

# LETTER FROM JOHN CARR TO RALPH CARR ABOUT CONFLICT WITH FRANCE AND INFLUENZA IN ITALY, 1793

REFERENCE: ZCE F/1/1/1/132 | SUGGESTED AGE GROUPS: KS2, KS3, KS4, LIFELONG LEARNERS | MEDICINE AND HEALTHCARE, FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS, THE GRAND TOUR

## THE GRAND TOUR

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was fashionable for wealthy British families to send their sons, and occasionally daughters, on a Grand Tour. This saw privileged young men and women setting off usually from London to travel across Europe. The tourists were affluent enough to spend multiple years on the Tour. They would often carry letters of introduction with them to integrate into society while abroad.

## JOHN AND HARRIET CARR

John Carr (1764-1817) and Harriet Carr (1771-1848) were siblings who set out on their Grand Tour in 1791, returning to England in 1794. They were the children of successful northern businessman Ralph Carr and his wife Isabella.



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Ralph and Isabella were initially against Harriet going on the Grand Tour but eventually gave their approval because it was thought that the tour would benefit Harriet's health – she had a cough thought to be tuberculosis. Some of their objections were around fears of the political situation in Europe and potential dangers to travellers. John and Harriet's ultimate destination was Italy, travelling via France and Switzerland.

John and Harriet spent almost six months in Rome with short trips to Bologna, Florence, Naples, and Turin. They had planned to leave for England in early 1792 but the outbreak of the Franco-Austrian War prevented this. They returned to Florence in May 1792, staying there until November 1793. In December 1793 John and Harriet made a final visit to Rome before leaving for England and arriving home in the summer of 1794.

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## LETTER FROM JOHN CARR TO RALPH CARR

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This letter is written by John Carr to his father, Ralph Carr, from Florence, Italy, on 31 March 1793, towards the end of John and Harriet's tour.

It is clear from the letter that John is planning their journey home. In the second paragraph, he asks for a £500 remittance 'as it is impossible to foresee where or how long we may be detained upon the road, or even what route we are to pursue in our journey homewards'. This money was provided by his father, likely by a letter of credit as it was dangerous to carry money while travelling. £500 was a large sum of money – equivalent to about £77,000 today.

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## FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS

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Uncertainty around the journey home was because of the political situation in Europe at this time.

The French Revolutionary Wars were a series of conflicts across Europe lasting from 1792 to 1801, in which France fought against Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia and several other European monarchies. The conflict is divided into two periods: the War of the First Coalition (1792-1797) and the War of the Second Coalition (1798-1802).



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The conflicts were a direct result of the French Revolution (1789-1799) which stemmed from discontent towards absolute monarchy, dissatisfaction with the Estate System and the bourgeoisie, poor harvests, inflated costs, decreased wages, and riots. European nations were shocked to learn of events in France and were fearful of the spread of revolution across the continent.

European nations were shocked to learn of events in France and were fearful of the spread of revolution across the continent. A series of conflicts were fought in northern Italy between the French Revolutionary forces and a coalition of Austria, Russia, Piedmont-Sardinia, and a number of other Italian states. In this letter John states that the Italians are looking to Britain as 'their deliverers and friends' against French aggression. John offers an assurance to his father that he will keep abreast of news on French troops and plan their journey accordingly when they set out for home. The letter shows the perils of European travel at this time.

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## INFLUENZA

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The letter reports John and Harriet have had influenza which is also prevalent in Rome and Naples. This must have been concerning to their family at home as Harriet suffered from ill-health with a cough believed to have been tuberculosis – often referred to as consumption in this period.

Sickness was another peril of the Grand Tour. The journey itself might result in travel sickness, illness might result from the food and drink consumed and there was always a risk of picking up an illness prevalent in the immediate geographical area. Medical attention might not be immediately available.

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## TRANSCRIPT

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(No 39 March 12) No 40 Florence March 31st 1793

My D[ea]r Sir



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I wrote to Sir Rob[er]t Herries & Co by the same Post with my last Letter to you, presuming upon the permission you had so frequently urged for my so doing. Our intelligence from England has long been so scarce and so uncertain, that I had delayed my last Letter for two Posts, hoping every day for the arrival of the Mail.

I desired the remittance of £500 as it is impossible to foresee where or how long we may be detained upon the road, or even what route we are to pursue in our journey homewards. We have now four English Couriers due, and are generally in complete ignorance of what is passing at home. The eyes of the Italians are fixed upon you as their deliverers and friends, and are constantly demanding of us with the utmost anxiety news from England.

