

# DISCOVER AMERICA

## Course 26 - Teacher Guide



### Distance and Devotion: The Letters of John and Abigail Adams

Table of  
**Contents**

Themes & Values  
Learning Objectives  
Key Terms  
Introduction  
Lesson  
Let's Write a Letter  
Caring Pictures  
Resources  
Notes

# Kindergarten Teacher Guide



Credit: PBS

## Key Themes

- Adaptability and Creativity in Communication
- Connection Across Time and Space
- Leadership and Sacrifice
- Resilience

## Core Values

- Community
- Faith
- Life

# Learning Objectives

## Students will be able to

- Summarize the historical events surrounding John and Abigail Adams' lives, including the tensions leading up to the American Revolution and the roles they played in shaping American history.
- Identify how Abigail Adams supported and encouraged John Adams in his endeavors, such as representing Massachusetts in the First Continental Congress and the Second Continental Congress.
- Explain the significance of communication in maintaining relationships, as demonstrated by the heartfelt letters exchanged between John and Abigail Adams during times of separation and challenges in their lives.





# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten

## Key Terms

- 01 **Declaration of Independence:** the document that proclaimed that the 13 original colonies were “free and independent states.”
- 02 **diplomatic:** able to control a difficult situation without upsetting anyone.
- 03 **First Continental Congress:** a meeting of delegates from each of the thirteen colonies.
- 04 **First Lady:** a title given to the wife of the President of the United States.
- 05 **public:** having to do with all members of a community.
- 06 **rebellion:** an armed fight against one’s government.
- 07 **Second Continental Congress:** a gathering of delegates who decided to create an organized army of colonists to fight in the war.
- 08 **Stamp Act:** Britain’s first direct tax on the colonies which taxed newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, legal documents, and playing cards.

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten

# Introduction

## TELL Students

I have something very special to share with you today. Have you ever received a letter from a friend or family member? Well, imagine if I told you about a time when people didn't have phones or computers to talk to each other. Instead, they wrote letters.

## ASK Students

Have you ever received a letter from someone?

## TELL Students

Today, we are going to learn about two important people named John and Abigail Adams who wrote a lot of letters to each other.

They were an extraordinary couple who lived a long time ago when America was just beginning. Even though they could not talk to each other like we do now, they wrote letters all the time. In their letters, John and Abigail talked about everything! They shared stories about their day, their dreams for the future, and even their feelings. And you know what? Many of these letters still exist today, like little time capsules that let us peek into their lives.



# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten

# Introduction

## ASK Students

What do you know about John and Abigail Adams?

## TELL Students

Today, each of you are going to imagine you are John or Abigail. You will write a letter to a friend, just like they did. You can tell your friend or family member about your day, share a story, or just let them know how much you appreciate them. Are you ready to start learning about writing letters? Let's see what wonderful letters you can create!



## ASK Students

Who will you write your letter to? Is it faster to call, text a friend, or write a letter?

## TELL Students

That is right! Texting is much faster! But, John and Abigail Adams did not have that option. John was the second President of the United States, and Abigail was his wife and the First Lady. The **First Lady** is a title given to the wife of the President of the United States. Even though they lived a long time ago, they are still famous today for something very special—writing letters! John had a very important job, so he had to travel a lot. But that didn't stop him and Abigail from staying close. They wrote letters to each other all the time, sharing stories, secrets, and a lot of love. And guess what? Many of these old letters are still around today, like treasures from the past!

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten

# Introduction

## ASK Students

What do John and Abigail Adams' letters tell us about their life?

## TELL Students

Even though John and Abigail lived in a different time, their letters help us understand how much they cared for each other and how important they were in history.



Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more about John and Abigail Adams.

## WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon Ep. 26: [John and Abigail Adams](#)



# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten Lesson

## TELL Students

In 1764, John and Abigail were married, starting a beautiful journey together. Over the next eight years, they welcomed five children into their family. Meanwhile, across the colonies, tensions were rising against Great Britain. When the Stamp Act was passed in 1765, causing colonists to protest against the unfair taxes, John initially hesitated to join the rebellion. A **rebellion** is an armed fight against one's government. John worried about his legal career in Boston. The **Stamp Act** was Britain's first direct tax on the colonies which taxed newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, legal documents, and playing cards. However, as the call for freedom grew louder, John realized he couldn't stay silent. He began writing powerful essays in newspapers, fighting for justice against British mistreatment.



## ASK Students

Why was John Adams initially hesitant to join the rebellion?

## TELL Students

Even with John busy in Boston and the rest of the family living on their rural Massachusetts farm, their love stayed strong. Through heartfelt letters, they shared their affection and longing for each other. In a September 1764 letter, John expressed his deep love for Abigail, eagerly awaiting her return. Abigail reciprocated with equal warmth, reassuring John of their well-being and their shared love for their family. These letters, filled with love and devotion, remain a testament to their enduring bond.



# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten Lesson

## ASK Students

How did John and Abigail Adams keep their love strong?

## TELL Students

In 1774, John got an important opportunity to represent Massachusetts in the First Continental Congress. The **First Continental Congress** was a meeting of delegates from each of the thirteen colonies. This meant he had to leave his family and go to Philadelphia. While he was away, Abigail, his wife, encouraged him to do his duty for their country. She wrote to him, "You cannot be, ... nor do I wish to see you an inactive Spectator." Abigail was telling John, "You can't just sit and watch, and I don't want you to. You have to help!"



Credit: Britannica

## ASK Students

What did Abigail inspire John to do in her letter?

## TELL Students

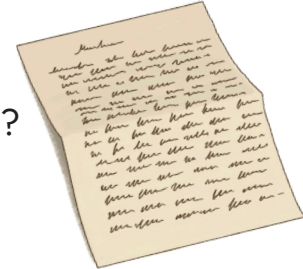
After the First Continental Congress didn't bring the changes the colonists hoped for, they gathered again for the Second Continental Congress in May 1775. The **Second Continental Congress** was a gathering of delegates who decided to create an organized army of colonists to fight in the war. Once more, John represented Massachusetts in Philadelphia. In a letter to his wife, Abigail, he expressed how much he relied on her advice. Abigail kept John updated on public feelings. **Public** means having to do with all members of a community. She told him that the colonies were ready for a more stable government from Congress.



# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten Lesson

## ASK Students

What information did Abigail provide to John in their letters?



## TELL Students

That is right! Abigail expressed how the public felt in her letters to John. This was very helpful as he represented the colonists in the Second Continental Congress. John also represented the colonists in a special group called the Committee of Five, which included Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams. This group was chosen by Congress to write the **Declaration of Independence**. This document proclaimed that the 13 original colonies were “free and independent states.” The day before Congress officially approved the document on July 4th, John eagerly shared his belief with Abigail that this day would be celebrated for generations to come. He imagined grand celebrations across the continent, filled with solemn acts of devotion, parades, games, bells, bonfires, and illuminations.



## ASK Students

What holiday did John imagine would be celebrated for years to come? Was he correct?

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten Lesson

## TELL Students

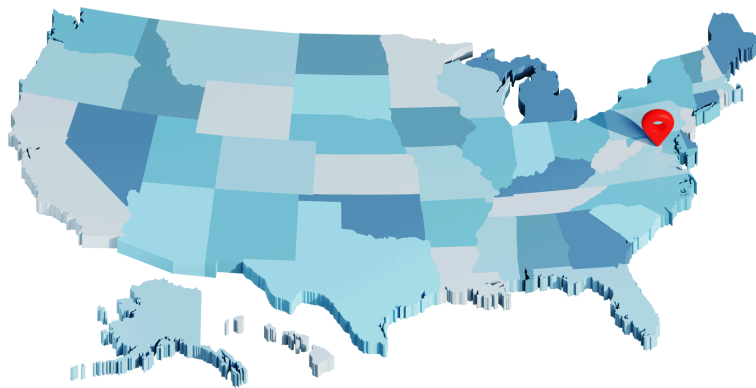
With the Declaration of Independence, the colonies became independent from Great Britain. During the Revolutionary War, John took on important diplomatic roles in Paris and Amsterdam. Someone who is **diplomatic** is able to control a difficult situation without upsetting anyone. He did not see Abigail again until 1784, which she referred to as her "widowhood." Upon returning home in 1788 from his diplomatic missions, John didn't get much family time. In 1789, he became the first Vice President of the United States.

## ASK Students

What kept John away from Abigail during this time?

## TELL Students

In 1797, John became the second President of the United States after George Washington's retirement. Although Abigail chose to stay in Massachusetts, John realized he needed her by his side. He pleaded with her to join him in the nation's capital, and she agreed.



## ASK Students

Why did John need Abigail?

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten Lesson

## TELL Students

During John's presidency, Abigail became known as the "chief domestic minister without portfolio," advising him on many issues. However, John lost his bid for re-election in 1800 to Thomas Jefferson. After leaving the White House, they returned to their home in Massachusetts, which was later named "Quincy" after Abigail's grandfather.

## ASK Students

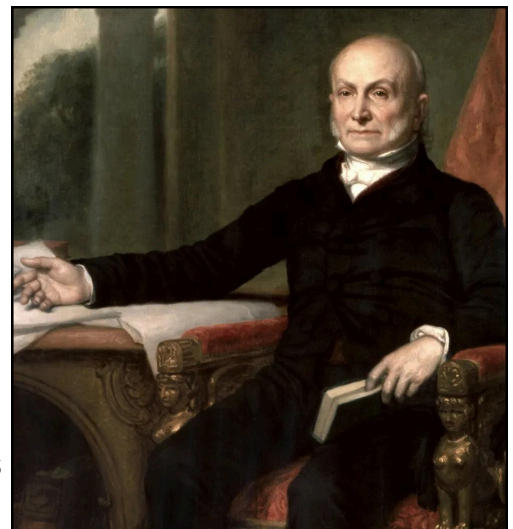
Why do you think John and Abigail returned to Massachusetts?

