

from The Paston Letters

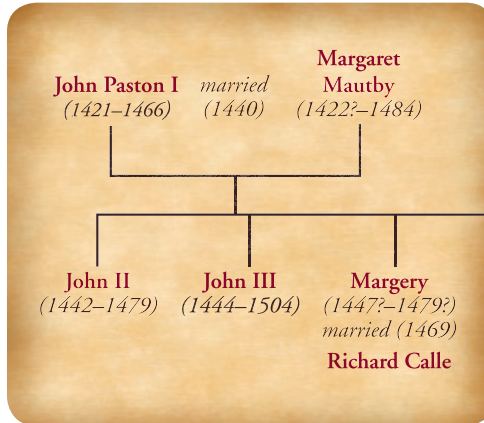
Letters by the Paston Family



READING 8 Analyze, make inferences, and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural and historical contexts. **9C** Make and defend subtle inferences and complex conclusions about the ideas in the text and their organizational patterns. **9D** Synthesize ideas and make logical connections among multiple texts representing similar genres and support those findings with textual evidence. **RC-12(B)** Make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding.

Meet the Author

The Paston Family



The 15th century in England was a period of great unrest and lawlessness. Landowners often attacked their neighbors' estates and betrayed their political allies. The Wars of the Roses, a conflict between two royal families for control of the kingdom, ravaged England between 1455 and 1485. In addition, several outbreaks of the plague devastated many English families during the century.

The Saga Begins A firsthand record of this turbulent era survives in more than 1,000 documents and letters written by the Pastons, an English landowning family. During the early 1400s, William Paston, a lawyer, began accumulating property in Norfolk, a county in eastern England, both through purchases and through his acquisition of estates inherited by his wife, Agnes Berry. William's extensive landholdings and growing prosperity earned him a number of enemies. Some even challenged his claim to certain properties and brought grief to William's descendants for many years.

Endless Legal Wrangling William Paston and Agnes Berry had five children. The oldest, John I, inherited much of the family property when his father died in 1444, and his marriage to Margaret Mautby led to the acquisition of even more property from his wife's family. Like his father, John I was a lawyer, possessed of skills that were much needed in his constant legal battles over claims to various properties. His many legal disputes required him to stay in London for long periods of time, leaving Margaret to manage the Paston estates. John I and Margaret's seven children included two sons named John—John II and John III—and a daughter named Margery. The letters you will read concern John I, Margaret, and these three children.

Anxiously Awaited Letters In their letters, the Pastons exchanged detailed information about their legal disputes and other problems. Although writing letters had become an important means of communication by the 15th century, sending the letters was not easy. They had to be delivered by hand, often by a servant or even a total stranger. Weeks might pass before a letter reached its destination, and many never arrived. Despite these limitations, the Pastons wrote hundreds of letters over the course of 90 years, leaving an invaluable source of information about the social and political conditions of the times.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Paston family ...

- is immortalized in the old Norfolk saying "There never was a Paston poor, a Heydon a coward, or a Cornwallis a fool."
- claimed that they were willed the property of Sir John Fastolf, who inspired Falstaff, a comic character in three of Shakespeare's plays.

Author Online



Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML12-126

LITERARY ANALYSIS: PRIMARY SOURCES

Primary sources, such as diaries and letters, are materials created by people who took part in or witnessed the events portrayed. These documents can help you synthesize ideas and make logical connections based on evidence from the text to draw conclusions about the people who wrote them and the period in which they lived. Consider this excerpt from a letter written by Margaret Paston to her husband:

They let me know that various of Lord Moleyns' men said that if they could get their hands on me they would keep me in the castle. They wanted you to get me out again, and said that it would not cause you much heart-ache.

The excerpt shows that participants in land disputes of the time would sometimes resort to kidnapping for ransom. As you read these letters, determine what they reveal about their writers and life in the 15th century.

