

A letter from Johanna Maria van Riebeeck

Name: _____



A letter from Johanna Maria van Riebeeck to her parents in 1710

Work with a friend. One person reads the first paragraph whilst the other listens. Exchange roles for the second paragraph. Answer the questions.

Johanna Maria van Riebeeck (1679-1759) was from an elite family in Batavia. She was the granddaughter of Jan van Riebeeck, first Dutch Commander at the Cape.

“I can’t withstand the cold very well yet, and am rather uncomfortable because of it, and plagued with sinkings and a stiff neck, which I hope will get better with time. When you see this place from the sea, it is prettier and more pleasant than when you arrive on land. It is very miserable; you don’t see grass or clover, and the streets everywhere by the castle and in the town are full of holes, as though wild pigs had rooted through them—when you decide to ride into the city or to the Company’s gardens, you are always worried about falling! And the gardens are so fine that your heart closes right up. When you come into the garden, nothing looks finer than the Laurel trees, which grow quite tall here, however, the paths are very narrow.

The fruit trees are full of fruit, but little is ripe yet and there are nice vegetables too, but not planted in nice order, and the ground is very rough, so that Ms. Moutmaker likened it well to a ‘volgeesie’—which the people from the Cape don’t enjoy hearing. In this place there is nothing nice to see along the seashore. The castle is quite ugly and the Governor’s house is like a labyrinth, so that you can easily get confused, and the other houses within the castle walls look like prisons. I must admit that based on appearances, I have never seen a worse place.”

(taken from <https://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/modules/lesson7/pdfs/primarysourcepacket.pdf>)

A letter from Johanna van Riebeeck

1. In your opinion where and when did this take place?

2. Can you comment on Johanna's social, moral and cultural values?



3. Imagine you are Johanna arriving at the Cape giving an unprepared speech to the Governor. Present it to your friend. It must have a beginning, middle and ending. Use appropriate language and style for the audience and appropriate annotation and body language.

4. Present your speeches to the class.

Answer sheet

1. In your opinion where and when did this take place?

Learners' own answers but words to this effect.

I think this takes place in the Cape because her grandfather was the Dutch Commander and she found the conditions very difficult to endure. She talks about what the place looked like from the sea.

2. Can you comment on Johanna's social, moral and cultural values?

Values: values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what they think "ought" to be.

Social values: They provide the person's general guidelines for social conduct and how people should behave. Values such as fundamental rights, patriotism, respect for human dignity, rationality, sacrifice, individuality, equality, democracy etc.

Moral values: how the person views right conduct and distinguishes between right and wrong;

Cultural values: The commonly held standards of what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong, workable or unworkable, etc. in a community or society.

Learners' own answers but words to this effect.

Social values: Johanna finds the people of the Cape see things differently to her and they probably shouldn't.

Moral values: People in the Cape behave in an inferior way because they allow things to get into such a mess.

Cultural values: Maria is from an elite background that has money to spend on making things beautiful and keeping them well-maintained. She likes the Company Gardens which are well-maintained, but finds everything else troublesome.

3. Imagine you are Johanna arriving at the Cape giving an unprepared speech to the Governor. Present it to your friend. It must have a beginning, middle and ending. Use appropriate language and style for the audience and appropriate annotation and body language.

The requirements for the speech are:

- that it has a definite beginning, a middle section and an ending

Answer sheet

- It must use the language of the times
- Appropriate style: it should be spoken in the way Johanna would have spoken it – the same accent and choice of words
- intonation: the rise and fall of the voice in speaking should be similar to how Johanna would have said it
- appropriate boy language: the arms, face and body should convey the same message as the words.

Learners' own speech but given impromptu without length preparation

4. Present your speeches to the class.

Divide the class into pairs to give their speeches to one another. The pairs then meet with another pair and all four give their speeches.