

Historiographical Case Study: Lafayette Square

Lesson Warm-Up

1

Charleston, 19 June, 1777.

... Considering the pleasant life I lead in this country, my sympathy with the people, which makes me feel as much at ease in their society as if I had known them for twenty years, the similarity between their mode of thinking and my own, and my love of liberty and of glory, one might suppose that I am very happy...

LAFAYETTE

2

The 14 October 1777

My dear General,

I do not do myself the honor of writing to you as many times as I would choose, because I fear to disturb your important occupations. ... Give me leave, dear General, to speak to you about my own affairs with all the confidence of a son, of a friend, as you favoured me with those two so precious titles. My respect, my affection for you, answered to my own heart that I deserve them on that side as well as possible. ...

Your Excellency's
The most obedient servant
The Mquis. de Lafayette

3

Paris June the 29th [1782]

... Adieu, my dear General, I hope you will approve my conduct and in everything I do I first consider what your opinions would be had I an opportunity to consult it. I anticipate the happiness to be again with you, my dear General, and I hope I need not assuring you that nothing can exceed the sentiments of respect and tenderness I have the honor to be with

Your most h^{ble} serv and for
ever your most devoted affectionate
friend

Lafayette

4

Witmold-Holstein
May the 20th 1798

My dear General...

But there is a circumstance which from every public motives and private feelings makes me more unhappy that I can find words to express the anxiety of my mind. I mean the deplorable disputes between the United States and France. I see that instead of subsiding [decreasing], ... they appear to be worse than dismal news of a declared war between the two nations ... I am sure, my dear general, that your powerful influence will be employed in removing the obstacles that are found on your side of the Atlantic, and that you will ... recommend to the leading statesmen in both parties not to let political or personal piques encrease the difficulties ... Adieu, my dear and beloved general, you know how happy I am to have so good a right to call myself

Your respectful, filial,
and obliged friend,
Lafayette.

5

Remarks delivered by Gen. Lafayette at the tomb of Gen. George Washington, Mt. Vernon, October 17, 1824

The feelings, which on this awful moment oppress my heart don't leave me the power of utterance. I can only thank you, my dear Custis [Washington] for your precious gift and pray a silent homage to the tomb of the greatest and best of men, my paternal friend.

6

Morris-town May 8th 1780.

My dr Marqs

Your welcome favour of the 27th of April came to my hands yesterday—I received it with all the joy that the sincerest friendship could dictate—and with that impatience which an ardent desire to see you could not fail to inspire....

I most sincerely congratulate with you on your safe arrival in America & shall embrace you with all the warmth of an Affectionate friend when you come to head Qrs—where a bed is prepared for you.[1] adieu till we meet Yrs

[Gen. Washington]

Mount Vernon
February 01, 1784

... The accounts contained therein [in Lafayette's last letter] of the political and commercial state of affairs as they respect America, are interesting, and I wish I could add that they were altogether satisfactory; and the agency you have had in both, particularly with regard to the free ports in France, is a fresh evidence of your unwearied endeavours to serve this country ...

I thank you most sincerely My Dear Marqs. for your kind invitation to your house, if I should come to Paris ... With every sentiment of esteem, Admiration and Love, I am etc.

[Gen. Washington]

Mount Vernon, December 25, 1798

My dear Sir: ...

You have expressed a wish, worthy [of] that benevolence of your heart, that I would exert all my endeavors to avert the Calamitous effects of a rupture between our Countries. Believe me ... that no one, during the whole of my Administration laboured more incessantly ... to render every justice, nay favor to France, consistently with the neutrality which had been proclaimed to these sanctioned by Congress and approved by the State legislatures ... But neutrality was not the point at which France was aiming...

I shall now only add what you knew well before that with the most Sincere friendship and affectionate regard, I am always &c.

[Gen. Washington]

From the Committee of the citizens of the village of Utica [1824]

General Lafayette -

On behalf of our fellow citizens, we come with open arms, and hearts filled with gratitude, to welcome the man who was the companion of our fathers in the glorious struggle which achieved their Independence; and whom united proudly in war and [?] in peace, have secured to use the rights of men and the blessings of liberty.

Washington, D.C., Sept. 9, 1825

General Lafayette: It has been the good fortune of many of my distinguished fellow citizens, during the course of the year now elapsed, upon your arrival at their respective places of abode, to greet you with the welcome of the Nation. The less pleasing task now devolves upon me, of bidding you, in the name of the Nation, Adieu.

... You deliberately and perseveringly preferred toil, danger, the endurance of every hardship ... in defence of a holy cause ...

... Go, then, our beloved friend - return to the land of brilliant genius ... to that beautiful France ... if in after days, a Frenchman shall be called to indicate the character of his nation by that of one individual, during the age in which we live, the blood of lofty patriotism shall mantle in his cheek, the fire of conscious virtue shall sparkle in his eye, and he shall pronounce the name of Lafayette.

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