

# Not Too Far Distant

## Letter Analysis Lesson Plan

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Students examine real letters from a World War II medic to his wife. Students use an analysis guide to dig deeper into the letter to learn more about Clarence Williams life as a soldier and more broadly that of soldiers during the war. Reading between the lines, students uncover the things left unsaid about Clarence's life. (To be paired with the play Not Too Far Distant by Becky Boesen)

#### Nebraska State Education Standards

SS 7.4.4  
SS 8.4.2  
SS HS.4.1.b (US)  
SS HS.4.1.c (US)  
SS HS.4.4.b (US)  
SS HS.4.5.c (WLD)

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will develop an understanding of how to read historical letters by examining the parts and purpose of a World War II letter by Clarence Williams

#### Lesson Details

Time Requirement:  
30 minutes

Grade Level:  
7th - 12th grade

### PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE

- WWII (1939–1945) involved nearly every major country in the world. There were two sides, the Allies (the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union) and the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan).
- This war mainly took place in Europe and the Pacific. Starting in 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States sent soldiers, including those drafted, overseas to assist in the war effort.

### VOCABULARY

- **Draft** - compulsory recruitment for military service
- **Rave** - speak about something with great enthusiasm and admiration
- **Latrine** - a toilet or outhouse, especially a communal one
- **Canteen** - a small water bottle used by soldiers

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

## WORKSHEET

# LETTER ANALYSIS

USE THIS WORKSHEET TO GATHER RELEVANT INFORMATION IN YOUR LETTER AND ANALYZE THE AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

### OBSERVE THE LETTER

- Who wrote the letter?
- Who read/received the letter?
- When was the letter written?
- Where was the letter written?

### MAKE SENSE OF THE LETTER

- Why was the letter written? What evidence in the letter helps you know why it was written? Quote from the letter.
- What does this letter tell you about the author's experiences?
- What question do you have that the letter didn't provide answers for.

### USE THE LETTER AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

- What did you learn from this letter that was new information to you?
- What other primary sources will you use to help you understand this event or topic?

## BONUS ACTIVITY: ENVELOPE ANALYSIS

- How much did this letter cost to mail? How do you know?
- How many days between when the letter was sent and when it was received?
- What is missing from this envelope that would be on a modern envelope?

# CLARENCE LETTER (TRANSCRIBED)

Monday  
15 January 45.

Darling Wife —

(1) Well honey we are still rolling, rolling over the deep blue sea. It has really been grand sailing today, beautiful sunshine and very warm. Also the water has been calm but I will still be glad when we again set foot on land for a change.

(2) Honey I am surely getting homesick for some of your letters and hope there will be some waiting when we arrive at our destination. Also it will be a lot easier to find some thing to write about when we get there I think. Then again perhaps everything of interest will be censored as it now is.

(3) We had a fairly good dinner tonite, nothing to rave about but better than usual. Had roast pork, noodles, asparagus, lettuce salad and some peaches for desert. Honey when I come back your going to be a very busy little girl in more ways than one. One of course will be cooking and what I mean I don't believe I will ever get my fill of it. Was talking with one of the boys today and he remarked how well he liked hot biscuits with good steak gravy. It reminded me of many happy memories which I hope will soon return.

(4) Just had to take time out for a cigarette and try to think of some thing new to write however can't say it helped much. When we have a cigarette we either have to go up on deck or into the latrine and of course there is no smoking on deck after dark. Also every place we go of course we must wear our life belts and pistol belt with a full canteen of water. I am not complaining about that because it is a good safety feature but it does get tiresome dragging it around and hooking same on every one walking by in the narrow aisles. It will seem rather odd to be on land and be able to walk around again without elbowing your way.

(5) I was thinking and wondering today if I told you on the phone about how I got to see the show at Radio City Music Hall that night. There was a crowd there over a block long all the time. As fast as people would go in more would follow in the line. When the theatre is filled (over 10,000) they merely close the doors. They keep the crowd roped in on the sidewalk to hold the line in order. I was standing near the door or entrance when an officer (Police) came along. He said, do you want to see the show, and of course I said I would like to very much. He lifted up the rope and said okay go under. I was third from the last in the theatre when they closed the doors. I thought it very nice of him being so considerate, don't you? That's one place we must visit when we go to New York.

