

# Abigail Adams

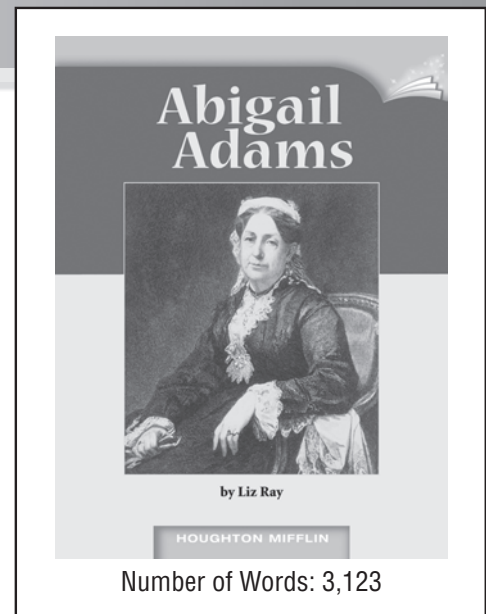
by Liz Ray

Fountas-Pinnell Level W

Narrative Nonfiction

## Selection Summary

Hostess, mother, wife. This is Abigail Adams. Yet, she is so much more, as she runs the family farm, tends four children, grows the family's food, and manages their finances in her husband John's prolonged absences. Devoted to the Patriot cause, Abigail puts aside personal comfort to advise and reassure her husband and serve the new nation.



## Characteristics of the Text

<b>Genre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative nonfiction</li> </ul>
<b>Text Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronological sequencing of plot events</li> <li>• Cause/effect drives plot and helps develop main character</li> <li>• Third-person narrator</li> </ul>
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many historical facts about people, events, values, and ideas</li> <li>• Detailed descriptions of colonial life in the late 1700s</li> <li>• Description of the close relationship between John and Abigail Adams</li> </ul>
<b>Themes and Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loyalty and service to your nation are important.</li> <li>• Sometimes a noble cause requires personal sacrifice.</li> </ul>
<b>Language and Literary Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversational language</li> <li>• Excerpts of letters from main character serve as dialogue</li> </ul>
<b>Sentence Complexity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parataxis (<i>The Bells rang, the privateers fired, the forts and Batteries, the cannon were discharged, the platoons followed, and every face appeared joyfull.</i>)</li> <li>• Several verb strings (e.g., <i>women could not own property, attend college, or vote</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms related to the Revolutionary War: <i>muskets, minutemen, privateers</i></li> <li>• Government and political terms: <i>traitor, assembly, congress, treaty</i></li> </ul>
<b>Words</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyphenated adjectives: <i>able-bodied, best-read, self-taught, self-conscious, eight-year-old</i></li> <li>• Multisyllable words: <i>vegetables, transportation, ammunition</i></li> </ul>
<b>Illustrations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawings provide historical context and support text.</li> <li>• Map</li> </ul>
<b>Book and Print Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seventeen pages of text, including a timeline of main character's life</li> <li>• Section headings organize narrative</li> </ul>

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## Build Background

Help students use their experience with self-sacrifice to visualize the selection.

Build interest by asking a question such as: *When have you put someone else's needs before your own? Why did you do it? How did you feel about what you did?* Read the title, author, and illustrator, and talk about the cover illustration. Tell students that this book is narrative nonfiction, and ask them what kind of features they can expect to find.

## Introduce the Text

Guide students through the text, noting important ideas and helping with unfamiliar language and vocabulary so they can read the text successfully. Here are some suggestions:

**Page 3:** Ask students to define the word *massacre*. Explain that, in the Boston Massacre, British soldiers killed five American colonists after the crowd had mocked a soldier and thrown stones.

**Suggested language:** *Would you have called this a massacre? Why or why not? Look at the illustration. Read the caption: John Adams was the lawyer who defended the British soldiers when they went on trial for the Boston Massacre. Although he wanted American independence, he believed that everyone had the right to a fair trial. Ask: What can you conclude about John Adams?*

**Pages 5–6:** Explain that, as one of the **legislators** in the new Continental Congress, John Adams spent most of his time in Philadelphia, 300 miles away from the family farm. This created many difficulties for Abigail.

