

LETTERS FROM JOHN CARR TO ISABELLA & RALPH CARR ABOUT THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS, 1793

REFERENCE: ZCE F/1/1/130 | SUGGESTED AGE GROUPS: KS2,

KS3, KS4, LIFELONG LEARNERS | FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS, MILITARY HISTORY

THE GRAND TOUR

During the 18th and 19th 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.

LETTER WRITING

This document is two letters in one written by John Carr. The first to his mother Isabella Carr and the second to his father, Ralph Carr. The letters were sent from Florence, Italy, in February 1793. John and Harriet had returned to Florence having delayed their journey home. Both letters were written on the same folded piece of writing paper.

In the 18th century both paper and postage were expensive. John was writing to his parents in the cheapest way. One side of the sheet of paper was left blank, the paper was then folded to form an envelope which was then sealed with wax. The address was then written on the exposed blank side.

John tells his mother that he and Harriet are writing to their parents fortnightly and that letters are occasionally delayed 'as may frequently happen in these times of confusion'. This is a reference to the political situation in Europe and is evidence of the impact of this on day-to-day life.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS



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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).

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.

A series of conflicts were fought in northern Italy between the French Revolutionary forces and a coalition of Austria, Russia, Piedmont-Sardinia, and several other Italian states. The difficult political situation does not appear to have deterred the Grand Tourist. John writes to his father 'Never were known so many English families in Italy as this year'.

NICOLAS JEAN HUGON DE BASSVILLE

In his letter to his mother, John describes the threatening behaviour of 'Mr Basville towards the Pope', and Basville's later murder by the Roman mob.

Nicolas Jean Hugdon de Basseville (1743-1793) was the agent of the French Minister at Naples and was sent to Rome. He enraged the more conservative populace of Rome with his revolutionary actions and beliefs. He demanded the Fleur de Lys emblem at the French Embassy be replaced with a picture of Liberty; proclaimed himself protector of the radical Jacobins in Rome; and demanded the expulsion of French people, including members of the French Royal Family who had taken refuge there. He also talked at large of "the purple geese of the Capitol" – who in Roman Mythology who are said to have saved the city. The story was taken on by French Revolutionaries and given a Republican interpretation. He met the protests of Cardinal Zelada, the Papal Secretary of State, with insults.

This led the Roman populace to view his action as having insulted to the Pope. On 13th January 1793, a Roman mob lynched and killed Bassville.



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EXECUTION OF LOUIS XVI

John declares that, after hearing of the execution of Louis XVI in Paris, France, he thinks the revolutionaries are 'bad men and worse politicians'.

The execution of Louis XVI was a major event of the French Revolution and took place publicly at the Place de la Révolution in Paris. This is often viewed as a turning point in both French and European history.

In August 1792, Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette were arrested and imprisoned. The monarchy was abolished the following month by the National Convention. Louis was placed on trial for counterrevolutionary activities and treason by the National Convention.

In January 1793 Louis was convicted of high treason and condemned to death. He was executed by guillotine on 21st January 1793. Marie Antoinette was similarly convicted of treason in September 1793 and executed by guillotine on 16th October 1793.

The executions emboldened the French Revolutionaries who would continue to radically alter the social and political structure of the country over the next several years. The executions inspired different reactions around the world. To some it symbolised the long-awaited ending of absolute monarchy and the beginning of true democracy in France. Others viewed it as senseless bloodshed and saw it as a sign that France had devolved into violence and chaos.

MONEY

The letter to Ralph Carr mentions a letter of credit to the value of £200 being made via the London bank, Sir Robert Herries & Co. This is a payment by Ralph to fund John and Harriet's trip. £200 was a substantial sum – equivalent to about £31,000 today.

