



PRIMARY SOURCE LESSON

Purpose: Primary sources are eyewitness or first hand accounts of a moment in time. Many of the words in this play come from Abby's letters. This lesson will help students recognize the speech patterns and language used in everyday 19th century America. The hand written manuscripts emphasize Abby's commitment and sacrifice to her life's work.

Timeframe: 1-2 class periods, works well a block lesson with B 6B and B 6C maps

Materials List:

- 17 April 1852 letter from Abby Kelley Foster to daughter Alla (copy on photo setting)
- Abby to Alla Worksheet
- Abby to Alla Transcription
- April 1854 letter from Alla to her mother (copy on photo setting)
- Alla to Abby Worksheet
- Alla to Abby Transcription
- Teachers may wish to make an overhead image of the manuscripts for easier viewing and discussion purposes.

Procedure:

- Assign half of the class to work on Abby's manuscript letter and the other half on Alla's manuscript letter. With a partner, students will try to read one of the manuscripts and then try to answer the corresponding worksheet. The challenge of reading difficult manuscripts is part of the experience. Pass out Extension Lesson maps to those done early so they do not bother others. If time is a factor, transcriptions could be stapled to manuscripts.
- After a reasonable length of time pass out corresponding transcriptions to help students complete the worksheet. Discuss how to "read" the past through primary source documents and artifacts. Have students read other manuscript if done early.
- 3. Using the timeline (**L 2** Student Handouts), students could determine how old Abby and Alla were at the time they wrote these letters.
- 4. Have students share their discoveries about Abby's relationship with her daughter with class.
- 5. Have students make a personal connection by writing their answer to: How is your relationship with an important woman in your life is similar or different to Abby and Alla?





Extensions:

- Students could be asked to correct Alla's spelling and grammar on the manuscript or in their transcription.
- Students could be asked to write a letter to an important adult in their life describing their activities and a cause about which they feel strongly.

Answers:

Abby to Alla Worksheet

- 1. She is trying to end slavery. She is gone for a long time. She sometimes can take long walks. "Preach to these wicked men, and make them good, so that they would let the poor slave mothers go home to their children."
- 2. To end slavery in the United States, "So the poor slave mothers go home to their children."
- 3. "Keep house. ", "Building our house.", Take walks with daughter, give daughter's gift on birthday, and mend her daughter's clothes.
- 4. Yes with some variations.
- 5. Answers will vary. Elizabeth's five children under ten years of age, including a new baby, shows Abby what a mother usually does around a house. The family makes Abby miss Alla's companionship.

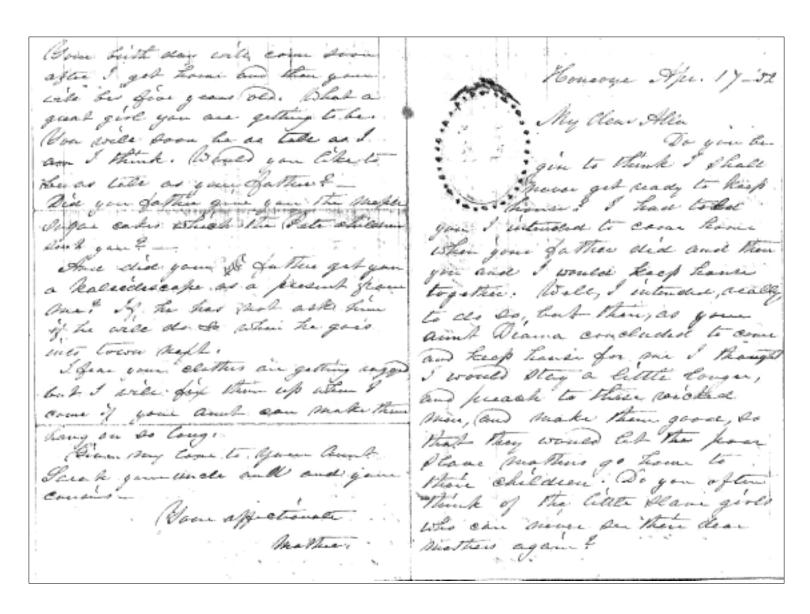
Alla to Abby Worksheet

- 1. Writing letters, reading a book, dropping potatoes, maybe gathering hen eggs
- 2. Maybe use email now or telephone, still read, maybe help with vegetable or flower garden, probably not gathering eggs unless living in rural area.
- 3. Her father and cousin Flora, maybe Clara Lyon and maybe Uncle Adams
- 4. Bossy babysitter. Maybe Flora doesn't want to hang around a little girl.
- 5. She's been sick and might be trying to make mother feel guilty. She wants her home alone rather than bring other people home. She tells about good things, like green grass, perhaps to make her mother homesick. She's affectionate, but not whining or gushy or begging—she accepts the way things are, but would rather have her mother home than Flora as babysitter.





