Philadelphia July 27, 1777

My dear Son

If it should be the design of providence that you should live to grow up, you will naturally feel a curiosity to learn the history of the causes which have produced the late Revolution of our Government. No study in which you can engage will be more worthy of you.

It will become you to make yourself master of all the considerable characters, which have figured upon the stage of civil, political or military Life. This you ought to do with the utmost candor, benevolence and impartiality, and if you should now and then meet with an incident, which shall throw some light upon you father’s character, I charge you to consider it with an attention only to truth.

It will also be an entertaining and instructive amusement, to compare our American Revolution with others that resemble it. The whole period of English history, from the accession of James the first, to the accession of William the third will deserve your most critical attention.

My Work for a day.

Make Latin,  
Explain

Cicero

Erasmus

Appendix

Peirce Phædrus.  
Learn

Greek Racines

Greek Grammar   
Geography   
Geometry  
Fractions  
Writing  
Drawing

As a young boy can not apply himself to all those things and keep a remembrance of them all I should desire that you would let me know what of those I must begin upon at first. I am your Dutiful Son,

John Quincy Adams

Paris March 17, 1780

My dear Son

I have received your Letter, giving an Account of your Studies for a day. You should have dated you letter.

Making Latin, construing Cicero, Erasmus, the Appendix de Diis et Heroibus ethnicis, and Phædrus, are all Exercises proper for the Acquisition of the Latin Tongue; you are constantly employed in learning the Meaning of Latin Words, and the Grammar, the Rhetorick and Criticism of the Roman Authors: These Studies have therefore such a Relation to each other, that I think you would do well to pursue them all, under the Direction of your Master.

The Greek Grammar and the Racines I would not have you omit, upon any Consideration, and I hope your Master will soon put you into the Greek Testament, because the most perfect Models of fine Writing in history, Oratory and Poetry are to be found in the Greek language.

Writing and Drawing are but Amusements and may serve as Relaxations from your studies.

As to Geography, Geometry and Fractions I hope your Master will not insist upon your spending much Time upon them at present; because altho they are Useful sciences, and altho all Branches of the Mathematicks, will I hope, sometime or other engage your Attention, as the most profitable and the most satisfactory of all human Knowledge; Yet my Wish at present is that your principal Attention should be directed to the Latin and Greek Tongues, leaving the other studies to be hereafter attained, in your own Country.

I hope soon to hear that you are in Virgil and Tully's orations, or Ovid or Horace or all of them.

I am, my dear Child, your affectionate Father,

John Adams

P.S. The next Time you write to me, I hope you will take more care to write well. Cant you keep a steadier Hand?