TRANSCRIPT

No 36 Jan[uar]y 12th) No 37 Florence Feb[ruar]y 3rd 1793



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My Dear Madam

We had been waiting for some time in hopes of hearing from you when your Letter of 7th Jan[uar]y which we rec[eive]d yesterday put an end to our anxiety. We have regularly written once a fortnight and if our Letters are occasionally delayed upon the road, as may frequently happen in these times of confusion, you will always know how to account for it. As to Harriet's health &c I may repeat what I said in my last. She has enjoyed four or five months of uninterrupted good health, without even being liable to those colds or other slight complaints which scarce any body has escaped during the unusual severity of this winter. Rome has long been in an unsettled state, and particularly so since the appearance of the French Squadron at Naples. We think ourselves very fortunate in having determined to remain where we are in every respect so well situated. You will have read in the Papers that the French Minister at Naples dispatch'd a Mr Basville to the Pope with orders to demand the immediate establishment of the Arms of the Republic over the door of the French Academy. The Pope of course could not comply with this, and upon his refusal a very rash and imprudent threat was made use of by the messenger, menacing nothing less than the total ruin of Rome. Parading the streets with their national cockades, a fray took place between them and the incensed populace in which Mr Basville received a wound of which he died the next day. The consequences of this affair may be dreadful, and it seems scarce probable that it will be settled without bloodshed. As we saw Rome perfectly last year, we are not so anxious about our return there, at least we will remain in peace and security where we are 'till we see what turn affairs are likely to take. We have this morning the account of the death of the King of France, which has put the finishing stroke to the glorious fabric of the French revolution. I think they are bad men and worse politicians. I can give you no more acceptable news than that we are both perfectly well and happy, and that we have every prospect of continuing so. We have all suffered more from the cold than Harriet, which makes me look forward with confidence to next winter in England. We join in Duty & Love, I am D[ea]r Madam Your ever Dutiful Son John Carr

P.S. We have just heard from Ralph and write to him by this Post

My D[ea]r Sir



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I received yours of the 17th Dec[embe]r, and upon enquiring of Mr Jenkins find that Sir Rob[er]t Herries & Co had lodged a credit for £200 in my favour which I shall make use of as I see occasion. You must not be uneasy in any respect on our accounts, for be assured that we will most diligently keep out of all danger, both during our stay in this country and when we begin our journey homewards. Rome is in a precarious state, therefore for the present we shall not think of moving from our good quarters at Florence, where we are in p[ea]ce] and safety. We expect every day to hear of the commencement of hostili[ties] against the French, and in that case I cannot [at] present determine upon what route we shall take towards England. Both the time when and the manner how must be decided by circumstances at present beyond our reach. I beg however once more that

you will be under no apprehensions for our safety, as it will be always in our power to avoid every chance of danger by making a larger circle. I undertake to bring Harriet home in the course of the summer in health and perfect safety. The English families who went to Pisa are return'd here discontented with Pisa, and sorry they did not remain here. Never were known so many English families in Italy as this year. D[ea]r Sir Your ever Dut[iful] Obed[ient] Son John Carr

GLOSSARY

Cockade – a knot of ribbons of distinctive colours worn to show the allegiance of the wearer to a particular political faction.

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

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/>

FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS

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



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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>

LOUIS XVI

History page on the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/king-louis-xvi-executed>

Biography of Louis XVI: <https://www.biography.com/royalty/louis-xvi>

BBC History page on Louis XVI: https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/louis_xvi

BBC Bitesize page on the French Revolution: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z4xx2v4>

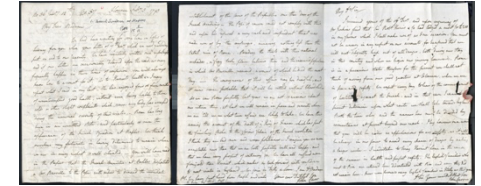
The trial and execution of Louis XVI: <https://alphahistory.com/frenchrevolution/trial-execution-of-louis-xvi/>

NICOLAS JEAN HUGDON DE BASSVILLE

Encyclopaedia Britannica entry on Bassville: https://theodora.com/encyclopedia/b/nicolas_jean_hugon_de_bassville.html



LEARNING ACTIVITIES: LETTERS FROM JOHN CARR TO ISABELLA AND RALPH CARR ABOUT THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1793



TOPIC: FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS, MILITARY HISTORY

SUBJECT AREAS: HISTORY, LITERACY, GEOGRAPHY

Background	Activity	Resources
<p>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).</p>	<p>See: What were the French Revolutionary Wars?</p> <p>See: When did the French Revolutionary Wars take place?</p> <p>See: Which countries were involved in the French Revolutionary Wars?</p> <p>See: Which two periods are the French Revolutionary Wars divided into?</p> <p>See: What were the French Revolutionary Wars a direct result of?</p> <p>See: Where did French Revolutionary conflicts take place in Italy?</p> <p>See: Who was Mr Bassville?</p> <p>See: What happened to Mr Bassville?</p> <p>Think: How was the French Revolution a direct cause of the French Revolutionary Wars?</p>	<p>https://www.britannica.com/event/French-revolutionary-wars</p> <p>https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802</p> <p>https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802/war-of-the-first-coalition-1792-8</p> <p>https://militarymaps.rct.uk/french-revolutionary-wars-1792-1802/war-of-the-second-coalition-nov-1798-mar-1802</p> <p>https://www.thoughtco.com/french-revolutionary-and-napoleonic-wars-2361116</p>



The conflicts were a direct result of the French Revolution (1789-1799).

