

Document Packet 'E'

Instructions: Read the background and context, followed by the four documents, then answer the questions that follow.

Background and Context:

In 1804, after a multi-year silence between the Adams and Jeffersons, John Adams' wife, Abigail, began a correspondence with Thomas Jefferson. The silence between the two was due in large part to the bitter presidential campaign of 1800 (which Jefferson won), in which both men were accused of orchestrating and supporting attacks vicious against one another in the press.

Questions:

Document 1:

- 1) Why did Abigail Adams write this letter to Thomas Jefferson?

Document 2:

- 1) What has happened to the friendship between Jefferson and Adams over the past few years? Why?
- 2) What did Adams do as President that particularly upset Jefferson?

Document 3:

- 1) Do you find Abigail Adams believable when she says that Adams did not mean to hurt Jefferson's feelings? Where else could historians look to determine if this she should be believed?
- 2) What does Abigail Adams have to say about "Callender?" From the information contained in this letter, who do you think he is and what do you think Jefferson did for him?

Document 4:

- 1) How did Jefferson justify what he did w/regards to Callender?
- 2) How did Jefferson describe his relationship w/Callender? Do you take him at his word? Why or why not?

Overall Questions:

- 1) What type of relationship did Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson appear to have?
- 2) What type of a relationship do you think Abigail Adams had with her husband?

Document E1:

Quincy, 20 May, 1804.

SIR

Had you been no other than the private inhabitant of Monticello, I should, ere this time, have addressed you with that sympathy which a recent event has awakened in my bosom ; but reasons of various kinds withheld my pen, until the powerful feelings of my heart burst through the restraint, and called upon me to shed the tear of sorrow over the departed remains of your beloved and deserving daughter. An event which I most sincerely mourn. The attachment which I formed for her, when you committed her to my care upon her arrival in a foreign land, under circumstances peculiarly interesting, has remained with me to this hour ; and the account of her death, which I read in a late paper, recalled to my recollection the tender scene of her separation from me, when with the strongest sensibility, she clung around my neck and wet my bosom with her tears, saying, " Oh ! now I have learned to love you, why will they take me from you."

It has been some time since I conceived that any event in this life could call forth feelings of mutual sympathy. But I know how closely entwined around a parent's heart are those cords which bind the parental to the filial bosom ; and when snapped asunder, how agonising the pangs. I have tasted of the bitter cup and bow with reverence and submission before the great Dispenser of it, without whose permission and overruling Providence, not a sparrow falls to the ground. That you may derive comfort and consolation in this day of your sorrow and affliction from that only source calculated to heal the wounded heart, a firm belief in the being, perfections and attributes of God, is the sincere and ardent wish of her, who once took pleasure in subscribing herself your friend

Abigail Adams.

Source:

Cappon, Lester J., ed. The Adams-Jefferson Letters. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill.

1959.

Document E2:

TO MRS. ADAMS.

Dear Madam,

Washington, June 13, 1804.

The affectionate sentiments which you have had the goodness to express in your letter of May the 20th, towards my dear departed daughter, have awakened in me sensibilities natural to the occasion, and recalled your kindnesses to her, which I shall ever remember with gratitude and friendship. I can assure you with truth, they had made an indelible impression on her mind, and that to the last, on our meetings after long separations, whether I had heard lately of you, and how you did, were among the earliest of her inquiries. Mr. Adams's friendship and mine began at an earlier date. It accompanied us through long and important scenes. The different conclusions we had drawn from our political reading and reflections, were not permitted to lessen mutual esteem; each party being conscious they were the result of an honest conviction in the other. Like differences of opinion existing among our fellow citizens, attached them to the one or the other of us, and produced a rivalry in their minds which did not exist in ours. We never stood in one another's way ... This consideration was sufficient to keep down all jealousy between us, and to guard our friendship from any disturbance by sentiments of rivalry: and I can say with truth, that one act of Mr. Adams's life, and one only, ever gave me a moment's personal displeasure. I did consider his last appointments to office as personally unkind. They were from among my most ardent political enemies, from whom no faithful co-operation could ever be expected; and laid me under the embarrassment of acting through men whose views were to defeat mine, or to encounter the odium of putting others in their places. It seems but common justice to leave a successor free to act by instruments of his own choice. If my respect for him did not permit me to ascribe the whole blame to the influence of others, it left something for friendship to forgive, and after brooding over it for some little time, and not always resisting the expression of it, I forgave it cordially, and returned to the same state of esteem and respect for him which had so long subsisted I have thus, my dear Madam, opened myself to you without reserve, which I have long wished an opportunity of doing; and without knowing how it will be received, I feel relief from being unbosomed. And I have now only to entreat your forgiveness for this transition from a subject of domestic affliction, to one which seems of a different aspect. But though connected with political events, it has been viewed by me most strongly in its unfortunate bearings on my private friendships. The injury these have sustained has been a heavy price for what has never given me equal pleasure. That you may both be favored with health, tranquillity, and long life, is the prayer of one who tenders you the assurance of his highest consideration and esteem.

