

Lesson 2: John and Abigail Adams

☐ Getting Started

When young Abigail Smith met John Adams, a lawyer, they were at first not impressed with each other, yet they developed a strong attraction that grew into love relatively quickly. In the reading for today, you'll learn about the courtship and early married life of Abigail and John and, in your activities for the lesson, you'll focus on the importance of citations and on the structures of well-written paragraphs. You'll also consider what Abigail's parents might have thought about John Adams as a suitor for their daughter.

Stuff You Need

- *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution*
by Natalie S. Bober

Ideas to Think About

- How do the lives of individuals interact with, influence, and become transformed by the events of the time and place in which they live?
- How does the availability of primary sources influence historical writing?
- Can attention to the structure of a paragraph and the role of different component parts allow authors to craft more persuasive and powerful writing?

Things to Know

- The sentences in a paragraph should all connect to and provide support for its main idea.
- A **topic sentence** states the main point of the paragraph.
- A **transition** connects one part of a piece of writing to another in a logical and seamless way.
- **Supporting sentences** or **supporting evidence** provide proof that the main point of the paragraph is valid, deepen the reader's understanding of the topic, or provide necessary background information.
- A **concluding observation** in a paragraph summarizes the paragraph and/or connects the ideas covered in one paragraph to the ideas that will come later in the larger body of writing.
- Authors provide **citations** when sharing information that they learned from another source and when quoting directly from other writings to allow readers to view the same sources that the author used when writing the book, allowing them to more accurately assess the validity of the author's interpretation and/or pursue their own research on the topic.

☐ **Reading and Questions**

Read Chapters 3 and 4 of *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution* by Natalie S. Bober. These chapters cover the early years in the marriage of Abigail and John Adams.

The questions for these chapters will focus, in part, on the bibliographic information referenced in the reading. You'll note that whenever the author quotes directly from a source, she includes a small number at the end of the sentence or paragraph in which the quotation appears. These are called endnote reference numbers, and each refers to a detailed endnote in the Reference Notes section at the back of the book. The endnotes are organized by chapter, and they allow the reader to easily match up a quotation with the original source from which it was drawn.

Citations are important because they let the reader know where the author found his or her information. If the author has provided a full citation, interested readers can easily identify where the information or quotation came from and look up that source themselves. This allows readers to make up their own minds about whether or not the author has relied on valid sources of information and whether or not the author has interpreted that information correctly.

Of course, using information from another source without giving credit for that source is also dishonest because the writer would be failing to give other people credit for their ideas and for their contributions to the writer's own ideas, research, and writing. It is always important to give credit by providing a citation to let readers know where the author found particular information or ideas. If a writer fails to cite a source, it is plagiarism, which is taken very seriously in schools and universities and in the publishing world. The consequences of plagiarizing the work of another writer can be quite severe (for example, in many universities plagiarism is grounds for a student being suspended for a semester or more and receiving a failing grade in a course), so properly citing the sources you use in your own work is an important habit to get into.

1. In the 25th paragraph of Chapter 3, which begins "In his letters, John often played the role...", the author describes Abigail's response to some criticism in John's correspondence with her. Use the reference notes at the back of the book to determine the source for the quotations in that paragraph.

2. In the notes referring to correspondence in Chapter 3, what information does the author provide to the reader?

3. The third note for Chapter 4 says that it was "Quoted in Bancroft, 3:77-78." Use the Bibliography (at the end of the book) to provide the full bibliographic entry for Bancroft.

4. Do all of the sources cited in Chapters 3 and 4 seem to be valid and reliable sources of information about Abigail Adams, people connected to her, and her time period?

Activities

☐ Activity 1: Paragraph Analysis

In writing, sometimes we can get away with just writing a list of unconnected words (a grocery list) or a simple sentence or two (a note to a sibling reminding her to walk the dog). But usually the ideas we're trying to convey are complex enough that they will require multiple sentences that must be organized in a way that will make sense and allow the reader to easily follow what we are trying to share.