**Page 14:** Have students read the excerpt from Abigail's letter. Explain why Abigail's capitalization and spelling is unusual. Read the second sentence in paragraph 2: *John did not agree that women should have the same freedoms as men and told her so in his reply.*

*Now, go back to the beginning to learn more about Abigail Adams's life as a Patriot and future First Lady of the United States.*

### Expand Your Vocabulary

**assembly** – a group of persons gathered together to make laws, p. 4

**congress** – the national legislative body of a nation, p. 5

**emancipating** – freeing from bondage, oppression, or restraint, p. 14

**foment** – to promote the growth of or incite, p. 14


**legislators** – persons who create or enact laws, p. 4

**negotiate** – to confer with one or more persons to reach an agreement, p. 17

**patriotism** – love of and devotion to one's country, p. 11

# Read

Have students read silently while you listen to individual students read aloud. Support their understanding of the text as needed.

Remind students to use the Monitor/Clarify Strategy  **TARGET STRATEGY** and to look for important details about the setting, characters, and plot.

## Discuss and Revisit the Text

### Personal Response

Invite students to share their personal responses to the selection.

**Suggested language:** *How do you think Abigail Adams felt about all the extra work she had to do while her husband was away? Do you think her experiences made her a stronger person? Why or why not?*

### Ways of Thinking

As you discuss the text, help students understand these points:

Thinking Within the Text	Thinking Beyond the Text	Thinking About the Text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During the American Revolution, Abigail does her work as well as her husband's.</li><li>• Abigail and John Adams exchange letters to stay in contact.</li><li>• When John Adams is elected president, Abigail moves with him to a partly-finished White House.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personal needs and wishes sometimes aren't as important as the needs and wishes of a group.</li><li>• Sometimes people must fight for their principles.</li><li>• Husbands and wives are partners who work together to solve problems and discuss issues.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The time setting of the selection extends from 1770 to 1818.</li><li>• Because the characters lived during the American Revolution, the author includes many details about the war and the time period.</li><li>• The author includes details about Abigail Adams's many sacrifices to show readers that she was a strong, patriotic woman.</li></ul>

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### Choices for Further Support

- **Fluency** Invite students to create a script for a readers' theater based on the description on page 10 of the way Abigail wrote to John to inform him of the difficulties she was facing. Have students use the quote in the first paragraph on page 10 as a starting point from which to create dialogue in which John and Abigail discuss the problems of running the family farm and how to solve those problems.
- **Comprehension** Based on your observations of the students' reading and discussion, revisit parts of the text to clarify or extend comprehension. Remind students to go back to the text to support their ideas.
- **Phonics/Word Work** Provide practice as needed with words and word parts, using examples from the text. Remind students that many English words have Latin roots and affixes. For example, the word *emancipating* on page 14 comes from the Latin root word *emancipare*, which means "to sell, transfer." Other words that share this root include *emancipation* and *emancipate*.

# Writing about Reading


## Critical Thinking

Have students complete the Critical Thinking questions on BLM 15.9.

## Responding

Have students complete the activities at the back of the book, using their Reader's Notebook. Use the instruction below as needed to reinforce or extend understanding of the comprehension skill.

## Target Comprehension Skill

**Compare and Contrast**  **TARGET SKILL** Remind students that readers compare and contrast to find similarities and differences. Often, readers compare and contrast to better understand characters, events, and setting. Model how to add details to the Graphic Organizer, using a "Think Aloud" like the one below:

### Think Aloud

*The diagram states that both John and Abigail Adams believed the colonies should be free. Abigail believed that women should have more freedoms and opportunities. Write that in the left oval. John Adams disagreed with his wife's views on women's rights. Put that in the right-hand oval. In this way, Abigail and John Adams's efforts and beliefs have been compared and contrasted.*

## Practice the Skill

Encourage students to share an example of a selection in which characters' beliefs can be compared and contrasted.

## Writing Prompt: Thinking Beyond the Text

Have students write a response to the writing prompt on page 6. Remind them that when they think beyond the text, they use their personal knowledge to reach new understandings.

## Assessment Prompts

- Abigail Adams read the books in her father's library to show that

- 
- Which sentences from the selection show that John Adams is a loving husband?
  - What can the reader conclude about the American Revolution as described in this selection?