Th. Jefferson.

Source:

Randolph, Thomas Jefferson, ed. *Memoirs, Correspondence, and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. Volume IV. London. 1829.

Document E3:

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Quincy, 1 July, 1804.

SIR,

Your letter of June 13th, came duly to hand you have been pleased to enter upon some subjects which call for a reply; and as you observe that you have wished for an opportunity to express your sentiments, I have given them every weight they claim.

"One act of Mr. Adams's life, and one only (you repeat) ever gave me a moment's personal displeasure. I did consider his last appointments to office as personally unkind; they were from my most ardent political enemies."

As this act, I am certain, was not intended to give any personal pain or offence, I think it a duty to explain it, so far as I then knew his views and designs. The Constitution empowers the President to fill up offices as they become vacant. It was in the exercise of this power, that appointments were made, and characters selected, whom Mr. Adams considered as men faithful to the constitution, and where he personally knew them, such as were capable of fulfilling their duty to their country. This was done equally by General Washington in the last days of his administration, so that not an office remained vacant for his successor to fill upon his coming into office. No offence was given by it and no personal unkindness thought of.

But the different political opinions, which have so unhappily divided our country, must have given rise to the idea that personal unkindness was intended. You will please to recollect, Sir, that at the time these appointments were made, there was not any certainty that the Presidency would devolve upon you, which is another circumstance to prove that no personal unkindness was intended. No person, I am sure, was ever selected from such a motive, and so far was Mr. Adams from harboring such a sentiment, that he had not any idea of the intolerance of party spirit at that time.

...I have never felt any enmity towards you, Sir, for being elected President of the United States. But the instruments made use of and the means which were practised to effect a change have my utter abhorrence and detestation, for they were the blackest calumny and the foulest falsehoods

...And now, Sir, I will freely disclose to you what has severed the bonds of former friendship, and placed you in a light very different from what some viewed you in ...

One of the first acts of your administration was to liberate a wretch, who was suffering the just punishment of his crimes for publishing the basest libel, the lowest and vilest slander which malice could invent or calumny exhibit, against the character and reputation of your predecessor;

of him, for whom you professed a friendship and esteem, and whom you certainly knew incapable of such complicated baseness. The remission of Callender's fine was a public approbation of his conduct.

Until I read Callender's seventh letter containing your compliment to him as a writer and your reward of fifty dollars, I could not be made to believe that such measures could have been resorted to, to stab the fair fame and upright intentions of one who, to use your own language, "was acting from an honest conviction in his own mind that he was right." This Sir, I considered as a personal injury; this was the sword that cut asunder the Gordian knot, which could not be untied by all the efforts of party spirit, by rivalry, by jealousy, or any other malignant fiend.

The serpent you cherished and warmed bit the hand that nourished him and gave you sufficient specimens of his talents, his gratitude, his justice and his truth. When such vipers are let loose upon society, all distinction between virtue and vice is levelled; all respect for character is lost in the deluge of calumny; that respect, which is a necessary bond in the social union, which gives efficacy to laws, and teaches the subject to obey the magistrate, and the child to submit to the parent.