We have been seldom able to satisfy their curiosity, and can give them no intelligence of the fleet they have been taught to expect with so much solicitude. Where the Couriers are stop'd I have never been able to learn, but our letters are usually about forty days upon the road, and frequently six Mails due at a time. The spring in this Country has been by no means healthy, a disorder (something like an epidemical complaint I remember in England six or seven years ago) which they term Influenza has been almost universally prevalent, and has had very serious effects upon many people. I think I suffered more from it than Harriet, though I very soon got rid of the Cough, which she has not yet quite got the better of. I am not in the least troubled on this account as her coughing evidently is only the remains of the disorder, and not connected with her old pulmonary complaint. I keep her out in the air sometimes longer than perhaps she herself would wish, and prevent her as much as possible from sitting in the house, which I am convinced has been one great cause of her recovering so fast as she has done. We have many English families now here, and three or four young women of her own age are still very seriously indisposed. At Rome and Naples this disorder has been more prevalent and more violent. The holy week being over, travellers are arriving every day from Rome, and all the Inns are already full or their apartments engaged. Instead of going round by the coast of the Adriatic, Loreto, Ancona &c, as the English generally are accustomed to do, the greatest part of them will this year return to this place, in order to wait in peace and security, till they can have the prospect of pursuing their journey homewards without danger. Despairing of this, many have already taken up their quarters here, and have established themselves for the summer.

From our last accounts however affairs seem likely to take a more favourable turn, and I hope before the summer is well advanced that the road will be perfectly practicable. Friends or foes on this occasion are equally to be avoided by travellers, who cannot always answer for being upon the road in the



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sunshine alone, but if the French are driven back into their own limits the combined armies will naturally follow, and we shall be enabled to keep clear of them all. We will regulate our motions according to the b[e]st information we can procure, and take our measu[re]s in all respects for the best, as far as common prudence can carry us. We will not forfeit the advantages of our

present situation till we are convinced that we can undertake our journey with effect, as we have no place to detain us except Venice for a few days in passing through, and as I know of no place from Wooler to Naples where Harriet could have the same reasons to wish to remain to the last moment. She cannot bear the thoughts of selling her horse and I have promised her that he shall not be disposed of 'till the last day. She has most undoubtedly acquired a great stock of constitutional strength, and her casual coughing is unattended by any pain or other symptoms that can give alarm. Your ever Dut[iful]  
Obed[ient] Son John Carr

P.S. You shall hear again in a few posts. We have had a great deal of rain lately, and the spring is unusually backward. The leaves are only just out, which is three weeks later than the spring at Rome last year. I will collect as to trees, and particularly the kitchen garden whatever I can hope may prove useful, though the great difference of the climate I am afraid may disappoint us. This is not the Country for timber trees, save stonepine, cypresse.

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## GLOSSARY

Remittance – a sum of money sent in payment or as a gift.

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## OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

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### MONEY

Bank of England inflation calculator: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

National Archives currency converter: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>



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## FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS

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Britannica page on the French Revolutionary Wars: <https://www.britannica.com/event/French-revolutionary-wars>

Military Maps page on the French Revolutionary Wars: <https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802>

Oxford timeline of the French Revolutionary Wars: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191737817.timeline.0001>

National Archives resources on the French Revolution: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/french-revolution/>

BBC page on the French Revolution with video by Andrew Marr: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks3-gcse-the-french-revolution/zb9d2sg>

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## TRAVEL AND HEALTHCARE

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History of medical tourism: <https://www.news-medical.net/health/Medical-Tourism-History.aspx>

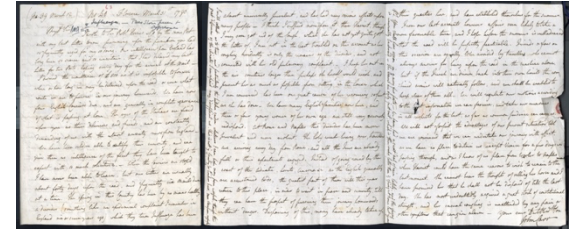
NHS page about tuberculosis (consumption): <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/tuberculosis-tb/>

NHS page about influenza: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu/>

History of influenza epidemics: <https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/flu>



# LEARNING ACTIVITIES: LETTER FROM JOHN CARR TO RALPH CARR ABOUT CONFLICT WITH FRANCE AND INFLUENZA IN ITALY, 1793



**TOPIC:** MEDICINE AND HEALTHCARE, FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS, THE GRAND TOUR  
**SUBJECT AREAS:** HISTORY, LITERACY, GEOGRAPHY

Background	Activity	Resources
<p>The letter reports John and Harriet have had influenza which is also prevalent in Rome and Naples. This must have been concerning to their family at home as Harriet suffered from ill-health with a cough believed to have been tuberculosis – often referred to as consumption in this period.</p> <p>Sickness was another peril of the Grand Tour. The journey itself might result in travel sickness, illness might</p>	<p><b>See:</b> What were the French Revolutionary Wars?</p> <p><b>See:</b> When did the French Revolutionary Wars take place?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Which countries were involved in the French Revolutionary Wars?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Which two periods are the French Revolutionary Wars divided into?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What were the French Revolutionary Wars a direct result of?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Where did French Revolutionary conflicts take place in Italy?</p> <p><b>See:</b> When did John and Harriet plan to leave Italy and return home?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Which conflict delayed John and Harriet’s journey home?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> How was the French Revolution a direct cause of the French Revolutionary Wars?</p>	<p><a href="https://www.britannica.com/event/French-revolutionary-wars">https://www.britannica.com/event/French-revolutionary-wars</a></p> <p><a href="https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802">https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802</a></p> <p><a href="https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802/war-of-the-first-coalition-1792-8">https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802/war-of-the-first-coalition-1792-8</a></p> <p><a href="https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802/war-of-the-second-coalition-nov-1798-mar-1802">https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802/war-of-the-second-coalition-nov-1798-mar-1802</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.thoughtco.com/french-revolutionary-and-napoleonic-wars-2361116">https://www.thoughtco.com/french-revolutionary-and-napoleonic-wars-2361116</a></p>



result from the food and drink consumed and there was always a risk of picking up an illness prevalent in the immediate geographical area. Medical attention might not be immediately available.