READING SKILL: UNDERSTAND WRITER'S PURPOSE

To understand a writer's purpose, you must make subtle **inferences**, or reasonable assumptions based on clues in the text. The writer may wish to accomplish a goal, such as explaining a situation or eliciting a desired response. For example, you can infer how much danger the Pastons face when Margaret urges her husband to "please take care when you eat or drink in any other men's company, for no one can be trusted." Clues to the writer's purpose may include

- significant details the writer includes about events or ideas
- the writer's opinions or observations
- attempts by the writer to influence the recipient's thoughts or actions

As you read each letter, note significant details the writer provides. Record your thoughts on a chart like the one shown to help you conclude what each writer's purpose is.

Writer/ Recipient/Date	Significant Details	Your Inferences	Writer's Purpose
Margaret to John I, 28 February 1449			



Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

What disturbs your sense of SECURITY?

Imagine living with the fear of being struck down by the plague or learning that parts of your home and property had been destroyed—and feeling powerless to prevent further destruction. For the Paston family, such horrors were a reality. Although they were relatively wealthy and privileged, a sense of security was not something their money could buy.

DISCUSS Life in 21st-century America is radically different from life in 15th-century England, but events can still intrude upon our security. Working with a partner, think of a global, national, or local event that shook your sense of security. Discuss why you found the event disturbing and what you did to attempt to regain your peace of mind.

Event
Terrorist Attacks, 9-11-01
Aspects That Shook My Sense of Security
1.
2.
3.
What I Did to Regain My Sense of Security



The Paston Letters

The Paston Family

Margaret Paston, in the absence of her husband, John I, was able to deal equally well with small housekeeping problems and with family disasters, including attacks against the Paston manors. While she was living at the Paston estate of Gresham, it was attacked by a Lord Moleyns, who claimed rights to the property and ejected Margaret from her home. Margaret first escaped to a friend's house about a mile away; but later, fearing that Moleyns's band of men might kidnap her, she fled to the city of Norwich, where she wrote the following letter to her husband.

Analyze Visuals ►

What is the economic status of the family pictured? How can you tell?



Margaret to John I

28 FEBRUARY 1449

Right worshipful husband, I commend myself to you, wishing with all my heart to hear that you are well, and begging that you will not be angry at my leaving the place where you left me. On my word, such news was brought to me by various people who are sympathetic to you and me that I did not dare stay there any longer. I will tell you who the people were when you come home. They let me know that various of Lord Moleyns' men said that if they could get their hands on me they would carry me off and keep me in the castle. They wanted you to get me out again, and said that it would not cause you much heart-ache. After I heard this news, I could not rest easy until I was here, and I did not dare go out of the place where I was until I was ready to ride away. Nobody in the place knew **A** that I was leaving except the lady of the house, until an hour before I went. And I told her that I would come here to have clothes made for myself and the children, which I wanted made, and said I thought I would be here a fortnight¹ or three

A WRITER'S PURPOSE

What is Margaret explaining to John I in lines 1–10? Speculate about how she wants him to react.

1. **fortnight**: 14 nights, or two weeks.



weeks. Please keep the reason for my departure a secret until I talk to you, for those who warned me do not on any account want it known.

I spoke to your mother as I came this way, and she offered to let me stay in this town, if you agree. She would very much like us to stay at her place, and will send me such things as she can spare so that I can set up house until you can get a place and things of your own to set up a household. Please let me know by the man
20 who brings this what you would like me to do. I would be very unhappy to live so close to Gresham as I was until this matter is completely settled between you and Lord Moleyns.

Barow² told me that there was no better evidence in England than that Lord Moleyns has for [his title to] the manor of Gresham. I told him that I supposed the evidence was of the kind that William Hasard said yours was, and that the seals were not yet cold.³ That, I said, was what I expected his lord's evidence to be like. I said I knew that your evidence was such that no one could have better evidence, and the seals on it were two hundred years older than he was. Then Barow said to me that if he came to London while you were there he would have
30 a drink with you, to quell any anger there was between you. He said that he only acted as a servant, and as he was ordered to do. Purry⁴ will tell you about the conversation between Barow and me when I came from Walsingham.⁵ I beg you with all my heart, for reverence of God, beware of Lord Moleyns and his men, however pleasantly they speak to you, and do not eat or drink with them; for they are so false that they cannot be trusted. And please take care when you eat or drink in any other men's company, for no one can be trusted. **B**

I beg you with all my heart that you will be kind enough to send me word how you are, and how your affairs are going, by the man who brings this. I am very surprised that you do not send me more news than you have done. . . .