There is one other act of your administration which I considered as personally unkind, and which your own mind will easily suggest to you; but as it neither affected character nor reputation, I forbear to state it.

This letter is written in confidence. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Often have I wished to have seen a different course pursued by you. I bear no malice. I cherish no enmity. I would not retaliate if it was in my power; nay more, in the true spirit of Christian charity, I would forgive as I hope to be forgiven. With that disposition of mind and heart, I subscribe the name of

Abigail Adams.

Source:

Charles Francis Adams. *Letters of Mrs. Adams: Wife of John Adams Volume II*. C. Little and James Brown. Boston, 1840.

Document E4:

TO MRS. ADAMS. Washington, July 22, 1804.

Dear Madam,

Your favor of the 1st instant was duly received ... My charities to Callendar are considered as rewards for his calumnies. As early, I think, as 1796, I was told in Philadelphia that Callendar, the author of the Political Progress of Britain, was in that city, a fugitive from persecution for having written that book, and in distress. I had read and approved the book; I considered him as a man of genius, unjustly persecuted. I knew nothing of his private character, and immediately expressed my readiness to contribute to his relief, and to serve him. It was a considerable time after, that, on application from a person who thought of him as I did, I contributed to his relief, and afterwards repeated the contribution. Himself I did not see till long after, nor ever more than two or three times. When he first began to write, he told some useful truths in his coarse way; but nobody sooner disapproved of his writing than I did, or wished more that he would be silent.

...Printers at large published against Mr. Adams, I was as far from stooping to any concern or approbation of them, as Mr. Adams was respecting those of Porcupine, Fenno, or Russel, who published volumes against me for every sentence vended by their opponents against Mr. Adams. But I never supposed Mr. Adams had any participation in the atrocities of these editors, or their writers. I knew myself incapable of that base warfare, and believed him to be so. On the contrary, whatever I may have thought of the acts of the administration of that day, I have ever borne testimony to Mr. Adams's personal worth; nor was it ever impeached in my presence, without a just vindication of it on my part. I never supposed that any person who knew either of us, could believe that either of us meddled in that dirty work. But another fact is, that I 'liberated a wretch who was suffering for a libel against Mr. Adams.' I do not know who was the particular wretch alluded to; but I discharged every person under punishment or prosecution under the sedition law, because I considered, and now consider, that law to be a nullity, as absolute and as palpable as if Congress had ordered us to fall down and worship a golden image; and that it was as much my duty to arrest its execution in every stage, as it would have been to have rescued from the fiery furnace those who should have been cast into it for refusing to worship the image. It was accordingly done in every instance, without asking what the offenders had done, or against whom they had offended, but whether the pains they were suffering were inflicted under the pretended sedition law. It was certainly possible that my motives for contributing to the relief of Callendar, and liberating sufferers under the sedition law, might have been to protect, encourage, and reward slander; but they may also have been those which inspire ordinary charities to objects of distress, meritorious or not, or the obligation of an oath to protect the constitution, violated by an unauthorised act of Congress. Which of these were my motives, must be decided by a regard to the general tenor of my life. On this I am not afraid to appeal to the nation at large, to posterity, and still less to that Being who sees himself our motives, who will judge us from his own knowledge of them, and not on the testimony of Porcupine or Fenno. You

observe, there has been one other act of my administration personally unkind, and suppose it will readily suggest itself to me. I declare on my honor, Madam, I have not the least conception what act is alluded to. I never did a single one with an unkind intention. My sole object in this letter being to place before your attention, that the acts imputed to me are either such as are falsely imputed, or as might flow from good as well as bad motives, I shall make no other addition, than the assurances of my continued wishes for the health and happiness of yourself and Mr. Adams.

TH. JEFFERSON

Source:

Randolph, Thomas Jefferson, ed. *Memoirs, Correspondence, and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson*.

Volume IV. London. 1829.