



**“Diagnosing and Treating Yellow Fever in
Philadelphia, 1793”**

End of Unit Assessment Activity

Directions

This Document Packet contains two letters written to Dr. Rush by his friends during the Yellow Fever epidemic of summer, 1793, and one letter Rush wrote to another Philadelphia doctor.

- 1) Read the letters. Typed versions of the texts are found on the pages following each scanned image.
- 2) Type or handwrite answers to the essay questions below. Your answers will be graded on: use of complete sentences, correct grammar and spelling, use of unit vocabulary words, and how well you support your claims with evidence from the primary sources (both these letters and your Case Sheet).

Essay Questions:

- 1) Write two-sentence summaries of the contents of each of the letters included in this packet. *6 sentences total*
- 2) Who do you think Nathaniel Irwin and James More might be? What information did they include in their letters to suggest their relationship with Dr. Rush? *3 – 5 complete sentences*
- 3) Why did Irwin and More write to Dr. Rush? *3 – 5 complete sentences*
- 4) Do you think Irwin was convinced that Dr. Rush was right in how he treated patients? How about More? Why or why not? In your answer, use examples from the letters in this packet, information from your Case Sheet, and unit vocabulary words. *3 – 5 complete sentences*
- 5) Imagine that you and your family lived in Philadelphia in summer, 1793. What might you have done to protect yourselves from the Yellow Fever epidemic and/or care for sick family members? Do you think you would have trusted Dr. Rush's treatment methods, or would you have followed others' advice? Why? In your answer, use examples from the letters in this packet, information from your Case Sheet, and unit vocabulary words. *6 – 8 complete sentences*

REMINDER: You must turn in both your Case Sheet and essay questions to receive full credit for this assignment.

Letter from Nathaniel Irwin to Dr. Benjamin Rush,
September 30, 1793, Page 1

Dear Sir

N. Hammony Sept. 30th 1793

I will not take up your precious time by telling you how much I think your fellow Citizens indebted to your disinterested & hazardous labours, in attempting to save those who are appointed to die. The reason of my troubling you is shortly this —

The malignant fever has come into our neighbourhood. It has been fatal in every instance. Our Physicians are afraid to approach it & know very little about it. I wish therefore to be prepared to afford proper & timely assistance to my neighbours, my family, or self should God in his providence render it necessary — Newspapers might perhaps afford the means of lights, but I have scarce any access to them — I first glanced at two papers about two weeks ago, containing some medicinal hints said to be from you — All your words of cure subscribed with your Name. In this I should have rested had not Dr. Rhums very different method & the Secretaries official report shook my faith a little — Further doubts have been suggested by a Letter I have rec^d of Doct Ingham of our County who has been chosen in the Legislature to investigate the nature of the fever & mode of cure — By the way I am sorry to add that he is likely to have the superadded sin of inexperience as he is now in the prime of his life. In fine Sir, knowing that above all men I ever knew, you stand open to conviction & that you have ^{had} further ex-

Text:

[Beginning at First Arrow]

Neshammey Sept. 30th 1793

Dear Sir

I will not take up your precious time by telling you how much I think your fellow Citizens indebted to your disinterested & hazardous labours in attempting to save those who are "appointed to die." The reason of my troubling you is shortly this –The malignant fever has come into our neighbourhood. It has been fatal in every instance. Our Physicians are afraid to approach it & know very little about it. I wish therefore to be prepared to afford proper & kindly assistance to my neighbours, my family, or self should God in his providence render it necessary—Newspapers might perhaps afford the necessary lights, but I have scarce any access to them. I just glanced at two papers about two weeks ago, containing some medical hints said to be from you....

[Beginning at Second Arrow]

In this I should have rested had not Dr. Khun's very different method & the Secretaries official report shook my faith a little – Further doubts have been suggested by a Letter I have received of Doct Ingham of our County who has been thrice in the City lately, to investigate the nature of the fever & a mode of cure – By the bye I am sorry to add, that he is likely to have the super added knowledge of experience as he is now in the fever himself. In fine Sir, knowing, that above all men I ever knew, you stand open to conviction & That you have had further ex

[**Note:** Dr. Adam Kuhn, spelled here as "Khun," was a prominent Philadelphia doctor who prescribed palliative methods to treat the symptoms of Yellow Fever. Born just outside Philadelphia in 1741, Kuhn studied medicine at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He and Rush disagreed strongly over appropriate medical responses to Yellow Fever.]