In 1465, in still another property dispute, the Paston estate of Hellesdon was attacked by the duke of Suffolk, who had gained the support of several local officials. Although Margaret and John were not living at Hellesdon at the time, many of their servants and tenants suffered from the extensive damage. In the following two letters, Margaret tells her husband about the devastation.



Margaret to John I

17 OCTOBER 1465

40 . . . On Tuesday morning John Botillere, also John Palmer, Darcy Arnald your cook and William Malthouse of Aylsham were seized at Hellesdon by the bailiff

B PRIMARY SOURCES

From Margaret's statements in lines 23–36, what can you **infer** that a claimant might do to gain property in these times?

2. **Barow:** one of Lord Moleyns's men.

3. **the seals . . . cold:** A seal, often made by impressing a family emblem on hot wax, was placed on a document to show its authenticity. Margaret is suggesting that Lord Moleyns's documents are recent forgeries.

4. **Purry:** perhaps a servant or tenant of the Pastons'.

5. **Walsingham** (wôl'sîng-əm): a town near Lynn in the English county of Norfolk.

of Eye,⁶ called Bottisforth, and taken to Costessey,⁷ and they are being kept there still without any warrant or authority from a justice of the peace; and they say they will carry them off to Eye prison and as many others of your men and tenants as they can get who are friendly towards you or have supported you, and they threaten to kill or imprison them.

The duke came to Norwich at 10 o'clock on Tuesday with five hundred men and he sent for the mayor, aldermen and sheriffs, asking them in the king's name that they should inquire of the constables of every ward within the city which men
50 had been on your side or had helped or supported your men at the time of any of these gatherings and if they could find any they should take them and arrest them and punish them; which the mayor did, and will do anything he can for him and his men. At this the mayor has arrested a man who was with me, called Robert Lovegold, a brazier,⁸ and threatened him that he shall be hanged by the neck. So I would be glad if you could get a writ sent down for his release, if you think it can be done. He was only with me when Harlesdon and others attacked me at Lammas.⁹ He is very true and faithful to you, so I would like him to be helped. I have no one attending me who dares to be known, except Little John. William Naunton is here with me, but he dares not be known because he is much threatened. I am told that
60 the old lady and the duke have been frequently set against us by what Harlesdon, the bailiff of Costessey, Andrews and Doget the bailiff's son and other false villains have told them, who want this affair pursued for their own pleasure; there are evil rumors about it in this part of the world and other places. **C**

As for Sir John Heveningham, Sir John Wyndefeld and other respectable men, they have been made into their catspaws,¹⁰ which will not do their reputation any good after this, I think. . . .

The lodge and remainder of your place was demolished on Tuesday and Wednesday, and the duke rode on Wednesday to Drayton and then to Costessey while the lodge at Hellesdon was being demolished. Last night at midnight
70 Thomas Slyford, Green, Porter and John Bottisforth the bailiff of Eye and others got a cart and took away the featherbeds and all the stuff of ours that was left at the parson's and Thomas Water's house for safe-keeping. I will send you lists later, as accurately as I can, of the things we have lost. Please let me know what you want me to do, whether you want me to stay at Caister¹¹ or come to you in London.

I have no time to write any more. God have you in his keeping. Written at Norwich on St. Luke's eve.¹²

M.P.

C PRIMARY SOURCES

Reread lines 47–63. What methods of intimidation does the duke of Suffolk use against the Pastons? What is the Pastons' recourse?

6. **bailiff of Eye:** an administrative official of Eye, a town in the English county of Suffolk.

7. **Costessey:** an estate owned by the duke of Suffolk.

8. **brazier** (brā'zhēr): a person who makes articles of brass.

9. **when Harlesdon . . . Lammas** (lām'əs): when Harlesdon and others of the duke of Suffolk's men attacked on Lammas, a religious feast celebrated on August 1.

10. **catspaws:** people who are deceived and used as tools by others; dupes.

