

Abigail Adams: Integrating Social Studies and Language Arts
Linda Walczak, Grade 3 Literacy Teacher
John Winthrop School

Multi-disciplinary Abigail Adams Unit (3 weeks)

Goals:

Students will have a range of strategies to employ while reading non-fiction in order to have good comprehension and retention of content area information.

Students will have a good understanding of why Abigail Adams is a significant historical figure and why she is deserving of an important sculpture.

Students will also explore and learn more about:

- World geography
- New England geography
- Historical sites in Boston, Quincy and Braintree
- Colonial life in Massachusetts
- Causes of the American Revolution
- Heroes of the American Revolution
- The presidency of John Adams

The following reading strategies will be taught: making connections, questioning, inferring, determining importance, synthesizing, monitoring and visualizing.

The strategies will be taught by modeling, guiding and providing lots of opportunities for students to practice. The unit covers all components of balanced literacy, except for guided reading. Students will also make progress in their efforts to master most of the language arts learning standards (*not* 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 24, and 25). The unit will encompass work on oral language, comprehension, writing skills and genre study.

Day 1: K-W-L approach on Abigail Adams. Chart. Move to circle. Tell children about Boston Women's Memorial. Share pictures and information about statues and the sculptor. Discuss, take questions, build excitement. Tell them about planned trips to Abigail's home and to the statue. "We're going to explore this woman's life to find out why some people thought she deserved a statue. What will a study of her life teach us?"

Activities/Product: Group discussion, K-W-L chart.

Day 2: Introduce *Abigail Adams* by Alexandra Wallner. Picture walk, determine genre and structure. Have text on overhead also. Start timeline chart (good way to note most important things to remember, becomes classroom resource). Teacher reads page 1 aloud and models inferring, questioning, determining important facts/ideas. Continue to add to timeline. Teacher continues to read aloud pages 2 and 3. Students help make entries on timeline. Discuss and take questions, interpret illustrations.

Day 3: Review timeline, entertain questions. Shared reading with text and overhead copy. Discuss, add to timeline (pp. 4-8).

Day 4: Review timeline, shared reading using questioning, inferring, determining importance. Finish book and timeline. Have some students decorate/embellish timeline.

Day 5: Hang up portrait of Abigail Adams. Share copies of her letters. Review illustrations in the biography, take note of how many show writing. Discuss.
Activity/product: You live in colonial Massachusetts. Write to Abigail as her neighbor, husband, sister, mother, friend (Mercy Otis Warren) or cousin (Samuel Adams). Brainstorm topics: weather, health, politics, farm, holidays, war activities, etc.
Use “antique” paper.

Day 6: Read biographical sketch of Abigail Adams by Bonnie Hurd Smith. Leave tracks to understand. Write in margins, use post-its, showing evidence of making connections, questioning, inferring, visualizing, determining important facts. Everyone’s notes will be different. Teacher models first couple of paragraphs. Students finish for independent reading. Teacher circulates/confers/advises. Review/share.

Day 7: Read aloud They Led the Way, “Independence Day for Women too.” Stop, discuss, think, pair, share. Chart responses. During independent reading (not A.A. work), have some students work on readers’ theater. Abigail and friend or sister, John and associates, discuss equality for women issue. Students perform.

Day 8: Read aloud The Children’s Book of America. “The Bravery of Abigail Adams.” Read, use comprehension strategies, discuss. Students return to seats and do quick writes in reading response journals. Share.

Day 9: Read “Abigail Adams seeks good for all.” Use two-column note taking (see form). Share.

Day 10: Prepare for visit of Abigail Adams. What questions do you want to ask her? The actress? Make your questions authentic and interesting. Brainstorm. Finish for homework.

Day 11: Review questions to be posed to Abigail Adams. Abigail Adams performance. Assess/share.

Day 12: Introduce key question essay. Why is Abigail Adams deserving of a statue in Boston?

- * review structure of essay
 - introductory paragraph
 - thesis statement, supporting evidence
 - more supporting evidence
 - conclusion

Hang chart notes on the wall, teacher models an essay.

Day 13: With charts and outline available, students write rough draft. Teacher reads out loud examples of students on the right track.

Day 14: Finish, revise and edit.

Day 15: Display essays or excerpts. Share and give feedback.

Day 16: Take field trip to Adams National Historic Site (Braintree and Quincy).

Bibliography

Wallner, Alexandra. 2001. *Abigail Adams*. New York: Holiday House

Johnston, Johanna. 1973. *They Led The Way*. New York: Scholastic

The Boston Globe. Newspaper in Education Program. 1999. *Colonial Life in New England*

Harrey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudvis. 2000. *Strategies That Work*. York, Maine: Stenhouse

Masucci, Sara M. 2002. *The Boston Women's Memorial Curriculum*. Boston: Boston Women's Heritage Trail

Bennett, William J., 1998. *The Children's Book of America*. New York: Simon & Schuster

Cheney, Lynne V. 2003. *A is for Abigail: an almanac of amazing American women*. New York: Simon & Schuster

Osborne, Angela. 1989. *Abigail Adams*. New York: Chelsea House

Adams National Historic Park. *Pen & Parchment: from Penn's Hill to Pennsylvania*

Stead, Tony. 2001. *Is that a fact?: Teaching Persuasive Writing*. York, Maine: Stenhouse