

FLCHE-TPS Lesson

Abigail Adams and the American Revolution Grade 1 Lesson 3

It's Elementary, My Dear: Primary Sources in the Elementary Classroom

Enduring Understandings:

1. Women have helped shape our country's history.
2. We can use books and letters to show how history tells a story about people.

Essential Questions:

1. How does a letter (primary source) show how people lived a long time ago?
2. What sacrifices were made in times of war?

Vocabulary/Targeted Skills:

American Revolution, Abigail Adams, women, primary source, John Adams, letter, Braintree, Massachusetts, Philadelphia, history, King George III, Britain, war, England, colonies, colonists

Unit Assessment/Culminating Unit Activity/Success Criteria:

1. Students will list accomplishments made by women over time and share how women in their lives have impacted them.

Lesson: Abigail Adams and the American Revolution

Time: 45-60 minutes

Standard(s):

Social Studies Standards:

- SS.1.A.1.1 Develop an understanding of a primary source.
- SS.1.A.1.2 Understand how to use media center/other sources to find answers to questions about a historical topic
- SS.1.A.2.1 Understand history tells the story of people and events of other time and places.

Language Arts Standards:

- LAFS 1.RI.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text
- LAFS 1.RI.1.3 Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.
- LAFS 1.SL.2.4 Describe people, places, things and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

Content Purpose: Students will use a primary source (letters from Abigail Adams to John Adams) and a secondary source *A is for Abigail* to show what roles women have played overtime.

Assessment/Evaluation (for this lesson):

- Students will listen carefully and record the accomplishments of women.
- Students will make a connection between roles Abigail Adams played and the role a woman has played in their life.

Reading Materials/Primary Source links:

- Primary Source: John and Abigail Adams home: <https://www.loc.gov/item/gsc1994010098/PP/>
- Secondary Source: Portrait of Abigail Adams: <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.42934.html>
- Primary Source: Abigail to John Adams Letters September 14, 1774 and September 16, 1774
http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=L17740914aa&bc=%2Fdigitaladams%2Farchive%2Fbrowse%2Fletters_1774_1777.php
- Modified Version of Abigail Adams Letters (attached)
- Secondary Source: *A is for Abigail* by Lynne Cheney

Suggested Procedures:

1. Tell students that today they will read about some extraordinary women in history. One of these women is Abigail Adams.
2. Share the portrait of Abigail Adams. <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.42934.html> Ask students to describe who they think she may be. What makes them think that?
3. Read the first six pages of the book, *A is for Abigail* by Lynne Cheney. As you read letter A, have students record time when Abigail does something special for women. List these accomplishments. You may continue to add to the list as you cover letters B-F. Stop at F, as F is for First Ladies. You can share that Abigail will eventually become our country's second First Lady, as her husband John Adams became our country's second president.
4. Show students the image of John and Abigail Adams home: <https://www.loc.gov/item/gsc1994010098/PP/>. This is where Abigail lived while her husband had to work in Philadelphia.
5. Tell students that there was a time in our history that America was under control of another country, Britain. Many people in the colonies (what states were called before the Declaration of Independence in 1776), thought King George III treated the colonists unfairly. Men and women living in the colonies wanted to change this treatment and even decided to go to war. Show students a map of the English colonies and the mother

country, England: <http://blogdev.learnquebec.ca/societies/societies/the-thirteen-colonies-around-1745/english-colonies/>

6. Show students that many members of families traveled far from their homes to attend to meetings or go to war. John Adams, Abigail Adam's husband, left his home in Braintree, Massachusetts to represent Massachusetts in the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Use a googlemap to show the distance between Braintree, MA and Philadelphia.
7. Show students an original copy of Abigail's letter to John dated September 14, 1774. Tell students that these letters are quite old and are written in cursive. However because so many people are interested in the letters, historians have transcribed these letters into text. Because the text is still difficult for primary grades, use the modified version of the text. Project the modified version and read the text aloud to students.
8. Have students identify what is going on. Is Abigail upset? Why? What does she want to know?
9. Repeat this process with the second letter from September 16, 1774. Project both the original version and then read aloud the modified text version. First have students identify how many days later this letter was received. Is this letter any different? Is Abigail still upset? How do you know? How long has John been gone? What has been happening around her? What evidence supports that activity?
10. Close the lesson by asking students what women in their lives do for them. Are any of these tasks the same as Abigail? Have students recall a time when they or someone they know had to travel from their families. What did this feel like for the families left at home?