11. **Caister:** one of the Paston estates.

12. **St. Luke's eve:** the eve of St. Luke's Day, a religious feast. The feasts of different saints were celebrated on different days throughout the year, and writers often dated letters with the name of a saint's day or eve instead of using days and months.



Margaret to John I

27 OCTOBER 1465

... I was at Hellesdon last Thursday and saw the place there, and indeed no one can imagine what a horrible mess it is unless they see it. Many people come out
80 each day, both from Norwich and elsewhere, to look at it, and they talk of it as a great shame. The duke would have done better to lose £1000¹³ than to have caused this to be done, and you have all the more goodwill from people because it has been done so foully. And they made your tenants at Hellesdon and Drayton, and others, help them to break down the walls of both the house and the lodge: God knows, it was against their will, but they did not dare do otherwise for fear. I have spoken with your tenants both at Hellesdon and Drayton, and encouraged them as best I can.

The duke's men ransacked the church, and carried off all the goods that were left there, both ours and the tenants, and left little behind; they stood on the
90 high altar and ransacked the images, and took away everything they could find. They shut the parson out of the church until they had finished, and ransacked everyone's house in the town five or six times. The ringleaders in the thefts were the bailiff of Eye and the bailiff of Stradbroke, Thomas Slyford. And Slyford was the leader in robbing the church and, after the bailiff of Eye, it is he who has most of the proceeds of the robbery. As for the lead, brass, pewter, iron, doors, gates, and other household stuff, men from Costessey and Cawston have got it, and what they could not carry they hacked up in the most spiteful fashion. If possible, I would like some reputable men to be sent for from the king, to see how things
100 are both there and at the lodge, before any snows come, so that they can report the truth, because otherwise it will not be so plain as it is now. For reverence of God, finish your business now, for the expense and trouble we have each day is horrible, and it will be like this until you have finished; and your men dare not go around collecting your rents, while we keep here every day more than twenty people to save ourselves and the place; for indeed, if the place had not been strongly defended, the duke would have come here. . . . **D**

For the reverence of God, if any respectable and profitable method can be used to settle your business, do not neglect it, so that we can get out of these troubles and the great costs and expenses we have and may have in future. It is thought here that if my lord of Norfolk would act on your behalf, and got a commission to
110 inquire into the riots and robberies committed on you and others in this part of the world, then the whole county will wait on him and do as you wish, for people love and respect him more than any other lord, except the king and my lord of Warwick.¹⁴ . . .

Language Coach

Oral Fluency Part of reading fluently is correct pronunciation. As a plural noun meaning "profits," *proceeds* has a stress on the first syllable. As a form of the verb *proceed* ("go forward"), *proceeds* has a stress on its final syllable. Which pronunciation should you use in line 95?

D WRITER'S PURPOSE

In lines 97–105, what does Margaret ask John to do, and why?

13. **£1000**: a thousand pounds (British money).

14. **the king . . . Warwick** (wŏr'ŭk): King Edward IV and the earl of Warwick, a figure so influential that he was known as Warwick the Kingmaker. Warwick put his friend, the Yorkist King Edward IV, on the throne but later turned against him and fought with the Lancastrian faction, who opposed the Yorkists in the War of the Roses.

Please do let me know quickly how you are and how your affairs are going, and let me know how your sons are. I came home late last night, and will be here until I hear from you again. Wykes came home on Saturday, but he did not meet your sons.

God have you in his keeping and send us good news from you. Written in haste on the eve of St. Simon and St. Jude.

By yours, M.P.

During the 15th century, most marriages among the upper classes were arranged by families, usually to strengthen economic or political ties. The Paston family was greatly alarmed, therefore, when they learned that Margery, a daughter of Margaret and John I, had secretly become engaged to the Paston bailiff Richard Calle. Eventually, the two were married, in spite of bitter opposition from Margery's family. In the following letter to Margery—the only piece of their correspondence to survive—Richard expresses his feelings about their predicament. The next letter is the response of Margery's mother, Margaret, to the situation, written to her son John II.



