

Lesson 8: Genre

☐ Getting Started

In this lesson, you'll learn more about the overseas voyages of the Adams family and explore the idea of literary genre.

Stuff You Need

- *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution* by Natalie S. Bober
- crayons, markers, or colored pencils* (Activity 2 - Option 2)

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?
- What is the purpose of biography and how can biographies influence and inspire readers?
- How does an author's choice of genre influence his or her decisions and the resulting literary work?

Things to Know

- A **genre** is a category of literature that is defined by similarities in theme, style, or structure.
- **Adventure stories** focus on exciting quests or perilous situations and are usually full of action, danger, and thrills.
- **Historical fiction** stories are set in a real time and place in the past and often feature people, places, and events that really happened. Unlike nonfiction historical works or biographies, the author may also invent new characters, imagine new situations, or make up details that are not verifiable in the historical record.
- **Mysteries** usually focus on the solving of a crime or puzzle, with secrets and clues revealed throughout the story.
- **Myths** are legends and are often handed down from generation to generation. They tend to explain historical events or natural phenomena and may involve deities or mythical creatures.
- **Science fiction** stories are driven by events related to real, imagined, or theoretical science. Many science fiction stories take place in the future or on other planets.
- **Realistic fiction** stories could actually happen. These stories seem real to the reader and often include details of daily life.

- **Satire** is a form of literature that uses ridicule or sarcasm to show the shortcomings and vices of a person, organization, or institution. Often, satire is used to make a point about a public figure or government in an effort to make a political or social statement.
- A **parody** is related to satire in that it is ridicule-based, but whereas satire is usually making a social or political point, parodies are sometimes just for fun. In a parody, another work is imitated, usually in a way that pokes fun at the original.
- **Graphic novels** tell a story using both written words and sequential art, often similar to comic books, but they can be more complex and experimental in their design. Japanese manga is a well-known form of graphic novel.
- Readers can interpret **allegories** to find a hidden meaning in the text. The story may be a simple one on the surface, but embedded in the story is another meaning, usually a life lesson, that can be teased out.

☐ Reading and Questions

Read Chapters 15 and 16 of *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution* by Natalie S. Bober and then answer these questions.

1. Why might John and Abigail Adams have had reservations about Royall Tyler's suitability as a boyfriend for Nabby?

2. How are Abigail Adams' preparations for overseas travel as described in Chapter 15 different from what they might be today?

3. What was Abigail Adams's first impression of Paris?

4. Why did Nabby Adams break off her engagement with Royall Tyler?

Activities

☐ Activity 1: Matching Genres

Authors create a variety of different kinds of works that can be divided into genres. A **genre** is a category of literature that is defined by similarities in theme, style, or structure. In this activity, you'll learn more about genre and categorize book descriptions based on the genre that seems most appropriate to you.

Read over the list of genres in the "Things to Know" section. Use the definitions to help you complete the "Matching Genres" activity page.

☐ Activity 2: Experimenting with Genre

In this activity, you'll have the chance to experiment with genre on your own. First, look back over Chapters 15 and 16 of the reading and choose a scene or incident from the book that interests you. Perhaps you'll choose a scene of Royall Tyler talking about politics with Abigail and Nabby Adams by the fire, or Thomas Jefferson trying to convince Abigail to join him on a ship bound for Paris in July instead of leaving earlier. Or maybe you'll decide to focus on the stormy part of the trip once the ship was underway, or the happy reunion between Johnny Adams and his mother or Nabby Adams and her father.

On your own paper or using a computer, write a paragraph that summarizes the scene you chose based solely on known facts — do not add any details or make up any additions. Instead, simply summarize the events based on the nonfiction biography that you read. Then read over Option 1 and Option 2 and decide which you would prefer to complete. Option 1 focuses on a variety of genres while Option 2 allows you to create a graphic novel version.

Option 1: Your Choice of Genre

Look back over your summary of the event or incident that you selected. Then imagine that you are an author interested in writing about Abigail Adams but, unlike Natalie S. Bober, you don't want to write a nonfiction biography. Instead,

you'd like to try a different genre and you plan to fictionalize Abigail Adams's life a bit. Consider these options:

- *Historical Fiction* -- You may stick to the facts most of the time, but you might want to share details that we can't know from the historical record, like the specific words that people spoke to one another in a conversation, or you may want to add a made-up character to the scene or otherwise alter what happened.
- *Mystery* -- Perhaps you'd like to create a mystery in which one of the members of the Adams family plays a role?
- *Science Fiction* -- You could create a fantastic story about time travel or aliens that somehow involves this moment from the life of Abigail Adams.

