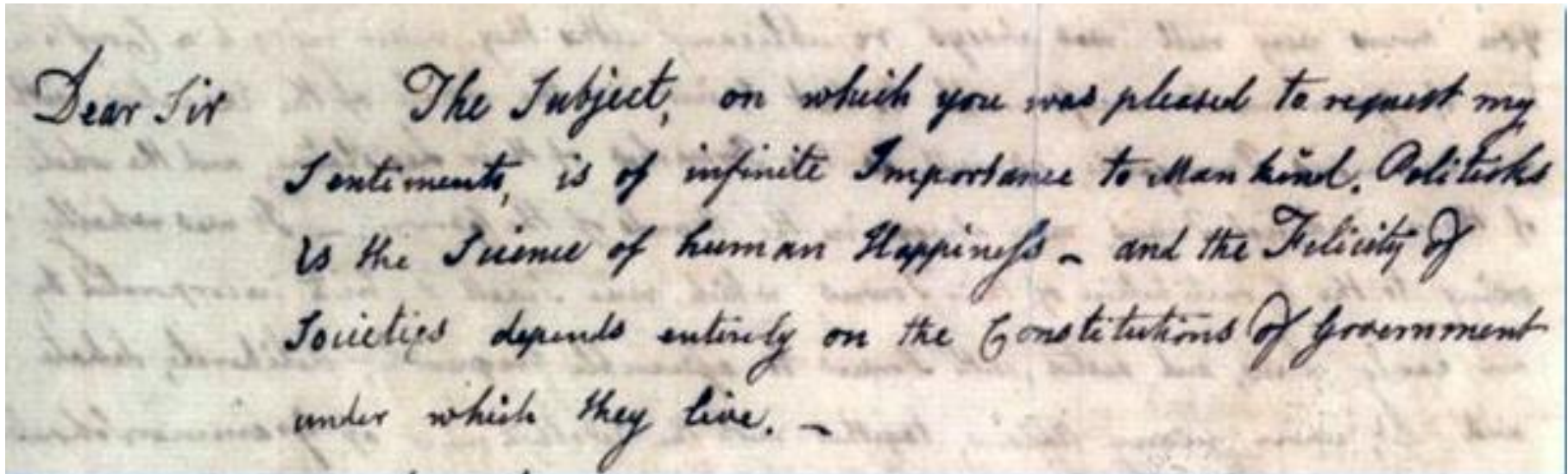


**Directions:**

Examine and discuss sections of the letter that John Adams wrote to William Hooper, North Carolina delegate to the Continental Congress, in March 1776.

**Paragraph 1**

A photograph of a handwritten letter on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script. The first line on the left reads "Dear Sir". The main body of the text begins with "The Subject, on which you was pleased to request my Sentiments, is of infinite Importance to Man kind. Politics is the Science of human Happiness - and the Felicity of Societies depends entirely on the Constitutions of Government under which they live. -".

Dear Sir

The Subject, on which you was pleased to request my Sentiments, is of infinite Importance to Man kind. Politics is the Science of human Happiness - and the Felicity of Societies depends entirely on the Constitutions of Government under which they live. -

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

## SELECTIONS & QUESTIONS: Thoughts on Government

### Paragraph 1:

Dear Sir

The Subject, on which you was pleased to request my Sentiments, is of infinite Importance to Man kind. Politicks is the Science of human Happiness—and the Felicity of Societies depends entirely on the Constitutions of Government under which they live

*What is “the subject” Adams is referring to? How does he feel about it?*

*What do you think he means when he says, “Politicks is the Science of human happiness?” Why would that be the case?*

Paragraph 3

If you can determine, what Form of Government, will produce the greatest Quantity of human Happiness, you will at once decide, which is the best, this being the only Extension. - If you determine what the Dignity of human Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind consist in, you will decide what it is that produces the greatest Quantity of Happiness. - Divines, Moralists, Philosophers, and others of Pleasure all agree that it consists in Virtue. - If there is a Form of Government, therefore, whose Principle or Foundation, is Virtue, will not all those kinds of Men acknowledge, it to be better calculated to promote the general Happiness, than another, the Principle of which is Fear, or even Honour.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