Richard Calle to Margery Paston

SPRING-SUMMER 1469

120 *My own lady and mistress, and indeed my true wife before God,*¹⁵ I commend myself to you with a very sad heart as a man who cannot be cheerful and will not be until things stand otherwise with us than they do now. This life that we lead now pleases neither God nor the world, considering the great bond of matrimony that is made between us, and also the great love that has been, and I trust still is, between us, and which for my part was never greater. So I pray that Almighty God will comfort us as soon as it pleases him, for we who ought by rights to be most together are most apart; it seems a thousand years since I last spoke to you. I would rather be with you than all the wealth in the world. Alas, also, good lady, those who keep us apart like this, scarcely realize what they are doing: those who
130 hinder matrimony are cursed in church four times a year. It makes many men think that they can stretch a point of conscience in other matters as well as this one. But whatever happens, lady, bear it as you have done and be as cheerful as you can, for be sure, lady, that God in the long run will of his righteousness help his servants who mean to be true and want to live according to his laws. **E**

I realize, lady, that you have had as much sorrow on my account as any gentlewoman has ever had in this world; I wish to God that all the sorrow you have had had fallen on me, so that you were freed of it; for indeed, lady, it kills me to hear that you are being treated otherwise than you should be. This is a painful life we lead; I cannot imagine that we live like this without God being
140 displeased by it.

E WRITER'S PURPOSE

According to Richard, how do he and Margery stand in relation to God? How might his words affect Margery, and Margery's parents, were they to read them?

15. **my true wife before God:** In the 1400s, the vow of a man and woman spoken before God, even without a witness, was regarded as an official marriage.



Epistres en Vers François, dedicated to Anne de Bretagne (1500s). Parchment, 29.5 cm × 19.5 cm. 112 pages. Anne de Bretagne replies to her husband, fol.40 verso. Russian National Library, St. Petersburg, Russia.

◀ Analyze Visuals

In this picture, a noblewoman writes a letter to her husband. What indicates the formality of this activity?

You will want to know that I sent you a letter from London by my lad, and he told me he could not speak to you, because so great a watch was kept on both you and him. He told me that John Thresher came to him in your name, and said that you had sent him to my lad for a letter or token which you thought I had sent you; but he did not trust him and would not deliver anything to him. After that he brought a ring, saying that you sent it to him, commanding him to deliver the letter or token to him, which I gather since then from my lad was not sent by you, but was a plot of my mistress [i.e., Margaret Paston] and James Gloys.¹⁶ Alas, what do they intend? I suppose they think we are not engaged; and if this is the case I
 150 am very surprised, for they are not being sensible, remembering how plainly I told my mistress about everything at the beginning, and I think you have told her so too, if you have done as you should. And if you have denied it, as I have been told

16. James Gloys: the Paston family chaplain.

you have done, it was done neither with a good conscience nor to the pleasure of God, unless you did it for fear and to please those who were with you at the time. If this was the reason you did it, it was justified, considering how insistent you were called on to deny it; and you were told many untrue stories about me, which, God knows, I was never guilty of.

My lad told me that your mother asked him if he had brought any letter to you, and she accused him falsely of many other things; among other things, she
160 said to him in the end that I would not tell her about it at the beginning, but she expected that I would at the ending. As for that, God knows that she knew about it first from me and no one else. I do not know what my mistress means, for in truth there is no other gentlewoman alive who I respect more than her and whom I would be more sorry to displease, saving only yourself who by right I ought to cherish and love best, for I am bound to do so by God's law and will do so while I live, whatever may come of it. I expect that if you tell them the sober truth, they will not damn their souls for our sake. Even if I tell them the truth they will not believe me as much as they would you. And so, good lady, for reverence of God be plain with them and tell the truth, and if they will not agree, let it be between
170 them, God and the devil; and as for the peril we should be in, I pray God it may lie on them and not on us. I am very sad and sorry when I think of their attitude. God guide them and send them rest and peace. **F**

I am very surprised that they are as concerned about this affair as I gather that they are, in view of the fact that nothing can be done about it, and that I deserve better; from any point of view there should be no obstacles to it. Also their honor does not depend on your marriage, but in their own marriage [i.e., John II's]; I pray God send them a marriage which will be to their honor, to God's pleasure and to their heart's ease, for otherwise it would be a great pity.

