

Abigail and John Adams, "Letters"

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Abigail and John Adams, *Letters*

From Abigail to John

Braintree, March 31, 1776

I wish you would ever write me a Letter half as long as I write you; and tell me if you may where your Fleet are gone? What sort of Defence Virginia can make against our common Enemy? Whether it is so situated as to make an able Defence? Are not the Gentry Lords and the common people vassals, are they not like the uncivilized Natives Brittain represents us to be? I hope their Riffel Men who have shewen themselves very savage and even Blood thirsty; are not a specimen of the Generality of the people.

I . . . am willing to allow the Colony great merrit for having produced a Washington but they have been shamefully duped by a Dunmore.¹

I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for Liberty cannot be Equally Strong in the Breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow Creatures of theirs. Of this I am certain that it is not founded upon that generous and christian principal of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us.

Do not you want to see Boston; I am fearfull of the small pox, or I should have been in before this time. I got Mr. Crane to go to our House and see what state it was in. I find it has been occupied by one of the Doctors of a Regiment, very dirty, but no other damage has been done to it. The few things which were left in it are all gone. Cranch has the key which he never delivered up. I have wrote to him for it and am determined to get it cleand as soon as possible and shut it up. I look upon it a new acquisition of property, a property which one month ago I did not value at a single Shilling, and could with plea sure have seen it in flames.

The Town in General is left in a better state than we expected, more owing to a percipitate flight than any Regard to the inhabitants, tho some individuals discovered a sense of honour and justice and have left the rent of the Houses in which they were, for the owners and the furniture unhurt, or if damaged sufficient to make it good.

Others have committed abominable Ravages. The Mansion House of your President is safe and the furniture unhurt whilst both the House and Furniture of the Solisiter General have fallen a prey to their own merciless party. Surely the very Fiends feel a Reverential awe for Virtue and patriotism, whilst they Detest the paricide² and traitor.

I feel very differently at the approach of spring to what I did a month ago. We knew not then whether we could plant or sow with safety, whether when we had toild we could reap the fruits of our own industery, whether we could rest in our own Cottages, or whether we should not be driven from the sea coasts to seek shelter in the wilderness, but now we feel as if we might sit under our own vine and eat the good of the land.

I feel a gaieti de Coar³ to which before I was a stranger. I think the Sun looks brighter, the Birds sing more melodiously, and Nature puts on a more chearfull countenance. We feel a temporary peace, and the poor fugitives are returning to their deserted habitations.

Tho we felicitate ourselves, we sympathize with those who are trembling least the Lot of Boston should be theirs. But they cannot be in similar circumstances unless pusilanimity and cowardise should take possession of them. They have time and warning given them to see the Evil and shun it. — I long to hear that you have declared an independency — and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hand of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they

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could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation. 52
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 That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in immitation of the Supreem Being make use of that power only for our happiness. 55
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¹The Fourth Earl of Dunmore (John Murray) was the British colonial governor of Virginia from 1771 to 1776. He opposed in de pen dence for the colonies and was forced to return to England. — Eds.

²A son who murdered his father, also known as a patricide. — Eds

³French (correctly spelled gaieté de coeur), happiness of heart. — Eds.

1. The author’s question “Are not the Gentry Lords and the common people vassals, are they not like the uncivilized Natives Brittain represents us to be?” (lines 5–7) is an example of which rhetorical device?
 - a. personification
 - b. apostrophe
 - c. understatement
 - d. irony
 - e. metonymy

2. In the first three paragraphs (lines 1-16), the author establishes herself as an individual who
 - a. openly criticizes the British Loyalists for their shameful, violent behavior
 - b. has a deep curiosity about revolutionary events and is hostile toward all British people
 - c. sympathizes with the colonists while attempting to exercise objectivity and to extend Christian principles to the British
 - d. accuses both the British and the colonists of dishonorable activities due to their desire for power
 - e. has a “passion for Liberty” (line 12) that she believes is connected to biblical teaching

3. In the fifth paragraph, “some individuals” (line 27) refers to
 - a. honest citizens of Boston
 - b. people who have broken into houses
 - c. colonial soldiers who have stayed with Boston families
 - d. British prisoners held in Boston homes
 - e. British soldiers withdrawing from occupation

4. Throughout the letter, the author’s primary discussion shifts from
 - a. war to domesticity
 - b. national scope to regional focus
 - c. religion to politics
 - d. personal experience to theoretical discussion
 - e. specific evidence to generalizations

5. Paragraph 9 (lines 44–54) contains each of the following EXCEPT
- a. conditional syntax
 - b. declarative syntax
 - c. imperative syntax
 - d. analogy
 - e. colloquialism
6. The author appears to believe most firmly that
- a. all men, like the British government, are tyrannical, leading to an inevitable rebellion from women who are under their oppressive rule
 - b. relationships, whether between a government and citizens or within a marriage, are most harmonious when both parties are respectful of the other
 - c. women are naturally placed under the protection of men by God’s plan, and men have a moral duty to make women happy
 - d. British soldiers are naturally violent and incapable of sympathy for those who are fighting for their rights
 - e. independence for the new nation and for women requires a “new Code of Laws” (line 48) to establish equality for all citizens
7. The author uses the term “vassals” in lines 6 and 60 primarily to mean
- a. brutish individuals who appear to be uncivilized
 - b. men who are in a position of power
 - c. people who must serve a tyrannical authority
 - d. those having an interdependent relationship with the upper class
 - e. citizens who have free will to make their own choices for good or evil
8. The author’s tone might best be described as
- a. intimate and reasoned
 - b. annoyed yet understanding
 - c. critical and analytical
 - d. religious and judgmental
 - e. detached yet reflective