A series of conflicts were fought in northern Italy between the French Revolutionary forces and a coalition of Austria, Russia, Piedmont-Sardinia, and several other Italian states. The difficult political situation does not appear to have deterred the Grand Tourist. John writes to his father 'Never were known so many English families in Italy as this year'.

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?

Think: What can you infer about the Roman populace's attitudes towards revolution from their actions towards Mr Bassville?

Do: Read through the two letters from John Carr to his parents. Highlight any parts that reference the French Revolution or French Revolutionary Wars.

Do: Annotate the sections highlighted to make note of which events in the French Revolution or Revolutionary Wars John is referring 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 Revolution and 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>



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

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

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 counties entered the wars, when major conflicts took place, and when countries were defeated or sued for peace.

Do: Write a statement about the political, social and economic structure in Europe in 1792, prior to the start of the French Revolutionary Wars.

Do: Write a statement about the political, social, and economic structure in Europe in 1802, at the end of the French Revolutionary Wars.

Do: Compare your two statements. Discuss the impact that the French Revolutionary Wars had on the political, social, and economic structure in Europe.



<p>The French Revolution (1789-1799) 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.</p>	<p>See: What was the French Revolution?</p> <p>See: When did the French Revolution take place?</p> <p>See: What were the causes of the French Revolution?</p> <p>See: Who was the King of France at the beginning of the French Revolution?</p> <p>See: What was Louis XVI placed on trial for?</p> <p>See: What happened to Louis XVI after the trial?</p> <p>See: What was Marie Antoinette placed on trial for?</p> <p>See: What happened to Marie Antoinette after the trial?</p>	<p>https://learnodo-newtonic.com/french-revolution-effects\</p> <p>https://www.history.com/news/how-did-the-american-revolution-influence-the-french-revolution</p> <p>https://www.sparknotes.com/history/european/frenchrev/key-people/</p> <p>https://learnodo-newtonic.com/french-revolution-leaders</p> <p>https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/louis_xvi.shtml</p>
<p>The execution of Louis XVI was a major event of the French Revolution and took place publicly at the Place de la Révolution in Paris. This is often viewed as a turning point in both French and European history.</p> <p>The executions emboldened the French Revolutionaries who would continue to radically alter the social</p>	<p>Think: What is an absolute monarchy?</p> <p>Think: How long had the absolute monarchy been in place in France prior to the Revolution?</p> <p>Think: Why were French people dissatisfied with the absolute monarchy?</p> <p>Think: What was the French Estate System?</p> <p>Think: What impact did the Estate System have on life in France?</p> <p>Think: Who were the bourgeoisie?</p> <p>Think: Why were there inflated costs and decreased wages in France prior to the Revolution?</p> <p>Think: Did the American Revolution impact the French Revolution?</p>	<p>https://www.history.org.uk/secondary/categories/8/info/3637/age-of-revolutions-resources</p>



<p>and political structure of the country over the next several years. The executions inspired different reactions around the world. To some it symbolised the long-awaited ending of absolute monarchy and the beginning of true democracy in France. Others viewed it as senseless bloodshed and saw it as a sign that France had devolved into violence and chaos.</p>	<p>Think: Did other counties in Europe fear revolution?</p> <p>Think: Did the French Revolution lead to any subsequent revolutions?</p> <p>Think: What changes came about in France as a result of the French Revolution?</p> <p>Think: What replaces the monarchy in France?</p> <hr/> <p>Do: Create a diagram showing the causes of the French Revolution.</p> <p>Do: Add to your diagram showing the events that led up to each of the causes of the French Revolution.</p> <p>Do: Add to your diagram describing how each of the causes contributed to the French Revolution.</p> <p>Do: In groups, discuss how significant each of the causes was to the French Revolution. Can you put them in a hierarchy?</p> <p>Do: Choose which cause you think was the most important reason behind the outbreak of the French Revolution. Write an argument to express this, using evidence to support your position.</p> <p>Do: Create a profile showing the key people in power at the start of the French Revolution. Make note of what happened to them during the revolution.</p> <p>Do: Create a profile showing the key people leaders of the French Revolution. Make note of what happened to them before, during and after the revolution.</p>	
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Do: Create a timeline showing the key events of the French Revolution.

Do: In groups, debate whether the execution of Louis XVI symbolised the long-awaited ending of absolute monarchy and the beginning of true democracy in France, or if it was senseless bloodshed and a sign that France had devolved into violence and chaos, with each group arguing for opposing views. Use evidence to support your claims.

Do: Discuss how the execution of Louis XVI was a turning point in French and European history.

Do: Create a diagram showing the outcomes of the French Revolution.