Mistress, I am frightened of writing to you, for I understand that you have
180 showed the letters that I have sent you before to others, but I beg you, let no one see this letter. As soon as you have read it, burn it, for I would not want anyone to see it. You have had nothing in writing from me for two years, and I will not send you any more: so I leave everything to your wisdom.

Almighty Jesu preserve, keep and give you your heart's desire, which I am sure will please God. This letter was written with as great difficulty as I ever wrote anything in my life, for I have been very ill, and am not yet really recovered, may God amend it.



Margaret to her oldest son, John II

10 SEPTEMBER 1469

... When I heard how she [Margery] had behaved, I ordered my servants that she was not to be allowed in my house. I had warned her, and she might have taken
190 heed if she had been well-disposed. I sent messages to one or two others that they



TEKS 9C

F WRITER'S PURPOSE

In order to reach conclusions about a writer's purpose, you must make **inferences**, or reasonable assumptions based on evidence from the text. These inferences can help clarify complicated relationships and events portrayed in the text. Based on this paragraph, what can you infer about the state of Richard and Margery's relationship? What is Margaret Paston's reaction to it? What does Richard hope to accomplish by writing this letter to Margery? Explain how you reached your conclusions.

should not let her in if she came. She was brought back to my house to be let in, and James Gloys told those who brought her that I had ordered them all that she should not be allowed in. So my lord of Norwich has lodged her at Roger Best's, to stay there until the day in question; God knows it is much against his will and his wife's, but they dare not do otherwise. I am sorry that they are burdened with her, but I am better off with her there than somewhere else, because he and his wife are sober and well-disposed to us, and she will not be allowed to play the good-for-nothing there. **G**

200 Please do not take all this too hard, because I know that it is a matter close to your heart, as it is to mine and other people's; but remember, as I do, that we have only lost a good-for-nothing in her, and take it less to heart: if she had been any good, whatever might have happened, things would not have been as they are, for even if he¹⁷ were dead now, she would never be as close to me as she was. . . . You can be sure that she will regret her foolishness afterwards, and I pray to God that she does. Please, for my sake, be cheerful about all this. I trust that God will help us; may he do so in all our affairs.

Although the Pastons were considered wealthy, they faced continual struggles. They even experienced occasional financial difficulties, particularly after the death of John I in 1466. John II, though frequently in London to deal with family legal matters, seems at times to have paid more attention to his own interests. The Pastons were also affected by the ravages of warfare and disease. The following three letters deal with some of their hardships.



Margaret to John II

28 OCTOBER 1470

. . . Unless you pay more attention to your expenses, you will bring great shame on yourself and your friends, and impoverish them so that none of us will be able to help each other, to the great encouragement of our enemies.

210 Those who claim to be your friends in this part of the world realize in what great danger and need you stand, both from various of your friends and from your enemies. It is rumored that I have parted with so much to you that I cannot help either you or any of my friends, which is no honor to us and causes people to esteem us less. At the moment it means that I must disperse my household and lodge somewhere, which I would be very loath to do if I were free to choose. It has caused a great deal of talk in this town and I would not have needed to do it if I had held back when I could. So for God's sake pay attention and be careful from now on, for I have handed over to you both my own property and your father's, and have held nothing back, either for myself or for his sake. . . . **H**

G PRIMARY SOURCES

Reread lines 188–198.

What behavior seems

expected of a daughter?

How is disobedience

punished?

H WRITER'S PURPOSE

Infer Margaret's reasons for writing this letter.

What rumors does she

hope to dispel and why?

17. **he:** Richard Calle.



John II to Margaret

APRIL 1471

220 *Mother*, I commend myself to you and let you know, blessed be God, my brother John is alive and well, and in no danger of dying. Nevertheless he is badly hurt by an arrow in his right arm below the elbow, and I have sent a surgeon to him, who has dressed the wound; and he tells me that he hopes he will be healed within a very short time. John Mylsent is dead. God have mercy on his soul; William Mylsent is alive and all his other servants seem to have escaped.¹⁸ . . .