All of the individual sentences in a successful paragraph focus on a main idea, providing evidence and support that will help the reader understand that idea more fully and become convinced of its validity. A paragraph usually includes these main parts:

- A **topic sentence** that states the main point of the paragraph. This is usually the first sentence in the paragraph, but it may sometimes be the second sentence if the author has included a transition at the very beginning of the sentence.
- **Supporting sentences** that demonstrate or provide evidence for the main point of the paragraph, deepen the reader's understanding of the topic, or provide necessary background information.
- A **concluding observation** that summarizes the paragraph and/or connects the ideas covered in one paragraph to the ideas that will come later in the larger body of writing. This observation usually occurs at or near the end of the paragraph.

The following sample paragraph illustrates how sentences can function in a paragraph:

The platypus is an uncommonly odd creature. (<—**Topic sentence**) Unlike most mammals, the female platypus lays eggs instead of giving birth to live offspring. (<—**Gives an example that shows how uncommon the animal is.**) It looks like a strange mash-up of several types of animals. (<—**Provides an illustration of its oddness.**) It has the feet of an otter, the snout of a duck, and the tail of a beaver. (<—**Describes the "mash-up" in more detail.**) In fact, when European explorers first saw the platypus, they thought it was a clever hoax created by someone who had sewn together parts of various animals! (<—**Gives background information and deepens the reader's understanding of the animal's strangeness.**)

Although it may be tempting to examine this strange critter up close, be careful — the male can inject you with very painful venom. (<—**Gives a concluding**

observation and provides additional evidence of the animal's oddness.)

Ask a parent which option you should complete for this activity.

Option 1

Read the paragraph on the activity page (it is the 12th paragraph of Chapter 3) and then complete the "Paragraph Analysis" (Option 1) activity page related to the paragraph.

Option 2

Read the 10th paragraph of Chapter IV, which begins, "The new king's first minister, William Pitt...". You should also read the paragraphs that come right before and right after this one to understand the paragraph in context and see if there are transitions between paragraphs. Then complete the "Paragraph Analysis" (Option 2) activity pages.

☐ **Activity 2: John Adams the Suitor**

Abigail Smith's parents, especially her mother, were not initially overly enthusiastic about John Adams as a potential suitor for Abigail. In this activity, you are considering whether or not you want to grant permission for your daughter to marry John Adams. Think about some of the pros and cons of Adams as a potential marriage partner for Abigail and consider the role of marriage in colonial life more broadly. Complete the page, "John Adams, The Suitor."

Wrapping Up

As John and Abigail Adams settled into married life, tensions between the British crown and the colonies were beginning to rise. Soon, these tensions would spill over into violence and, eventually, revolution. As you'll discover in the next lesson, Abigail and John were in the middle of it all.

Paragraph Analysis

Part I

Directions: Analyze each sentence and determine how it functions in the paragraph. Include one or more of the following statements, or you can use your own wording.

States the main point of the paragraph	Supplies background information about...
Explains...	Describes...
Gives an example of...	Deepens my understanding of...
Provides transition to (next line/next paragraph)	Summarizes..

(1) But Abigail's mother was not pleased about this attraction. (2) She had given her blessing to the marriage of her eldest daughter to Richard Cranch on November 25, 1762. (3) But she looked on John Adams as a struggling country lawyer whose lack of grace and polish, rude outbursts, and moody silences were not a fit match for her fragile but gifted middle daughter. (4) She had hoped that Abigail would marry into a more "noble" family.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Part II

Instructions: In the following paragraph, two sentences don't quite fit. Identify which sentences and explain why they don't work.

(1) John enjoyed farm life. (2) He complained often of the smell of cows and the lack of stores in the country. (3) Even though his work as a lawyer was time consuming, he often did gardening work himself. (4) And he was pleased that the farm provided much of the family's food. (5) At night, he and Abigail would read together.

Sentence # ____ Its problem: _____

Sentence # ____ Its problem: _____

Paragraph Analysis

Part I

Directions: Analyze each sentence and determine how it functions in the paragraph. Include one or more of the following statements, or you can use your own wording.