## TELL Students

On October 28, 1818, Abigail passed away at their Quincy home, speaking her final words to John. John himself died on July 4, 1826, exactly one year after his son, John Quincy, became president.

## ASK Students

Do you think John and Abigail Adams inspired John Quincy Adams to work hard and serve his country as President of the United States?



Credit: The White House

## TELL Students

From John and Abigail's story, we learn that even when separated because of responsibilities, there are many ways to show our loved ones we care. Whether through letters or calls, we can bridge the distance and keep our hearts close.

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten Lesson

## WATCH

Learn More With Liberty: The Art of Communication: Lessons from the Letters of John and Abigail Adams



# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten

# Let's Write a Letter

**Objective:** To understand the importance of keeping in touch with loved ones and to practice writing skills.

## **Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Crayons or markers
- Letter worksheet, included in lesson guide
- Stickers (optional)
- Envelopes (optional)

## ***Introduction***

Gather the students and begin by asking them if they have ever been away from someone they love for a long time, such as a friend or family member. Remind students that before phones and computers, people used to write letters to stay in touch, just like John and Abigail Adams did. Briefly review the story of John and Abigail Adams, emphasizing how they kept in touch through letters despite being apart.

## ***Activity Explanation***

Let the students know that they will now have the chance to write their own letters to someone special to them.

## ***Letter Writing***

Give each student the worksheet included or a piece of paper and crayons/markers. Encourage them to write or draw a picture for someone they miss or care about. They can write about what they've been doing, how much they miss the person, or anything else they want to share.

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten

## Let's Write a Letter

### ***Decorate***

If time allows, students can decorate their letters with stickers or additional drawings.

### ***Closing***

Once everyone has finished their letters, gather the students and ask if anyone wants to share who they wrote to and what they wrote about. Encourage positive and supportive feedback from classmates.

### ***Optional***

If envelopes are available, students can fold their letters neatly and put them in envelopes. They can address the envelopes with the recipient's name (with help from the teacher if needed).

### ***Delivery***

If possible, allow students to take their letters home to give to their intended recipients. Alternatively, collect the letters and promise to deliver them.

### ***Conclusion***

Remind the students that even though they may be apart from their loved ones, writing letters is a special way to stay connected and show how much they care. Encourage them to keep in touch with the people they love, even if they can't see them every day.





# LET'S WRITE A LETTER

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for writing the body of a letter.

**TO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten

# Caring Pictures

## **Objective**

Encourage kindergarten students to explore and express ways of showing care and kindness to their friends and family through drawing.

## **Materials Needed**

- Large sheets of paper
- Crayons or markers



## **Introduction**

Begin by discussing with the students the importance of showing care and kindness to the people we love, such as our friends and family. Explain that there are many different ways to show we care, and today they will be drawing pictures to represent some of these ways.

## **Brainstorming**

Engage the students in a brainstorming session by asking them, "How do we show our friends and family that we care about them?" Encourage them to think about actions they can take or things they can say to demonstrate care and kindness.

## **Drawing Activity**

Distribute large sheets of paper and crayons/markers to each student. Explain that they will be drawing a picture of one way they can show care to their friends or family.

## **Guided Drawing**

Offer suggestions for what the students can draw, such as:

- Hugging a family member
- Sharing toys with a friend
- Saying "I love you" to a family member
- Helping a friend who is sad
- Drawing a picture for a family member

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten

## Caring Pictures

### ***Drawing Time***

Allow the students ample time to work on their drawings. Circulate around the room to provide assistance and encouragement as needed.

### ***Sharing***

Once the drawings are complete, invite the students to share their artwork with the class. Encourage them to explain their drawing and how it shows care and kindness to their friends or family.



### ***Reflection***

After all students have had a chance to share, facilitate a brief discussion about the different ways they can show care and kindness to others. Emphasize that even small acts of kindness can make a big difference in someone's day.

### ***Display***

Display the drawings around the classroom or in a designated area, creating a "Wall of Caring." This allows the students to see each other's artwork and serves as a reminder of the importance of showing care and kindness to others.

### ***Conclusion***

Conclude the activity by thanking the students for their participation and reminding them to continue showing care and kindness to their friends and family in their everyday lives.

# John and Abigail Adams - Kindergarten Resources

1. <https://millercenter.org/president/adams/life-before-the-presidency>
2. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/adams-abigail/>
3. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0038>
4. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0049>
5. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0116>
6. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0110>
7. <https://millercenter.org/president/adams/family-life>
8. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0138>
9. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0259>
10. <https://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=L17760331aa>
11. <https://ellistheelephant.com/remember-the-ladies/>
12. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-12-02-0042>
13. <https://newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/john-quincy-adams-grieves-mother-abigail-adams/>