## SELECTIONS & QUESTIONS: Thoughts on Government

### Paragraph 3:

If you can determine, what Form of Government, will produce the greatest Quantity of human Happiness, you will at once decide which is the best, this being the only Criterion - if you determine what the Dignity of human Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind consists in, you will decide what it is that produces the greatest Quantity of Happiness. Divines, Moralists, Philosophers, and Men of Pleasure all agree that it consists in Virtue. If there is a Form of Government, therefore, whose Principle or Foundation, is Virtue, will not all those Kinds of Men acknowledge, it to be better calculated to promote the general Happiness, than another, the Principle of which is Fear, or even Honour.

*Underline the word "happiness" as it appears throughout this paragraph. How many times is it used?*

*What is the point Adams is making regarding happiness?*



Paragraph 4

I hold the Principle of Honour, Sacred - but am not ashamed to confess myself so much of a Grecian, or Roman, if not of a Christian as to think the Principle of Virtue of higher Rank in the Scale of moral Excellence, than Honour. indeed Honour is but a Part, a very small Part of Virtue. - As to Fear, it is so base and brutal a Passion, that it don't deserve the Name of a Principle, and I think no Gentleman of this Age and Country will think it a Foundation of Government proper for Americans. -



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

## SELECTIONS & QUESTIONS: Thoughts on Government

### Paragraph 4:

I hold the Principle of Honour, Sacred—but am not ashamed to confess myself So much of a Grecian, or Roman, if not of a Christian as to think the Principle of Virtue of higher Rank in the Scale of moral Excellence, than Honour. indeed Honour is but a Part, a very Small Part of Virtue. As to Fear, it is so base and brutal a Passion, that it dont deserve the Name of a Principle, and I think no Gentleman of this Age and Country will think it a Foundation of Government proper for Americans

*Which does Adams feel is the greater quality – honor or virtue? What is the difference between them?*

*Adams says fear is not “proper for Americans” as a governing principle. How did the colonists’ experience with Great Britain shape this opinion?*

Paragraph 5

The Spirit of the People, among whom I had my Birth and Education, which you know very well, was always republican, altho they never enjoyed a Constitution of Government conformable to that Spirit, as the whole of the Executive, with an enormous Prerogative, as well as two Branches of their Legislature, and the whole of their judicial Powers, were always in the Hands of the Crown. — It was wholly owing to the Constitution of their Towns, which were small Districts incorporated by an early Law, and vested with Powers to assemble frequently, deliberate, debate and act, upon many Affairs, together with the Establishment of Grammar Schools in every one of those Towns, that such a Spirit was preserved, at all among the People.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

## SELECTIONS & QUESTIONS: Thoughts on Government

### Paragraph 5:

The Spirit of the People, among whom I had my Birth and Education, which you know very well, was always republican, altho they never enjoyed a Constitution of Government conformable to that Spirit, as the whole of the Executive, with an enormous Prerogative, as well as two Branches of their Legislative, and the whole of their judicial Powers, were always in the Hands of the Crown. It was wholly owing to the Constitution of their Towns, which were Small Districts incorporated by an early Law, and vested with Powers to assemble frequently, deliberate, debate and act, upon many Affairs, together with the Establishment of Grammar Schools in every one of those Towns, that Such a Spirit was preserved, at all among the People

*Both Adams and Hooper grew up in or near Boston and attended Harvard University. How does this paragraph, which was not included in later versions of “Thoughts on Government,” reflect their common background?*

*What created a “republican” spirit in Adams’ experience?*





Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

## *SELECTIONS & QUESTIONS: Thoughts on Government*

### **The 1776 North Carolina Constitution states:**

“we, the Representatives of the Freemen of North Carolina, chosen and assembled in Congress, for the Express purpose of framing a Constitution, under the Authority of the people, most Conducive to their Happiness and Prosperity, do declare, that a government for this State shall be established.”