States the main point of the paragraph	Supplies background information about...
Explains...	Describes...
Gives an example of...	Deepens my understanding of...
Provides transition to (next line/next paragraph)	Summarizes..

(1) The new king's first minister, William Pitt, expected financial assistance from America. (2) He tightened up customs duties and reintroduced the Writs of Assistance. (3) These writs allowed customs officers to break into ships, shops, homes, or warehouses suspected of containing smuggled goods without a specific warrant. (4) The colonists were angry. (5) This was a breach of the constitutional liberties of all Englishmen. (6) Arbitrary search was the weapon of tyrants, they said. (7) It must be resisted at its very beginning.

1) _____

2) _____

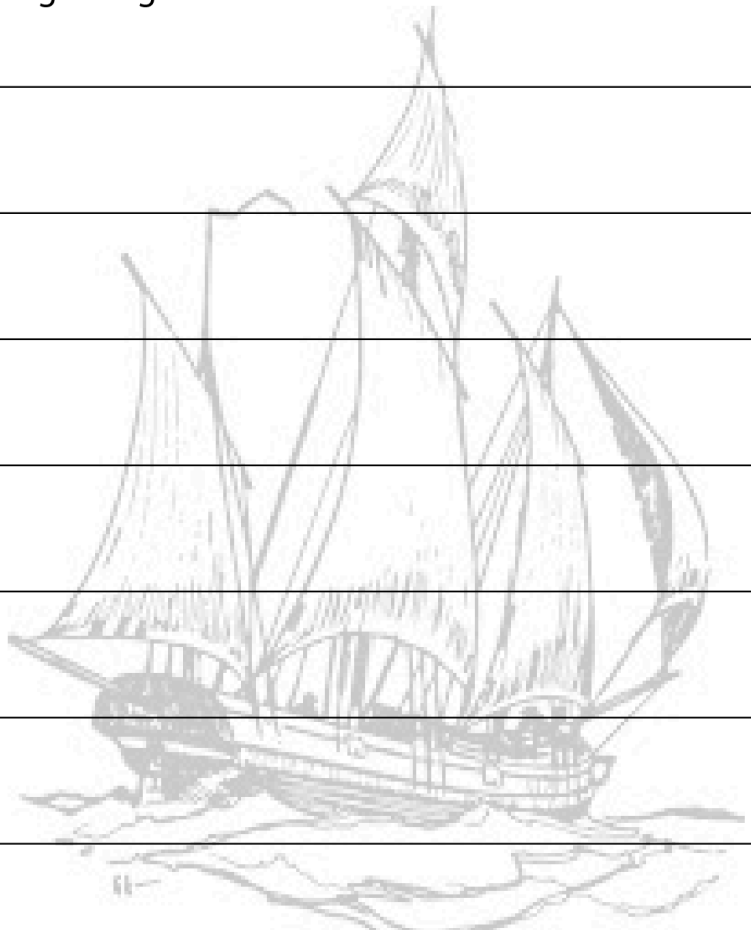
3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____



Paragraph Analysis

Part II

Instructions: In the following paragraph, two sentences don't quite fit. Identify which sentences and explain why they don't work. Next, write a replacement for each sentence, using today's reading to give you ideas for content that might work.

(1) John enjoyed farm life. (2) He complained often of the smell of cows and the lack of stores in the country. (3) Even though his work as a lawyer was time consuming, he often did gardening work himself. (4) And he was pleased that the farm provided much of the family's food. (5) At night, he and Abigail would read together.

Sentence # _____

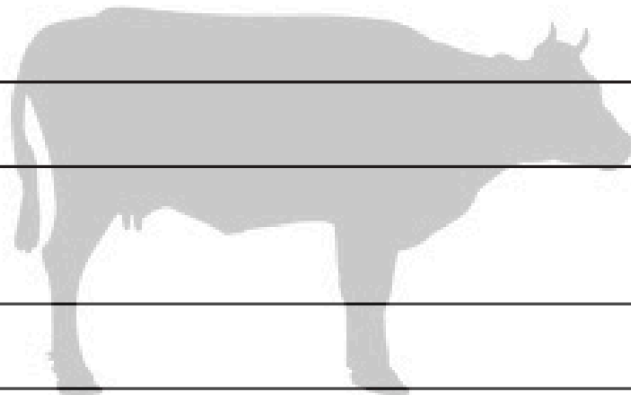
Its problem:

Your replacement:

Sentence # _____

Its problem:

Your replacement:



John Adams,

The Suitor



Instructions: Imagine that you are Reverend and Mrs. Smith, young Abigail's parents. Make a list of the positive and negative attributes that you see in John Adams and his family.

