

LESSON PLAN

PT-109: HEROISM AND LEADERSHIP



Lieutenant John F. Kennedy being awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, June 11, 1944.

White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.

GRADE

6th–8th

TIME

50–60 minutes

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Students will learn the details of the collision that occurred between Japanese destroyer Amagiri and a U.S. patrol boat PT-109 during World War II's battle for the Pacific in August 1943. PT-109 commander, Lt. John F. Kennedy, demonstrated selflessness, bravery and leadership to save his crewmates after their boat was destroyed. This lesson includes primary sources such as images from World War II, letters from Kennedy to his family and a document from the former commander of the Amagiri to President Kennedy. Students will analyze these primary sources to gain a deeper understanding of the PT-109 story and produce an original work to show their learning.

MATERIALS

- [Appendix A](#) | Lt. John F. Kennedy's Letters Home – August 12 & 29, 1943
- [Appendix B](#) | Cover Letter and Letter from Kohei Hanami – Former Commander of *Amagiri* Destroyer – September 15, 1952
- [Appendix C](#) | Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions Handout

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before his career in politics, John F. Kennedy was a Navy lieutenant put in command of the U.S. patrol boat PT-109 in the battle of the Pacific during World War II. In August 1943, while on patrol, a Japanese destroyer ship, the *Amagiri*, collided with the small patrol vessel, ripping it apart. Lt. Kennedy's heroic actions of bravery and leadership gained worldwide attention following the War and helped bolster his career in politics. Articles linked in the instructions will help students gain insight into the events that unfolded in August 1943 and how this incident impacted various perspectives about John F. Kennedy.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How did John F. Kennedy show selfless leadership throughout the PT-109 boat incident?
2. How would this event and his actions play a role in his career in politics, especially as President of the United States?
3. How was John F. Kennedy viewed by his men, the American people, and the former commander of the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri*?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to make inferences, use evidence and synthesize information to support understanding and create new understanding.
2. Students will be able to analyze information by applying chronology through sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.
3. Students will be able to organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps.
4. Students will be able to use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

[TEKS | C3 standards](#)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Using the link below, students will read the PT-109 story from the Naval History and Heritage Command.
 - a. [Naval History and Heritage Command - PT 109](#)
2. Divide the class into three groups.
 - a. Assign one group [Appendix A](#): Lt. Kennedy's Letter's Home,
 - b. The second group will look at [Appendix B](#): Cover Letter and Letter from Kohei Hanami – Former Commander of the *Amagiri* destroyer – September 15, 1952
 - c. The last group half will read the article using the link below.
 - i. [John F. Kennedy's Story of Survival | The New Yorker | June 17, 1944](#)
 - d. Give a copy of [Appendix C](#): Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions to each group. This document will help students break down, analyze, and gain a better understanding of the primary source assigned to their group.

3. After each group has read through their document and completed Appendix E, provide time for each group to share out about the document. Use the points below as a guide for the information students will share.
 - a. Briefly describe the document in 1-2 sentences.
 - b. Share the Basic Source Parts:
 - i. Who was the author / creator?
 - ii. Who was the receiver / reader?
 - iii. When was it from?
 - c. Does the document mention specific people or events of the time? Who/what does it mention?
 - d. Optional: If this primary source was created today, what would be different about it? Same?
4. Students will have the choice of two writing prompts.
 - a. Prompt 1: Students will put themselves in the shoes of one of Lt. Kennedy's crewmates by writing a letter home from their perspective. Students should include the following in the letter:
 - i. At least one event from each day (7-8 events in total) – these can be found in the following links
 1. [Naval History and Heritage Command - PT 109](#)
 2. [John F. Kennedy and PT 109 | JFK Library](#)
 - ii. Describe at least two-character traits displayed by Lt. Kennedy and specific actions that demonstrated these traits.
 - iii. Briefly describe how they view Kennedy as a potential political leader based on the character traits and actions displayed by their commander during this event.
 - b. Prompt 2: Using the details and information from one or both links below, students will write a letter of recommendation for Lt. John F. Kennedy describing his qualifications for the Navy and Marine Corps Medal as well as the Purple Heart.
 - i. [Naval History and Heritage Command - PT 109](#)
 - ii. [John F. Kennedy and PT 109 | JFK Library](#)
 - iii. Students should cite specific actions relating to the PT-109 – this information will come from the links above and all other primary sources in Appendices A and B.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

This lesson may be extended beyond the recommended time and incorporate creativity to make original artwork. Students will create a visual representation of the PT-109 event in the style of a storyboard or comic book.

Students should have a minimum of 7-8 frames – one for each day – but are free to create as many as they feel adequately tell the story. Including short captions and/or speech bubbles may be used to help readers better understand the events represented.

Students may share their work in small groups or as a class if time allows. They can briefly discuss 2-3 frames of their work, why they chose that event and their artistic approach.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

The links below can be used to provide more information on the PT-109 story and its impact on John F. Kennedy's political career.

