

Reading Primary Sources: Letters ^[1]

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John Adams (October 30, 1735 – July 4, 1826) was the second president of the United States and the nation's first vice president. As a delegate from Massachusetts to the Continental Congress, he played a leading role in persuading Congress to adopt the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776. The frequent letters he exchanged with his wife, Abigail Adams (November 11, 1744 – October 28, 1818), provide invaluable eyewitness accounts of the events leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War home front, and are also excellent sources of political commentary.

The two letters included in this interactive guide tell us a great deal about the events of the time through the lens of Mr. Adams' personal experience. But in order to understand the value of these letters as historical documents, it's important to ask the right questions. This guide steps through layers of questions, leading the reader through the process of historical inquiry.

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- [Newspaper editorials](#) ^[3]
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[2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/reading-primary-sources-3>

[3] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/reading-primary-sources>

[4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/reading-primary-sources-0>

[5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/cover>

[6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-6>

[7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/students>

[8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/teachers>

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