17 April 1852 Letter from Abby Kelley Foster to Her Daughter Alla (Front)



Page 4 – Page 1
Courtesy of the Kelley-Foster Papers 1941.08.2.50, Worcester Historical Museum and the Abby Kelley Foster Letters Project, Worcester Women's History Project





17 April 1852 Letter from Abby Kelley Foster to Her Daughter Alla (Back)

But now I am peetly some I share Have gan	from what a justy
come from in four weaks and then Others their	is in this paper !
we will have fine times of the . It was give	- Me ley ales. I touten,
a Considing one house	on of wary suce paper,
Mile you ask your !	loute you a lot of
	as paper - I have gan
Stan ale Summer and hop . " will keep ;	on alter very clean
Relp us while one house is a way and land les	au your diaver -
	Cantiful Cake class
fine her soon built & Now if try where I	am. Do gan know
you shall be very good and hugh. What a la	to is ? - It is a large
your count all you can, and he parce - The	is as long ar from
as little trouble as passible, I our house.	into town, and boats
Think the may be willing to day, sail on it	I test a very place.
Bleave sine her me Coar and a kins, and walk	gesteeday deaver to the
Have your Make didams and arent. Dide of the	Cake. The sum was
Sarah gat sicely to Rouse keeping? wasm and to	ught, the water Sparker
What a fine wack we wife have the birds say	and the green shoots
	er beginning to sking
Them. get home going up to are of goods to	time I come home The
Tale your and Deans and your flowers with	begin to bloom and ,
father that I hope they will whent The fields a	the ter beautifue to work
	se be very happy?
Lustand. The small be very long. Her, if we a	we good. The good an
Home you got any whicher get always happy	
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Page 2 – Page 3

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PRIMARY SOURCE: Abby to Alla Worksheet





PRIMARY SOURCE: Abby to Alla Letter Transcription

My dear Alla

Honeoye [New York] Apr. 17 ___'52

Do you begin to think I shall never get ready to keep house? I had told you I intended to come home when your father did and then you and I would keep house together. Well, I intended, really to do so, but then, as your Aunt Diana concluded to come and keep house for me I thought I would stay a little longer, and preach to these wicked men, and make them good, so that they would let the poor slave mothers go home to their children. Do you often think of the little slave girls who can never see their dear mothers again?

But now I am pretty sure I shall come home in four weeks and then we will have fine times a building our house. Will you ask your Aunt Diana¹ if she will stay all summer and help us while our house is building and tell where she will have her room built? Now if you shall be very good and help your aunt all you can, and be a little trouble as possible, I think she may be willing to stay. Please give her my love and a kiss. Have your Unkle [sic] Adams and Aunt Sarah² got nicely to housekeeping?

Page 2

Have you got any chickens yet?

Cook's husband.³ He must be very lonely.

hope they will spend an evening with Nancy

Tell your Aunt Diana and your father that I

home going up to see them.

What a fine walk we will have when I get

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES:

[sic] means the transcriber left the original spelling, even though it is incorrect, to have a clearer picture of the writer's personality at that] Brackets indicate an addition by the transcriber. () Parentheses indicate the transcriber's interpretation of illegible writing.

Diana Kelley Ballou was Abby's older sister who often came to help care for Alla.

² Adams and Sarah Foster had lived on the farm, caring for it and Alla, until they purchased a nearby farm in 1851. Adams was Stephen's older brother. Nancy Cook's husband possibly refers to a member of the family living two farms away from the Foster farm on Mower Street in Worcester



WHM 1941.08.2.50

happy.

Yes, if we are good. The good are always

Shall we be very happy?

Worcester Women's History Project Yours for Humanity—Abby Curriculum Packet © 2004



Have you seen what a pretty stamp there is this paper?

It was given me by Mrs. Stanton⁴ and a lot more of very nice paper, so I can write you a lot of letters on nice paper__ I hope you will keep you[r] letters very clean and laid up in your drawer__

There is a beautiful lake close by where I am. Do you know what a lake is? — It is a large pond__ This is as long as from our house into town, and boats sail on it. I took a very pleasant walk yesterday down to the side of the lake. The sun was warm and bright, the water sparkled, the birds sang and the green

Your birth day [sic] will come soon after I get home and then you will be five years old.

What a great girl you are getting to be. You will soon be as tall as I am I think. Would you like to be as tall as your father?

Did your father give you the maple sugar cakes which the Pete children⁵ sent you?

And did your father get you a kaleidescope [sic] as a present from me? If he has not ask him if he will do so when he goe's [sic] into town next.

I fear your clothes are getting ragged but I will fix them up when I come if your aunt can make them hang on so long.