Choose one of the genres above and rewrite the scene (in a paragraph or two) as it might appear in your version. Since you are taking a fictional approach, feel free to embellish the scene and make up details that will fit with the genre you chose.

For example, if you were choosing to rewrite the scene from the opening of Chapter 14 from the previous lesson's reading, in which Abigail and John Adams were reunited in September 1779 and spent some time taking long walks together and attending to the harvest and maintenance on the farm, as a mystery, it might look something like this:

Taking her husband's hand, Abigail led him into the kitchen herb garden, eager to show John how the rosemary had grown in the year and a half that he had been away. The aromas of sage and thyme filled the air, and bees buzzed around the early fall flowers of the herbs. "You won't believe it, John," she said, leaning happily on his arm, "it's nearly as tall as the fence and we've been using it in so many dishes."

But as they approached the white picket fence at the garden's edge, they stopped in their tracks. Where the large rosemary bush should have been, there was only a deep, muddy hole in the ground, surrounded by a few bruised and broken sprigs of the herb. "Oh my goodness," Abigail exclaimed, "this is just like what happened to Mrs. Warren last week! She went out to her own garden and found a rose bush missing." John looked concerned, furrowed his brow and said, "Abby, I think we should walk over to the Warrens' house and see if perhaps there's a connection."

Option 2: Graphic Novel

Imagine that you are rewriting the scene from the biography of Abigail Adams to use for a graphic novel. Use the "Graphic Novel" pages provided to retell the story in

graphic novel format, and then use colored pencils, markers, crayons, or other art supplies to color in your artwork.

If you'd like, you can combine the graphic novel genre with another genre and, instead of just retelling the true story from Abigail Adams's life, you can, instead, imagine the story in another genre (as described in Option 1) and then draw and write that genre-based version as a graphic novel.

Wrapping Up

The many genres of literature give authors so many options when deciding how to write about a particular topic, and they give readers just as many choices about the kinds of books they'd like to read. Exploring genres that are new to you can be a great way to expand your literary horizons!

Life Application

Do you find that the books that grab your attention tend to fall into a particular genre? Maybe you read a lot of mysteries, or you can't put down a good science fiction title. Perhaps you're reading your way through the public library's fantasy offerings, or you turn again and again to the nonfiction section for wonderful biographies. On your next trip to the library, make a point of checking out 2-3 books from genres that you don't normally read. You may want to ask a librarian for assistance — let him or her know what authors or series you currently enjoy and that you are interested in branching out and trying some other genres. Perhaps the librarian will be able to make some suggestions that will introduce you to a new genre and perhaps a new favorite book!

Matching Genres

Instructions: Imagine that you have a summer job working for a major publisher. Authors from all over the country are sending in book proposals, and your job is to read each proposal and then assign it to an appropriate editor, based on the genre to which the proposed book is the best fit. Read each book description on the left-hand side of the page and draw a line to match it to the appropriate genre on the right side of the page

In a far distant future, humans have merged with their technology to become half-biological, half-computerized life forms who are working to develop a solar spacecraft that will let them travel to other planets to mine the resources required for the next stage of technological development.

adventure story

Richly illustrated in the Japanese manga style, this adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz* is sure to catch the eye of comic fans and fans of the classic L. Frank Baum novel alike.

historical fiction

Set in France during World War II, this novel for teenagers tells the story of a young couple whose lives are torn apart by the war.

mystery

When a group of teenagers become separated from their group on a hiking trip, they wander, lost, into a hidden canyon where they will spend the most dangerous and thrilling week of their lives.

myth

In this uproariously funny spoof of the classic fairy tale "The Three Little Pigs," a rock band must play three little gigs, in spite of the constant jabs of a wolfish music critic whose sarcastic "huffing and puffing" criticisms will leave audiences laughing out loud.

science fiction

In this book for middle school readers, a homeschooled teen struggles to maintain her friendships with her best friends, twin sisters who have decided to leave their homeschool group and attend public high school in the fall.

allegory

On the surface, this story is about the birds who visit a front yard bird feeder and their fear of the cats who come by every morning looking for a meal. But a closer reading reveals this book's deeper message about the nature of fear and the modern world's response to terrorism.

