fears?</i>		

Which words or phrases repeat?		
What surprises you?		

What questions do I still have?

What historical references do I need to research?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.
- F.

Summarize and explain what you discovered when you looked up each reference. Make sure you include information about where you found each piece of information.

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

Rhetorical Analysis			
	Your Answer Name of the rhetorical strategy or device.	Direct Quote From the original letter.	Effect What purpose does it serve?
Literary Device			
Literary Device			
Literary Device			
Literary Device			
Literary Device			