*In what way are Adams' views on government reflected in this statement?*

*Do you feel his views on government still apply today?*

## SELECTIONS & QUESTIONS: Thoughts on Government

### Paragraph 1:

Dear Sir

The Subject, on which you was pleased to request my Sentiments, is of infinite Importance to Man kind. Politicks is the Science of human Happiness—and the Felicity of Societies depends entirely on the Constitutions of Government under which they live

*What is “the subject” Adams is referring to? How does he feel about it?*

Government – He thinks it’s of “infinite importance to mankind”

*What do you think he means when he says, “Politicks is the Science of human happiness?” Why would that be the case?*

Government makes the laws and policies under which people live and those have a great effect upon quality of life.

### Paragraph 4:

I hold the Principle of Honour, Sacred—but am not ashamed to confess myself So much of a Grecian, or Roman, if not of a Christian as to think the Principle of Virtue of higher Rank in the Scale of moral Excellence, than Honour. indeed Honour is but a Part, a very Small Part of Virtue. As to Fear, it is so base and brutal a Passion, that it dont deserve the Name of a Principle, and I think no Gentleman of this Age and Country will think it a Foundation of Government proper for Americans

*Which does Adams feel is the greater quality – honor or virtue? What is the difference between them?*

He says virtue is the greater quality and that honor is just a small part of virtue. Virtue is about being a good person with good morals. Honor is a product or part of virtue.

*Adams says fear is not “proper for Americans” as a governing principle. How did the colonists’ experience with Great Britain shape this opinion?*

Great Britain used fear and intimidation against the colonists and that had only caused resentment and rebellion.

### Paragraph 3:

If you can determine, what Form of Government, will produce the greatest Quantity of human Happiness, you will at once decide which is the best, this being the only Criterion - if you determine what the Dignity of human Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind consists in, you will decide what it is that produces the greatest Quantity of Happiness. Divines, Moralists, Philosophers, and Men of Pleasure all agree that it consists in Virtue. If there is a Form of Government, therefore, whose Principle or Foundation, is Virtue, will not all those Kinds of Men acknowledge, it to be better calculated to promote the general Happiness, than another, the Principle of which is Fear, or even Honour.

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*Underline the word “happiness” as it appears throughout this paragraph. How many times is it used? 4*

*What is the point Adams is making regarding happiness?*

The best kind of government is one that promotes virtue and leads to happiness for most people.

### Paragraph 5:

The Spirit of the People, among whom I had my Birth and Education, which you know very well, was always republican, altho they never enjoyed a Constitution of Government conformable to that Spirit, as the whole of the Executive, with an enormous Prerogative, as well as two Branches of their Legislative, and the whole of their judicial Powers, were always in the Hands of the Crown. It was wholly owing to the Constitution of their Towns, which were Small Districts incorporated by an early Law, and vested with Powers to assemble frequently, deliberate, debate and act, upon many Affairs, together with the Establishment of Grammar Schools in every one of those Towns, that Such a Spirit was preserved, at all among the People

*Both Adams and Hooper grew up in or near Boston and attended Harvard University. How does this paragraph, which was not included in later versions of “Thoughts on Government,” reflect their common background?*

Adams expected Hooper to understand the village town hall and widespread education Adams witnessed in the Boston area.

*What created a “republican” spirit in Adams’ experience?*

Frequent assembly, opportunities to deliberate and debate before action, widespread education.



## SELECTIONS & QUESTIONS: Thoughts on Government

### **The 1776 North Carolina Constitution states:**

“we, the Representatives of the Freemen of North Carolina, chosen and assembled in Congress, for the Express purpose of framing a Constitution, under the Authority of the people, most Conducive to their Happiness and Prosperity, do declare, that a government for this State shall be established.”

*In what way are Adams' views on government reflected in this statement?*

*Do you feel his views on government still apply today?*

Discuss representatives and happiness. The framers of North Carolina's Constitution agreed with him. Answers will vary on the last question.