realistic fiction

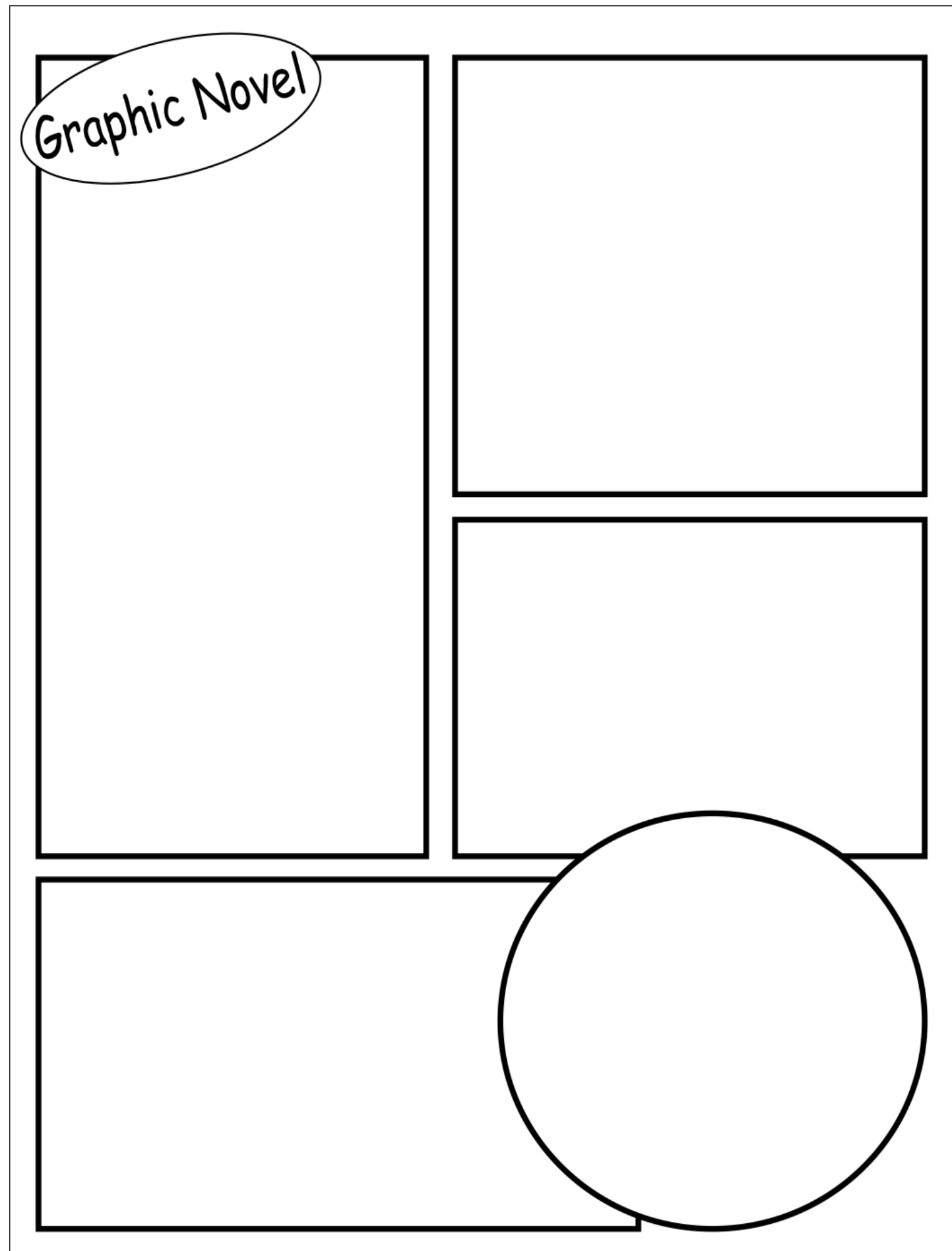
Have you ever wondered why trees are bare in winter? The Cherokee legend explaining this natural phenomenon is retold in this richly illustrated picture book for grades 2-5.

satire and parody

When a teen's computer containing the draft of her new novel and the video game she was writing is missing, it's up to her four friends who call themselves the Rainy Day Detectives to solve the case.

graphic novel

Graphic Novel



A template for a graphic novel page. It features a large rectangular frame divided into four panels. The top-left panel is a large vertical rectangle. The top-right panel is a smaller horizontal rectangle. The bottom-left panel is a smaller horizontal rectangle. The bottom-right panel is a large circle. An oval bubble containing the text "Graphic Novel" is positioned in the top-left corner of the frame.

