“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.
Dear Sir,

I will not take up your precious time by telling you how much I wish your fellow citizens could do their disinterested

significant labours in attempting to save those who are appointed to die. The reason of my troubling you is shortly this—

that the small pox has come into our neighbourhood. I have

been told in many instances, our physicians are often too-

approachable, know very little about it. I wish the fire to be

directed to the proper family assistance to my neighbours,

my family, or self should be in provision made, if our

officers, my friends might judge of the necessity

of making any such as to the


and at two houses about two weeks ago, containing some mo-

dical killed and taken to the grave. I know you are very faithful

with your care. In this I am to have you, Sir. Dr. Rush very correctly, with the Secretaries official report

making to the latter—his doubts have been suggested

by letter. I have received from them of our county to be the

in the City. I have examined the nature of the small pox

theme—by the way, I must add that there is little to be

for the small pox in the Philadelphia, as he is seen in the family.

of some, knowing that above all, I am now

know you stand open to conviction. That you have 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

experience in the treatment of this fever, wish to have your opinion of the first symptoms (in which such is it generally with other fevers) with the subsequent and more certain diagnostics. The first remedies to be used & after mode of treatment in general or detail as may suit your convenience. Perhaps you will send me a new paper that will answer any purpose. I may endeavor to send more. I will be thankful even for a short communication. I have prepared a few of your powders, but have been told that you now add two grains of opium. But whether this be necessary when the stomach is not otherwise unwell I cannot learn. I think it not improbable that you may have other communications on this prescription & substitute some thing in its place, if you find it convenient. I wish you will be so obliging to send your address to Sissors Sign of the Lamb, North end of Park. You need be in the hands of writing. I should like to know the patient and of those who have certainly had the malignant fever. I am told that at Bush Hill, &c. the restorative physicians have made a great success. I am led to call you physicians. You have done it yourself, and I should imagine you have done it with success. I am very much agitated, and must have done it myself. I am in a state of mind, which may not be yours.

your friend
Nathaniel Irwin

Valnt Irwin.
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 Lesher’s, Sign of the Lamb, North end of Second Street....

Your friend

& obliged humble servant

Nathl. Irwin
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 teaching of some of your medical friends of which you so kindly complain must be of late too, and one all this 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 friend,

James More
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 impossible for us to consult together in any case whatever with safety to a patient.

Yours & in your friend &

Oct. 3rd 1793.

Benj. Rush.

To Dr. Hodge
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 3\textsuperscript{rd} 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.