Extensions:

1. Have students develop a set of questions for Abigail if they could interview her.
2. Have students write a brief letter to Abigail sharing a time when they, too, were upset when someone they loved left.
3. Have students find a portrait or photograph of another woman in the book, *A is for Abigail*. Then have them find two facts about this very important woman in history.

http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=L17740914aa&bc=%2Fdigitaladams%2Farchive%2Fbrowse%2Fletters_1774_1777.php

ORIGINAL:

Braintree Sepbr. 14, 1774

Dearest Friend

Five Weeks have past and not one line have I received. I had rather give a dollar for a letter by the post, tho the consequence should be that I Eat but one meal for these 3 a day for these 3 weeks to come. Every one I see is inquiring after you and when did I hear. All my intelligence is collected from the news paper and I can only reply that I saw by that, that you arrived such a day. I know your fondness for writing and your inclination to let me hear from you by the first safe conveyance which makes me suspect that some Letter or other has miscaried, but I hope now you have arrived at Philidelphia you will find means to convey me some intelignace.

MODIFIED:

Five weeks have past since I have heard from you. I would pay a \$1.00 to hear from you, but then I would be only able to eat one meal a day for the next three weeks. Everyone is asking about you and what I have heard from you. I have only learned about you in the newspaper, and have told people I say that you have arrived. I know you love to write and will write me as soon as you feel it is safe. I hope you have arrived in Philadelphia and will write to me soon.

ORIGINAL:

September 16, 1774

I am rejoiced to hear you are well; I want to know many more perticuliars than you wrote me, and hope soon to hear from you again. I dare not trust myself with the thought of how long you may ~~illegible~~ perhaps be absent. I only count the weeks already past, and they amount to 5. I am not so lonely as I should have been, without my two Neighbours. We make a table full at meal times, all the rest of their time they spend in the office. Never were two ~~borders~~ persons who gave a family less trouble than they do. It is at last determined that Mr. Rice keep the School here. Indeed he has kept ever since he has been here, but not with any expectation that He should be continued, but the people finding no small difference between him and his predecessor chose he should be continued. I have not sent Johnny. He goes very steadily to Mr. Thaxter who

I believe takes very good care of him, and as they seem to have a likeing to each other believe it will be best to continue him with him. However when you return we can then consult what will be best. I am certain that if he does not get so much good, he gets less harm, and I have always thought it ~~illegible~~ of very great importance that children should in the early part of life be unaccustomed to such examples as would tend to corrupt the purity of their words and actions that they may chill with horrouat the sound of an oath, and blush with indignation at an obscene expression. These first principal[s] which grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength neither time nor custom can totally eradicate.-You will perhaps be tired. No let it serve by way of relaxation from the more important concerns of the Day, and be such an amusement as your little hermitage used to afford you here. You have before you to express myself in the words of the Bishop the greatest National concerns that ever came before any people, and if the prayers and peti[tions] assend unto Heaven which are daily offerd for you, wisdom will flow down as a stream and Rithousness as the mighty waters, and your deliberations will make glad the cities of our God.

MODIFIED:

I am so happy to hear you are well. I want to know more about what is going on than what you wrote me in your last letter and hope to hear from you again. I can't think about how long you will be gone. I have only counted the weeks that have past, and it has been five weeks. I am not as lonely because I have two neighbors. We eat meals together and the rest of the time they spend in the office. They rarely bother me. Mr. Rice is teaching at a school here and has continued to do so even if people see no difference between him and the last teacher. I have not sent Johnny to school. He goes often to Mr. Thaxter who I believe takes very good care of him. However, when you return we can then consult what will be best.