- [John F. Kennedy and PT 109 | JFK Library](#)
- [The Sixth Floor Museum Gallery Talk: PT-109 and the 1960 Campaign - YouTube](#)

TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (TEKS)

SOCIAL STUDIES

6th Grade

§113.18 (b) (15) (A) identify and describe means of cultural diffusion such as trade, travel, and war.

§113.18 (b) (19) (C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps.

7th Grade

§113.19 (b) (20) (A) analyze information by applying absolute and relative chronology through sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND READING

6th grade

§110.22 (b) (5) (D) create mental images to deepen understanding.

§110.22 (b) (5) (F) make inferences and use evidence to support understanding.

§110.22 (b) (5) (G) evaluate details read to determine key ideas.

7th Grade

§110.23 (b) (6) (E) interact with sources in meaningful ways such as notetaking, annotating, freewriting, or illustrating.

§110.23 (b) (11) (A) compose literary texts such as personal narratives, fiction, and poetry using genre characteristics and craft.

8th Grade

§110.24 (b) (5) (H) synthesize information to create new understanding.

READING

§110.25 (b) (4) (H) construct visual images based on text descriptions.

§110.25 (b) (5) (D) communicate information gained from reading.

§110.25 (b) (7) (B) respond to text through discussion, journal writing, performance, and visual representation.

ART

§117.202 (c) (2) (A) create original artworks based on direct observations, original sources, personal experiences, and the community.

§117.203 (b) (1) (D) understand and apply the expressive properties of artworks such as appropriation, meaning, narrative, message, and symbol using art vocabulary accurately.

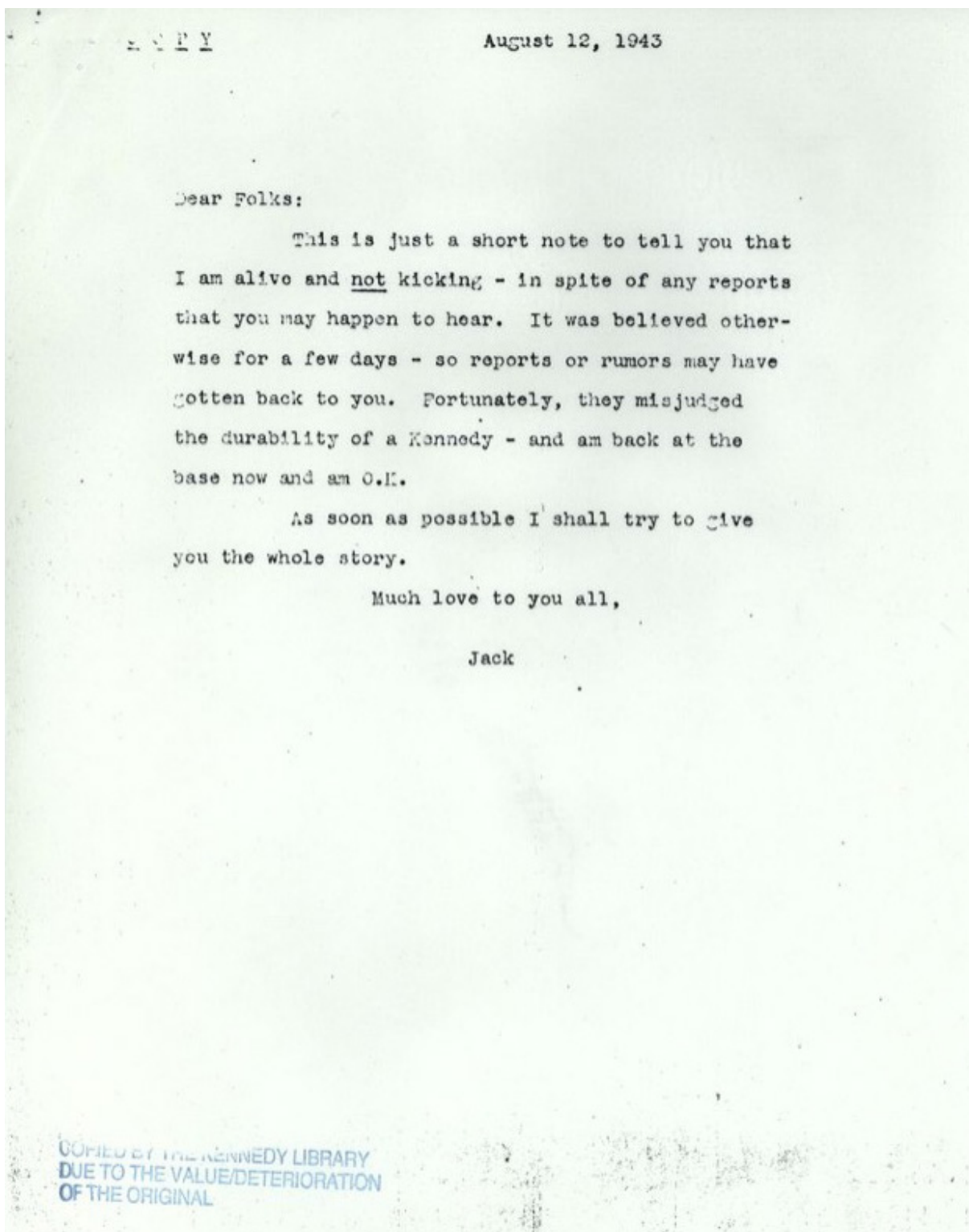
§117.204 (b) (3) (B) analyze cultural ideas expressed in artworks relating to social, political, and environmental themes such as environment/nature, conflict and power, relationships to others, and reality/fantasy.