Give my love to your Aunt Sarah your

By the time I come home the flowers will begin

to bloom and the fields will be beautiful to walk

shoots of grass were beginning to spring up.

Give my love to your Aunt Sarah your uncle (Adams) and your cousins ___

Your affectionate

Mother.

⁴ Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) lived in Seneca Falls near Honeoye, NY. She wrote the *Declaration of Sentiments* that was signed at the first Woman's Rights Convention in 1848. Her fifth child, Margaret, was born in 1853 while her husband Henry B. Stanton lectured for the abolition of slavery.

⁵ The Pete family possibly refers to a New York family the Fosters knew or boarded with on their lecture travels





PRIMARY SOURCE: Alla to Abby Worksheet

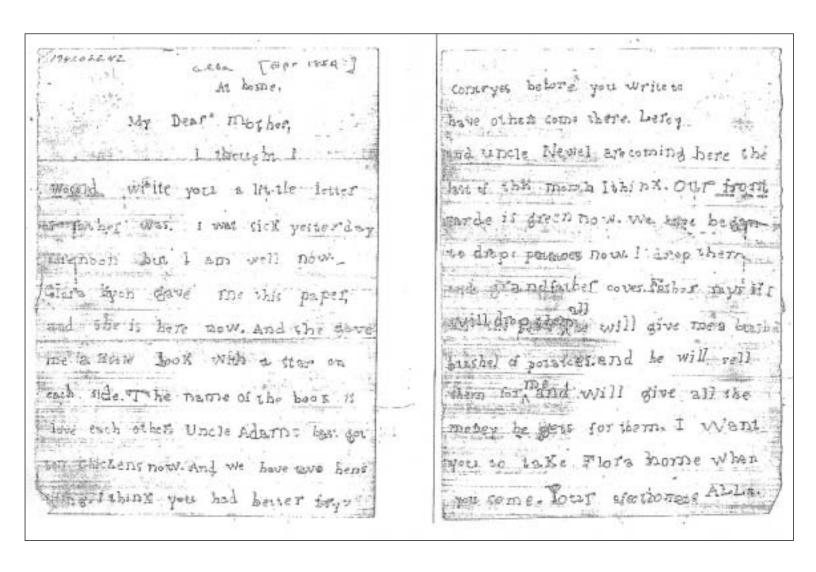
We can learn about 'Alla' Paulina Wright Foster (1847-1923) from her letter to her mother, Abby Kelley Foster (1811-1887). We can also discover clues about life in New England in the mid 19th century.

9	,
1.	What types of activities fill her time?
2.	How do they differ from today's 6 and 7 year olds?
3.	Who is taking care of her while her mother is lecturing in Indiana?
4.	What role do you think Flora plays in Alla's life?
5.	What clues can you find to discover how she feels about her mother's absence?
6.	Critical Thinking: Note that the spelling and capitalization are hers. What suggestions would you make to Alla to help her become a better speller and letter writer?





April 1854 Letter From Alla To Her Mother



Page 1 – Page 2

Courtesy of the Kelley-Foster Papers 1941.08.2.42, Worcester Historical Museum and the Abby Kelley Foster Letters Project, Worcester Women's History Project



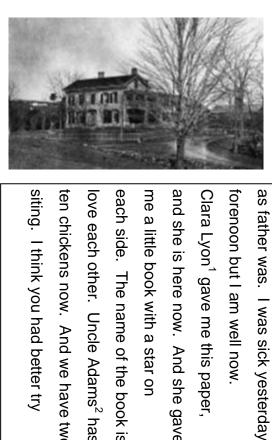


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Alla

[Apr. 1854]

Primary Source: Alla To Abby Transcription



Foster Farm Mower Street

Worcester, Massachusetts

My Dear Mother

At home.

I thought I

Uncle Adams is her father's brother who bought a nearby farm Uncle Newell is her father's brother and Leroy is probably his son.

Flora is Alla's cousin, the daughter of her mother's youngest sister Lucy. She's about 9 years old at the time

Original spelling and capitalization has been left for the reader to have a clearer picture of the writer's personality at the moment it was TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES Clara Lyon was probably a friend of the Fosters siting. I think you had better try each side. The name of the book is and she is here now. And she gave love each other. Uncle Adams² has got me a little book with a star on Clara Lyon' gave me this paper ten chickens now. And we have two hens

bushel of potatoes. And he will sell and grandfather cove[r]s Father says if and uncle Newel³ are coming here the you to take Flora⁴ home when money he gets for them. I want them for me and will give all the will drop them all he will give me a you come. Your affectionate Alla to drop potatoes now. I drop them yarde is green now. We have began last of this month I think. Our front have others come there. Leroy (come yes) before you write to

forenoon but I am well now

would write you a little letter

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