Positive Attributes	Negative Attributes

Why do you think the choice of a husband was so important to young women and their families in the colonial era?

Lesson 2: John and Abigail Adams

Getting Started

✿ Ideas to Think About

- How do the lives of individuals interact with, influence, and become transformed by the events of the time and place in which they live?
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- Can attention to the structure of a paragraph and the role of different component parts allow authors to craft more persuasive and powerful writing?



Things to Know

- The sentences in a paragraph should all connect to and provide support for its main idea.
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• Skills

- Record bibliographic information (e.g., author, title, page number) for all notes and sources according to a standard format. (LA)
- Differentiate between paraphrasing and plagiarism and identify the importance of using valid and reliable sources. (LA)
- Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept. (LA)

Introducing the Lesson

In the reading for today, your child will learn about the courtship and early married life of Abigail and John. You may wish to preview these chapters to determine their appropriateness for your child and to make note of any topics you may want to discuss before and/or after your child reads the chapters. In the activities for the lesson, your child will focus on the importance of citations and on the structure of well-written paragraphs. She will also consider the suitability of John Adams as a suitor for young Abigail from the point of view of the Smiths.

Reading and Questions

1. In the 25th paragraph of Chapter 3, which begins "In his letters, John often played the role...", the author describes Abigail's response to some criticism in John's correspondence with her. Use the reference notes at the back of the book to determine the source for the quotations in that paragraph.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, April 12, 1764 from The Book of Abigail and John: Selected Letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784, edited by L. H. Butterfield, Marc Friedlaender, and Mary-Jo Kline. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975 pp. 28-30. (Your child may just list the author, recipient, and date.)

2. In the notes referring to correspondence in Chapter 3, what information does the author provide to the reader?

The author of the letter, the recipient of the letter, the date, and the source where the book's author found the correspondence.

3. The third note for Chapter 4 says that it was "Quoted in Bancroft, 3:77-78." Use the Bibliography (at the end of the book) to provide the full bibliographic entry for Bancroft.

Bancroft, George. History of the United States. Vol. 3. New York: Dr. Appleton and Co., 1897.

4. Do all of the sources cited in Chapters 3 and 4 seem to be valid and reliable sources of information about Abigail Adams, people connected to her, and her time period?

The author has selected valid and reliable sources, drawing frequently from the correspondence of Abigail Adams herself, her husband, and other family members.

Activities

Activity 1: Paragraph Analysis

In this activity, your child will begin to explore paragraph structure by analyzing a paragraph from the day's reading and then by finding the problems in a poorly executed paragraph. Your child will continue to work on paragraph development throughout this unit and other units of this level of Moving Beyond the Page.

There are two options for this paragraph analysis activity. The content and vocabulary of the paragraph in Option 1 are easier to understand than in Option 2's paragraph. Option 1 also provides more guidance for analyzing the paragraph. Glance over each option and decide which one would be more appropriate for your child.

Option 1

Answer Key (Option 1)

Part I

Here are suggested comments for each sentence. Your child's answers may differ but should make sense.

1. But Abigail's mother was not pleased about this attraction. (*The "but" transitions from the previous paragraph, states the main point of the paragraph, and is also the topic sentence of the paragraph.*)
2. She had given her blessing to the marriage of her eldest daughter to Richard Cranch on November 25, 1762. (*Provides background information*)

3. But she looked on John Adams as a struggling country lawyer whose lack of grace and polish, rude outbursts, and moody silences were not a fit match for her fragile but gifted middle daughter. (*Gives specific examples to illustrate why the mother wasn't pleased.*)

4. She had hoped that Abigail would marry into a more "noble" family. (*Concluding thought showing what the mother did want.*)

Part II

The out-of-place sentences are #2 and #5.