John II to John III

15 SEPTEMBER 1471

. . . Please send me word if any of our friends or well-wishers are dead, for I fear that there is great mortality in Norwich and in other boroughs and towns in Norfolk: I assure you that it is the most widespread plague I ever knew of in England, for by my faith I cannot hear of pilgrims going through the country
230 nor of any other man who rides or goes anywhere, that any town or borough in England is free from the sickness. May God put an end to it, when it please him. So, for God's sake, get my mother to take care of my younger brothers and see that they are not anywhere where the sickness is prevalent, and that they do not amuse themselves with other young people who go where the sickness is. If anyone has died of the sickness, or is infected with it, in Norwich, for God's sake let her send them to some friend of hers in the country; I would advise you to do the same. I would rather my mother moved her household into the country. . . .

1 PRIMARY SOURCES

In this letter, what do you learn about the plague and what people do to avoid being stricken?

18. **my brother John . . . escaped:** John II is describing the Battle of Barnet in the War of the Roses. The Pastons fought with the Lancastrian faction, which King Edward IV's Yorkist faction defeated.

Comprehension

- Recall** What occurred at the Paston family estate of Hellesdon in October 1465?
- Clarify** Why does Margaret Paston consider her daughter Margery a “good-for-nothing”?
- Summarize** Briefly summarize Margaret’s message to John II in her letter of 28 October 1470.

Literary Analysis

- Understand Writer’s Purpose** Review the chart you made as you read. Describe each letter writer’s purpose on the basis of your inferences. Defend your conclusions with evidence from the text.
- Draw Conclusions** What conclusions did you draw about each letter writer’s personality? In a chart, provide an appropriate adjective to describe each person. Support your descriptions with evidence from the letters.

<i>Family Member</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<i>Margaret</i>		
<i>Richard Calle</i>		
<i>John II</i>		

- Analyze Primary Sources** What do you learn from these letters about life in 15th-century England? Comment on what they tell you about the role property and family played in people’s lives at that time.
- Analyze Style** These letters have been translated from Middle English into Modern English, but care was taken to preserve features of their original style. What do you notice about the language used in the letters?

Literary Criticism

- Critical Interpretations** Critics have commented that the Paston letters should be read for their historical value, not their literary value. Do you agree? Explain why the letters are or are not “literature.”



READING 8 Analyze, make inferences, and draw conclusions about the author’s purpose in cultural and historical contexts. **9C** Make and defend subtle inferences and complex conclusions about the ideas in the text and their organizational patterns. **9D** Synthesize ideas and make logical connections among multiple texts representing similar genres. **RC-12(B)** Make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding.

What disturbs your sense of **SECURITY?**

What are some of the negative results that might occur if you become overly concerned with losing your sense of security? Include specific examples to illustrate your point.

Literature and the Common Life

By reading autobiographies, such as Margery Kempe’s, and letters, such as Margaret Paston’s, a reader can learn more intimately about what life was like during the writer’s time: in this case, the Middle Ages. Nonfiction writing brings the lives of its authors to life in the reader’s imagination.

Writing to Compare

Comparing two people, places, or things can help you reach a greater understanding about both of them. Write a comparison of two of the major figures in the nonfiction selections in the “Reflections of Common Life” section, using a chart like the one below to help you organize your thoughts. Then, select three of the categories from your chart. What major similarities or differences do you notice about the two figures based on these categories? What generalizations can you make about what their lives might have been like in the Middle Ages based on these similarities or differences? Include evidence from the two texts to support your analysis.

	Name #1	Name #2
Occupation/Role		
Socioeconomic Status		
Family Relationships		
Hardships/Concerns		
Joys/Rewards		
Role of Religion in Life		

Extension

LISTENING & SPEAKING

Imagine a meeting between Margery Kempe and Margaret Paston. What might the two women discuss? With a partner, brainstorm some of the topics you think would come up in a conversation between the two. Then choose roles and role-play their conversation for the class. You might focus on one topic, such as family relationships, for your performance.



WRITING 15A Write an analytical essay.