Letter from Nathaniel Irwin to Dr. Benjamin Rush,
September 30, 1793, Page 2

experiment in the treatment of this fever, I wish to have your
opinion of — The first symptoms (in which perhaps it may agree
with other fevers) ~~with~~ the subsequent & more certain diagnostics —
And — The first remedies to be used & after mode of treatment either
in general or detail as may suit your convenience. Perhaps you can
send me a News paper that will answer every purpose — If your time
allows no more I will be thankful even for a ~~single~~ ^{single} recipe.
I have prepared a few of your powders, but have been lately told that
you now add two grains of opium. But whether this is of choice or
necessity, when the Stomach would not otherwise retain them,
I cannot learn: & I think it not improbable that you may have made
other alterations in this prescription & substituted some other
the place of it — Should this letter pass this gulph, that is, find
us, & you find leisure to answer, perhaps you will be so obliging as to
yours to Lesher's, Sign of the Lamb, North end of Second Street.
Should you be in the humour of writing, I should like to know the proportion
cured of those who have certainly had the malignant fever — The bills
of Mortality at Bush-Hill compared with the restored would form a
good index. I would ask the generally Bills of Mortality — The average
number per day for some time past & whether increasing or diminishing.
But I must have done & subscribe myself, which I do most faithfully
your friend
& obliged humble Servant
Nathl Irwin

Text:

[Beginning at Arrow]

experience in the treatment of this fever, I wish to have your [matured?] opinion of The first symptoms (in which it perhaps it may agree with other fevers) with the subsequent & more certain dignostics – and – The first remedies to be used & after mode of treatment either in general or detail as may suit your convenience. Perhaps you can send me a Newspaper that will answer every purpose – If your time allows no more I will be thankful even for a Recipe. I have prepared a few of your powders, but have been lately told that you now add two grains of opium. But whether this is of choice or necessity, when the Stomach would not otherwise retain them, - I cannot learn: & I think it not improbably that you may have made other alterations in this prescription & substituted some other in the place of it – Should this letter pass the gulph that is fixed us & you find leisure to answer, perhaps you will be so obliging as to send yours to Leshers, Sign of the Lamb, North end of Second Street....

Your friend

& obliged humble servant

Nathl. Irwin

Letter from James More to Dr. Benjamin Rush,
October 26, 1793

October 26th 1793

My Honored Friend

It has ever been my pride to think that I enjoyed some portion of your esteem; but the fresh marks of friendship with which you were pleased to honor me in your letter of yesterday, came like balm to raise my drooping spirits, and served to supply the want of your long wished for company. —

The treachery of some of your medical friends of which you so justly complain, ~~no doubt~~ & of those too, who owe all their importance in life to you, no doubt must be mortifying to you; be assured however that it is not the smallest of my ambition to find that you ~~can~~ consider me, what I have always been proud to be thought. — your faithful & sincere pupil
James More

Text [Entire Page]:

October 26, 1793

My Honored Friend

It has ever been my pride to think that I enjoyed some portion of your esteem; but the fresh marks of friendship with which you were pleased to honor me in your letter of yesterday, came like balm to raise my drooping spirits, and served to supply the want of your long wished for company. –

The treachery of some of your medical friends of which you so justly complain & of those to, who owe all their importance in life to you, no doubt must be mortifying to you; be assured however that it is not the smallest of my ambition to find that you consider me, what I have always been proud to be thought – Your faithful & sincere pupil

James More

Letter from Dr. Benjamin Rush to Dr. Hodge,
October 3, 1793

Dear Sir!

I regret that you & I differ
so much in our opinions & practice in
the prevailing Epidemic, that it is im-
possible for us to consult together in any
manner ^{hereafter} with safety to a patient.

From Sir your
friend &c

Benjⁿ Rush

Octob^r 3^d 1793.

To Dr Hodge

Text [Entire Page]:

Dear Sir,

I regret that you & I differ so much in our opinions & practice in the prevailing Epidemic, that it is impossible for us to consult together in any [way] whatever hereafter with Safety to a patient.

From Dear Sir your

Friend Dr

Benjamin Rush

October 3rd 1793.

To Dr Hodge

Vocabulary

Letter from Nathaniel Irwin to Dr. Benjamin Rush:

Afford: To offer.

Alterations: Changes.

Appointed: Decided on.

Diagnostics [Dignostics]: A characteristic doctors use to know if a patient has a certain illness.

Disinterested: Lack of concern for one's self; maintaining cool in a crisis.

Fatal: Deadly.

Gulph: Gulf, distance.

Hazardous: Dangerous.

Improbably: Unlikely.

Labours: Work.

Malignant Fever: Yellow Fever.

Mode: Method.

Opium: A drug made from the opium poppy. It is also used to produce heroin. While illegal for recreational use in many countries today, opium once was widely used in medicine.

Providence: God's spiritual authority.

Recipe: A description of the kinds and amounts of ingredients to use in making a medicinal drug, and how to combine them.

Render: Make.

Retain: Keep.

Secretaries: In this context, Irwin refers to the report drafted by the College of Physicians regarding the cause and treatment of Yellow Fever.

Thrice: Three times.

Letter from James more to Dr. Benjamin Rush:

Drooping: To bend or hang low because of tiredness.

Esteem: Good opinion.

Mortifying: Awful to look at or think about.

Pupil: Student.

Treachery: When a close friend disagrees with you, or works against you.

Letter from Dr. Benjamin Rush to Dr. Hodge:

Consult: Discuss a problem with someone else.

Practice: Professional actions. In this context, how doctors decide to treat their patients.

Prevailing: Common, widespread.