Graphic Novel

Graphic Novel

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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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⦿ Skills

- Understand the idea of genre in literature, including adventure stories, historical fiction, mysteries, myths, science fiction, realistic fiction, allegories, parodies, satire, and graphic novels. (LA)

Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson your child will learn more about the overseas voyages of the Adams family and explore the idea of literary genre. She'll also have the chance to read the correspondence between Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson firsthand and think about the influence that these two people may have had in each other's lives.

Reading and Questions

1. Why might John and Abigail Adams have had reservations about Royall Tyler's suitability as a boyfriend for Nabby?

It was rumored that he had lost his fortune and wasted years of his life. John Adams hinted in his letters that Tyler was not up to John's standards for honor and moral character.

2. How are Abigail Adams' preparations for overseas travel as described in Chapter 15 different from what they might be today?

Answers will vary. Your child may mention that Abigail had to make plans based on the season of the year, that the trip took much longer, that she was traveling by sea instead of air, or other differences.

3. What was Abigail Adams's first impression of Paris?

She objected to the smell.

4. Why did Nabby Adams break off her engagement with Royall Tyler?

He had ceased answering her letters and was spreading gossip about her, sharing their private correspondence with others and behaving dishonorably. She also became interested in Colonel William Smith and needed to free herself from the engagement with Tyler before she could consider Smith as a suitor.

Activities

Activity 1: Matching Genres

In this lesson, your child will match book descriptions to the genre in which the book might fit best. An answer key has been provided.

Answer Key - Matching Genres	
Book Description	Genre
In a far distant future, humans have merged with their technology to become half-biological, half computerized life forms who are working to develop a solar spacecraft that will let them travel to other planets to mine the resources required for the next stage of technological development.	science fiction
Richly illustrated in the Japanese manga style, this adaptation of <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> is sure to catch the eye of comic fans and fans of the classic L. Frank Baum novel alike.	graphic novel
Set in France during World War II, this novel for teenagers tells the story of a young couple whose lives are torn apart by the war.	historical fiction
When a group of teenagers become separated from their group on a hiking trip, they wander, lost, into a hidden canyon where they will spend the most dangerous and thrilling week of their lives.	adventure story

Answer Key - Matching Genres continued

Book Description	Genre
In this uproariously funny spoof of the classic fairy tale "The Three Little Pigs," a rock band must play three little gigs, in spite of the constant jabs of a wolfish music critic whose sarcastic "huffing and puffing" criticisms will leave audiences laughing out loud.	satire or parody
In this book for middle school readers, a homeschooled teen struggles to maintain her friendships with her best friends, twin sisters who have decided to leave their homeschool group and attend public high school in the fall.	realistic fiction
On the surface, this story is about the birds who visit a front yard bird feeder and their fear of the cats who come by every morning looking for a meal. But a closer reading reveals this book's deeper message about the nature of fear and the modern world's response to terrorism.	allegory
Have you ever wondered why trees are bare in winter? The Cherokee legend explaining this natural phenomenon is retold in this richly illustrated picture book for grades 2-5.	myth
When a teen's computer containing the draft of her new novel and the video game she was writing is missing, it's up to her four friends who call themselves the Rainy Day Detectives to solve the case.	mystery

Activity 2: Experimenting with Genre

In this activity, your child will summarize an event from the day's reading in her own words and then choose a genre to rewrite the scene in another way. Option 1 focuses on a range of genres and is a written activity while Option 2 invites students to create a graphic novel version (perhaps combined with another genre as well, such as a science fiction graphic novel) and will allow your child to both write and use artwork to convey the story. Allow your child to choose whichever option she prefers.

Option 1: Your Choice of Genre

In this option, your child will summarize a scene from the reading in one paragraph and then rewrite that scene as historical fiction, mystery, or science fiction.

Option 2: Graphic Novel

In this option your child will retell the scene she selected from today's reading in graphic novel format. She may either retell the story as a nonfiction account or she may choose a genre to use in reimagining the story. Templates have been provided for your child's artwork.

Wrapping Up**Questions to Discuss**

- How did John Adams's European appointments influence Abigail's life? (Answers will vary. Your child may mention that she had to make a lot of decisions on her own in his absence, that she missed him, that she had the opportunity to travel with him, or that the appointments were critical to his political career and therefore to the future of the entire family.)
- Which of your friends and teachers/family members do you think have the greatest influence on you today? How so?

Things to Review

- Review your child's responses to the questions about each day's readings.
- Review your child's "Matching Genres" activity page.
- Review your child's "Experimenting with Genre" activity.