

Lesson 9: The Vice Presidency

☐ Getting Started

In this lesson, you'll learn about a momentous event in the lives of the Adams family — John Adams's election as vice president. You'll also have the chance to read the correspondence between Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson and think about the influence that these two people may have had in each other's lives.

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 an author's choice of genre influence his or her decisions and the resulting literary work?

Things to Know

- John Adams was the first vice president of the United States of America.

☐ Reading and Questions

Read Chapters 17 and 18 *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution* by Natalie S. Bober and then answer the following questions.

1. How did George III greet Thomas Jefferson?

2. What influence did Abigail Adams and her sisters have on one another?

3. Why did John Adams think he might not be elected vice president?

4. What did Benjamin Franklin mean when he said the vice president should be called "His Superfluous Excellency"?

Activities

☐ Activity 1: Corresponding with Thomas Jefferson

We are often influenced by the role models in our lives, our friendships, our experiences, and the culture in which we live, and historical figures are no exception to that. Abigail Adams had many powerful and important friends with whom she maintained a lively correspondence. In this activity, you'll read one or more letters between Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson and write a diary entry from Abigail Adams's point of view about the influence of this important friend on her life.



National Archives: Founders Online

www.beyondthepage.com/link/3931/

This page will allow you to select letters that Abigail Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson (or vice versa) in 1804. Read at least two letters (or more if you'd like). If you find the style of writing to be hard to understand, try reading the letters aloud. Older writing often makes more sense when you hear it instead of just reading it.

As you read, think about these questions:

- What do Thomas Jefferson and Abigail Adams write to each other about?
- What impression do you get of each letter writer? Polite? Funny? Smart? Rude? Intellectual? Political?

- How do you think Thomas Jefferson might have influenced Abigail Adams and how might she have influenced him?
- What was the value of their friendship in Abigail Adams's life?

Then complete the "Corresponding with Thomas Jefferson" activity page based on your deeper understanding of their friendship.

☐ Activity 2: Choosing Genres

When authors choose a genre, it influences their decisions and the resulting work. An author who sets out to write a nonfiction biography will make very different choices than an author trying to write science fiction or a mystery, even if the two authors choose some of the same characters, settings, and events to write about.

In Lesson 8 you rewrote a scene from *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution* in another genre. In this activity, you'll imagine the whole book written in a different genre. For example, a horror story about Abigail Adams might imagine her fighting off werewolves on the streets of Boston and be described, on the back of the book, like this:

While John Adams fights for independence in the Continental Congress, Abigail has a very different fight on her hands — the Redcoats stationed in Boston have several werewolves among them. These British soldiers are bad enough on an average day, but when the full moon rises, it's a "hair-raising" terror! Abigail Adams pulls together a band of monster-fighting colonists to defeat the werewolf menace and save the town!

Follow the instructions on the "Choosing Genre" page.

Wrapping Up

Abigail Adams is, at this point in the biography, now married to the vice president of the new United States of America. In the remaining lessons, you'll learn how the duties of national government influence the lives of the Adams family.

Corresponding with Thomas Jefferson

Instructions: Choose one of the letters you read and fill in this diary from Abigail Adams as if she had just received or written the letter you selected.

Date: _____

Dear Diary,

I have just written/received (circle one) a letter
to/from (circle one) my friend Thomas Jefferson.

The letter discussed _____
(insert the topics of the letter here.)

I am so grateful for my correspondence with Mr.
Jefferson. I find him to be _____
(insert description here.)

His friendship fills an important role in my life:

(insert explanation of that role here).

Choosing Genre

Instructions: When authors choose a genre, that choice influences their decisions and the resulting book a great deal. Often, publishers write a short 1-2 sentence summary of a book that will appear in catalogs or on the publisher's website to let potential buyers know what the book is about and what to expect. In this activity, you'll imagine how the short description of the book you are reading might be different if the author had chosen a different genre. First write a short description for the book you are reading now, and then reimagine the book in at least two other genres and make up a new title and new description for each.

Title: *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution*

Genre: Nonfiction biography

Description:

Title:

Genre:

Description:

Title:

Genre:

Description:

Lesson 9: The Vice Presidency

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?
- How does an author's choice of genre influence his or her decisions and the resulting literary work?



Things to Know

- John Adams was the first vice president of the United States of America.

• 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 continue working with the idea of genre. He'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. How did George III greet Thomas Jefferson?

He literally turned his back on him.

2. What influence did Abigail Adams and her sisters have on one another?

They corresponded regularly and shared advice on parenting, marriage, and more -- they were a critical support system to one another.

3. Why did John Adams think he might not be elected vice president?

He feared that he had been forgotten while in Europe and that perhaps he was too honest and outspoken to be a popular politician.

4. What did Benjamin Franklin mean when he said the vice president should be called "His Superfluous Excellency"?

Franklin alluded to the fact that the vice presidency carried little actual power -- he was able to cast a vote in the Senate only in case of a tie, and custom dictated that he stay out of the debates.

Activities

Activity 1: Corresponding with Thomas Jefferson

In this activity your child will read two or more original letters between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail Adams and write a diary entry from the point of view of Abigail Adams indicating what influence that friendship has on her.

Activity 2: Choosing Genres

In this activity, your child will write a "blurb" for a book about Abigail Adams written in different genres.

Wrapping Up**Questions to Discuss**

- If you could correspond with a famous political figure from today, which political figure would you choose? What would you write to him or her about?
- Which genres do you tend to read from now? Why do you think you like those genres so much? Did you learn about any new genres in this unit that you'd like to try?

Things to Review

- Review your child's "Corresponding with Thomas Jefferson" activity page.
- Review your child's "Choosing Genres" activity page.