**Think:** What were the aims of the French Revolutionary Wars?

**Think:** Why were the conflicts divided into two periods?

**Think:** What took place during the War of the First Coalition?

**Think:** What took place during the War of the Second Coalition?

**Think:** Why did European monarchies become involved in the French Revolutionary Wars?

**Think:** What impact did the French Revolutionary Wars have on different European countries?

**Do:** Read through the letter from John Carr to his father. Highlight any parts that reference the French Revolutionary Wars.

**Do:** Annotate the sections highlighted to make note of any events in the French Revolutionary Wars that John refers to.

**Do:** Annotate the sections highlighted to make note of whether John is expressing a fact or an opinion.

**Do:** Discuss what you can learn about John's opinion towards the French Revolutionary Wars from his letters.

**Do:** Discuss what you can learn about the Italian populace's opinion towards the French Revolutionary Wars from his letters.

**Do:** Discuss what you can learn about Grand Tourists visiting Italy's opinion towards the French Revolutionary Wars from his letters.

<http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/alliances-and-wars/war-as-an-agent-of-transfer/frederick-c-schneid-the-french-revolutionary-and-napoleonic-wars>

<https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>





**Do:** Create a map to show the countries who were involved in the French Revolutionary Wars.

**Do:** On your map, mark where conflicts were fought during the French Revolutionary Wars.

**Do:** Create a timeline of the French Revolutionary Wars divided into the two time periods. Make note of which countries declared war each other, when countries entered the wars, when major conflicts took place, and when countries were defeated or sued for peace.

**Do:** Use your map and timeline to plan a safe route for John, Harriet and their two servants to travel home. Think about how they would have been travelling and the length of time it would have taken them to do so.

**Do:** Use the Bank of England currency convertor to work out how much the £500 John received is worth today.

**Do:** Use the National Archives currency convertor to work out the purchasing power of £500 in 1793.

**Do:** Use what you have learned about purchasing power in 1793 to plan a budget on how John could have used the £500 to fund the journey home for himself, Harriet and their two servants. Think about how long the journey would have taken, where they would have had to stay, and any resources or purchased that would have been made on the journey.



	<p><b>Do:</b> Create a budget and timeline for the same journey today. Compare this to the budget and timeline you created for John and Harriet's journey.</p>	
<p>The letter reports John and Harriet have had influenza which is also prevalent in Rome and Naples. This report must have been of concern to Ralph Carr. Harriet is known to have suffered from ill-health with a cough believed to have been tuberculosis – often referred to as consumption in this period.</p> <p>Sickness was another peril of the Grand Tour. The journey itself might result in travel sickness, illness might result from the food and drink consumed and there was always a risk of picking up an illness prevalent in the immediate geographical area. Medical attention might not be immediately available.</p>	<p><b>See:</b> Which illness does John report he and Harriet had?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Why would Ralph have been concerned about Harriet's health?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Where did the influenza outbreaks take place?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Where was the outbreak most prevalent and violent?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Why was sickness a peril of the Grand Tour?</p> <hr/> <p><b>Think:</b> Why might influenza have had a worrying effect on Harriet because of her medical history?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> How much was known about the cause of influenza and other infectious diseases in 1793?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> How much was known about the spread of influenza and other infectious diseases in 1793?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> How much was known about the treatment of influenza and other infectious diseases in 1793?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What is the relationship between war and the spread of infectious disease?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> Why did people travel abroad to benefit their health?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> Why did people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century think that bathing waters and seaside air had healing properties?</p>	<p><a href="https://www.news-medical.net/health/Medical-Tourism-History.aspx">https://www.news-medical.net/health/Medical-Tourism-History.aspx</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/flu">https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/flu</a></p>



**Do:** Read through John Carr's letter to his father. Highlight each section that mentions influenza.

**Do:** Research the causes, spread, and treatment of influenza.

**Do:** Create a diagram to demonstrate the causes, spread, and treatment of influenza.

**Do:** Discuss what you can infer from John's letter about how he tried to help Harriet's recovery from influenza.

**Do:** Using what you have learned about the causes, spread, and treatment of influenza, discuss how effective you think John's attempt at helping Harriet recover was.

**Do:** Using John's letter and what you have learned about the causes, spread, and treatment of influenza, discuss what you think might have contributed to the spread of influenza.

**Do:** Think about what you have learned about the causes and spread of influenza. Come up with a plan on how you would have halted the spread of the disease around Rome, Naples, Florence and beyond.