#2 doesn't work because it implies John doesn't like the farm, but the paragraph is about how he does enjoy it

#5 doesn't have to do with the farm at all, so it shouldn't be in the paragraph.

Option 2

Answer Key (Option 2).

Part I:

Here are suggested comments for each sentence. Your child's answers may differ but should make sense.

1. The new king's first minister, William Pitt, expected financial assistance from America. (*Illustrates the situation brought up in the last sentence of the previous paragraph. Sets the stage for the current paragraph. Can be considered a topic sentence.*)

2. He tightened up customs duties and reintroduced the Writs of Assistance. (*Provides examples of how Pitt tried to get financial assistance.*)

3. These writs allowed customs officers to break into ships, shops, homes, or warehouses suspected of containing smuggled goods without a specific warrant. (*Provides background information to explain the Writs*)

4. The colonists were angry. (*Explains the results of the unreasonable actions described in the previous sentence.*)

5. This was a breach of the constitutional liberties of all Englishmen. (*Explains why colonists were angry.*)

6. Arbitrary search was the weapon of tyrants, they said. (*Deepens the reader's understanding of why colonists opposed the writs.*)

7. It must be resisted at its very beginning. (*Transitions to the next paragraph about resistance.*)

Part II

The out-of-place sentences are #2 and #5.

#2 doesn't work because it implies John doesn't like the farm, but the paragraph is about how he does enjoy it

#5 doesn't have to do with the farm at all, so it shouldn't be in the paragraph

Your child's replacement sentences should fit the flow and theme of the paragraph (John's happiness about farm life).

Activity 2: John Adams the Suitor

In this activity, your child will consider the positive and negative attributes of John Adams as a suitor for young Abigail Smith. An answer key has been provided with some possible answers that your child may list — she may not include all of the details listed but ought to be able to think of at least 2-3 positive and 2-3 negative qualities. For the question, "Why do you think the choice of a husband was so important to young women and their families in the colonial era?" your child may mention that women were dependent on their husbands for economic survival and had no legal identity outside of that of their husbands (p. 10). Also, a good match would ensure that a woman would have a secure and comfortable future.

Answer Key

Possible Positive Attributes	Possible Negative Attributes
John Adams Sr. held a position of responsibility in his rural community and was well-known and liked.	He is rude and moody.
John's family members are good, solid people.	He is struggling economically.
John owns a house and farm.	His family is not "noble" enough.
His law practice seems to be growing.	He's a full-time lawyer.
He is smart and driven.	There are concerns about what the neighbors will think.
He treats Abigail well and is obviously in love with her.	

Wrapping Up**Questions to Discuss**

- How do you think the availability of thousands of letters by and to Abigail Adams influences the work of historians writing about her life? Without those letters, do you think we would know as much about Abigail Adams? (The correspondence of the Adams family is a treasure trove for historians -- without these documents, it would be far harder to understand the personal life, views, and personality of Abigail Adams. Since she was the wife of one president and mother of another, other people in her time period would have written about her and left historical records, but the correspondence provides a unique window into her life. The number and quality of primary sources available to a historian can make a tremendous difference in the kind of work that the historian is able to do.)
- How do citations help a book's readers and other researchers interested in the same topic or a related topic? (Your child's answers may vary, but she should understand that citations can help readers ascertain the quality of research that the author has done, weigh the validity of the sources used, and go to the original source if desired to do their own research. Citations can help other researchers identify sources that they have not yet run across that may help them in their research.)
- Today's lesson covered some political events happening around Abigail Adams, like the reintroduction of the Writs of Assistance, alongside daily details of the personal lives of John and Abigail, like their long walks together as a young married couple. If someone was going to write a biography of our family, what might they include as important political events going on around us? What might they include about our daily life?

Things to Review

- Review your child's responses to the questions about the day's reading.
- Review your child's activity pages.