# English Language Development

**Reading Support** Have students listen to the audio or online recordings. Make sure the text matches the students' reading level. Language and content should be accessible with regular teaching support.

**Idioms** The text includes some American idioms, such as *thirst for knowledge* (page 4), *burst into tears* (page 5), and *spoken her mind* (page 15). Explain that the author uses modern idioms in a selection about the eighteenth century because they communicate to today's American readers.

## Oral Language Development

Check student comprehension, using a dialogue that best matches your students' English proficiency. **Speaker 1** is the teacher, **Speaker 2** is the student.

Beginning/Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Early Advanced/ Advanced
<p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Who is the main character?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> Abigail Adams</p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> In what time and place is the selection set?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> Boston, Massachusetts in the late 1700s</p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Who is Abigail Adams's husband?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> John Adams</p>	<p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Why is John Adams away from home so much?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> John Adams was elected to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.</p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> How does Abigail's life change because John is gone?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> Abigail must now do her work and John's work.</p>	<p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Why does John Adams offer to resign?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> John Adams knows that Abigail's life has been difficult with him gone. He doesn't want her to suffer.</p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Why does Abigail Adams tell her husband not to resign?</p> <p><b>Speaker 2:</b> Abigail Adams is a patriot and feels that the country's needs come before hers.</p>

### Responding

**TARGET SKILL** Compare and Contrast How were Abigail and John Adams's efforts and beliefs alike? How were they different?

Abigail Adams
Both
John Adams

**Write About It**

**Text to Text** Think about another book you have read about someone who has made important contributions to a cause. Write several paragraphs summarizing that person's contributions. Include specific examples.

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Lesson 15  
BLACKLINE MASTER 15.9

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Critical Thinking

**Read and answer the questions.** Possible responses shown.

- Think within the text** What were women and enslaved people not allowed to do in the 1700s?  
They could not own property, attend college, or vote.
- Think within the text** What jobs did women have in the household?  
cleaning, sewing, raising crops, caring for the sick
- Think beyond the text** Compare and contrast Abigail Adams's life before and after her husband became involved in the Patriot cause. Before, the family lived in Boston. After, they moved to their farm and Abigail had to take care of the farm and their four children by herself when John was away.
- Think about the text** Do you think that the author considered Abigail Adams a hero? Why or why not?  
Yes, because she was one of the first people to fight for the rights of women.

**Making Connections** Abigail Adams did many kind things for others. Write about a kind act you have done for someone. Discuss how the person may have felt about what you did.

**Write your answer in your Reader's Notebook.**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Critical Thinking

**Abigail Adams**  
Critical Thinking

Read and answer the questions.

**1. Think within the text** What were women and enslaved people not allowed to do in the 1700s?

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**2. Think within the text** What jobs did women have in the household?

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**3. Think beyond the text** Compare and contrast Abigail Adams's life before and after her husband became involved in the Patriot cause.

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**4. Think about the text** Do you think that the author considered Abigail Adams a hero? Why or why not?

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**Making Connections** Abigail Adams did many kind things for others. Write about a kind act you have done for someone. Discuss how the person may have felt about what you did.

**Write your answer in your Reader's Notebook.**

# Abigail Adams • LEVEL W

**Abigail Adams**  
**Running Record Form**

page	Selection Text	Errors	Self-Corrections
5	<p>Even when John was home, Abigail worked hard on the farm. She cooked all the family's meals in the fireplace, using heavy iron pots and pans. She made their clothes, tended the garden, and took care of the livestock. They had cows for milk, sheep for wool and meat, and chickens for meat and eggs. They also owned horses to plow the fields and for transportation. Abigail grew all the vegetables, including onions, potatoes, and pumpkins, that they would eat during the winter when the garden was covered with snow. Abigail also took care of their four children, teaching them to do chores, read, and behave properly.</p>		
	Comments:	<b>Accuracy Rate</b> (# words read correctly/107 × 100) _____ %	<b>Total Self-Corrections</b> _____

Behavior	Code	Error
Read word correctly	✓ cat	0
Repeated word, sentence, or phrase	Ⓜ cat	0
Omission	̄ cat	1

Behavior	Code	Error
Substitution	cut cat	1
Self-corrects	cut <sup>sc</sup> cat	0
Insertion	the ^ cat	1
Word told	Ⓢ cat	1