Well darling, I am again out of news so will say that's all for now.

"Bye, Bye"

Worlds of Love

Clarence.



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Read Online

# CLARENCE LETTER & ENVELOPE

Monday  
15 January 45.

Darling Wife —

Hell honey we are still rolling over the deep blue sea. It has really been grand sailing today, beautiful sunshine and very warm. Also the water has been calm but I will still be glad when we again set foot on land for a change.

Honey I am surely getting homesick for some of your letters and hope there will be some floating when we arrive at our destination. Also it will be a lot easier to find some thing to write about when we get there I think. I am again perhaps everything of interest will be considered if now is.

We had a fairly good dinner tonight, nothing to rave about but better than usual. Had roast pork, woodlice, asparagus, lettuce salad and some peaches for desert. Honey when I come back again going to be a very busy little girl in more than one way. One of course will be cooking and for that I mean I don't believe I will ever get my fill of it. He is talking with one of the boys today and he remarked how well he liked his biscuits with good steak gravy. It reminded me of many happy memories which I hope will soon return.

Just had to take time out for a cigarette and try to think of some thing new to write however can't say it helped much. When we have a cigarette we either have to go up on deck or into the latrine and of course there is no smoking on deck after dark. Also every place we go of course we must wear our life belts and pistol belt with a full canteen

of water. I am not complaining about that because it is a good safety feature but it does get tiresome dragging it around and looking some on every one walking by in the narrow aisles. It will seem right up odd to be on land and be able to walk around again without elbowing your way.

I was thinking and wondering today if I told you on the phone about how I got to see the show at Radio City Music Hall that night. There was a crowd there over a block long all the time. As fast as people would go in, more would pour in the line. When the theatre is filled (over 10,000) they merely close the doors. They keep the crowd roped in on the sidewalk near the door or entrance when an officer (Police) came along. He said, do you want to see the show, and of course I said I would like to very much. He lifted up the rope and said, okay go under. I was third from the last in the theatre when they closed the doors. I thought it very nice of him being so considerate, don't you? That's one place we must visit when we go to New York.

Hell darling I am again out of news so will say that's all for now.

Bye, Bye  
Holds of Love  
Clarence.



## WORKSHEET

# LETTER ANALYSIS

USE THIS WORKSHEET TO GATHER RELEVANT INFORMATION IN YOUR LETTER AND ANALYZE THE AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

### OBSERVE THE LETTER

- Who wrote the letter?

*Clarence Williams*

- Who read/received the letter?

*His wife, Gretchen Williams*

- When was the letter written?

*January 15, 1945*

- Where was the letter written?

*The sea, the Atlantic Ocean, on a ship*

### MAKE SENSE OF THE LETTER

- Why was the letter written? What evidence in the letter helps you know why it was written? Quote from the letter.

*Clarence wants to tell his wife about his daily life and also let her know that he misses her. He gives examples of small aspects of his day, such as what they ate for dinner, but also lets her know that he misses her cooking. "We had a fairly good dinner tonite (sic), nothing to rave about but better than usual. Had roast pork, noodles, asparagus, lettuce salad and some peaches for desert (sic). Honey when I come back your (sic) going to be a very busy little girl in more ways than one. One of course will be cooking and what I mean I don't believe I will ever get my fill of it."*

- What does this letter tell you about the author's experiences?

*He got to have some fun experiences while he was still in the US, like going to Radio City Music hall*

- What question do you have that the letter didn't provide answers for.

*What other equipment do you have to carry besides the canteen?*

### USE THE LETTER AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

- What did you learn from this letter that was new information to you?

*You could learn what rations men had while traveling at sea.*

- What other primary sources will you use to help you understand this event or topic?

*Other letters, photographs*

## BONUS ACTIVITY: ENVELOPE ANALYSIS

- How much did this letter cost to mail? How do you know?

*6 cents, it's on the stamp in the upper*

- How many days between when the letter was sent and when it was received?

*21 days*

- What is missing from this envelope that would be on a modern envelope?

*Zip Code*

EXAMPLE  
ANSWER  
SHEET