C3 FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

D2.Hist.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

APPENDIX A

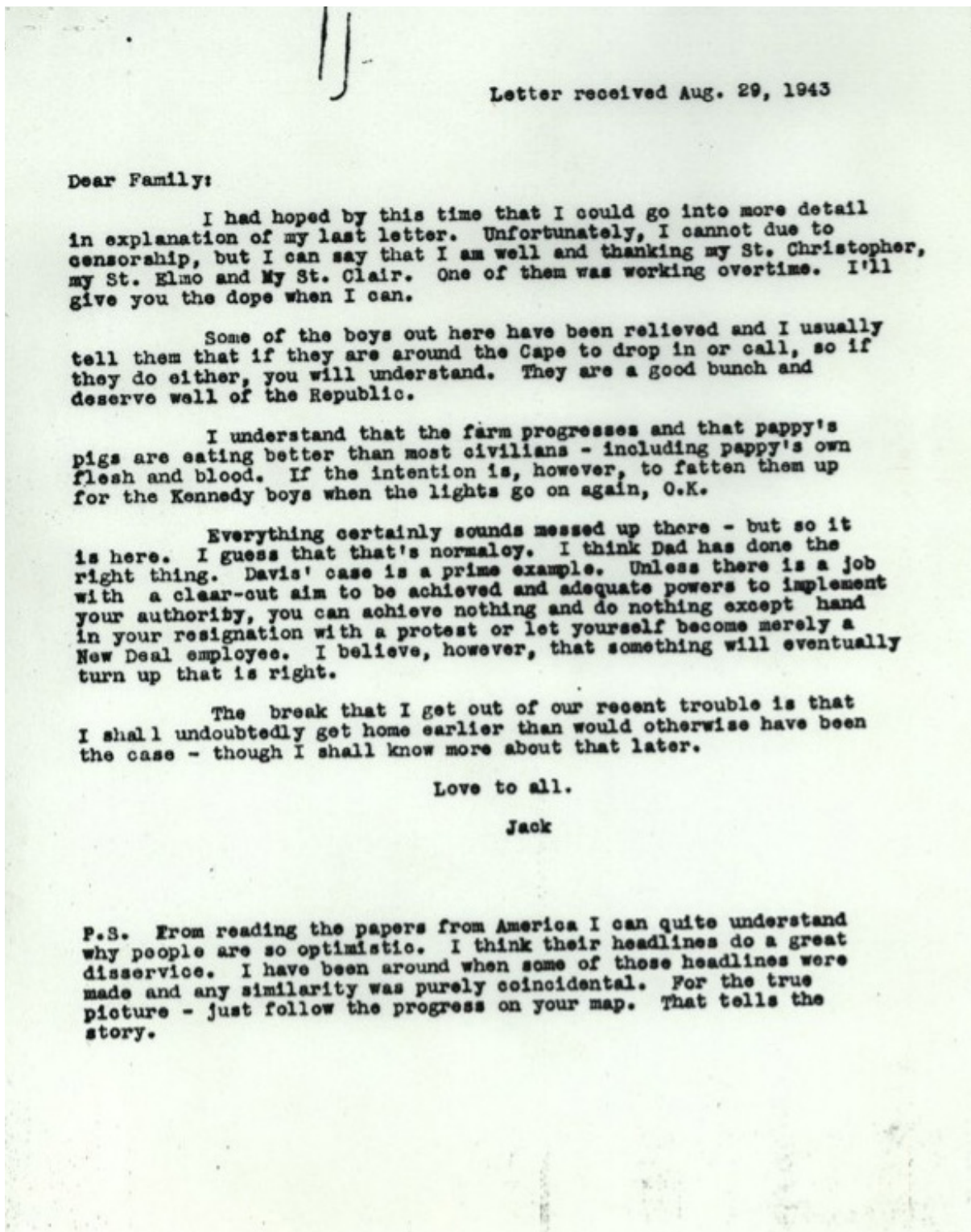
John F. Kennedy's Letter Home | August 12, 1943



*Joseph P. Kennedy Personal Papers. Family Correspondence.
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.*

APPENDIX A continued

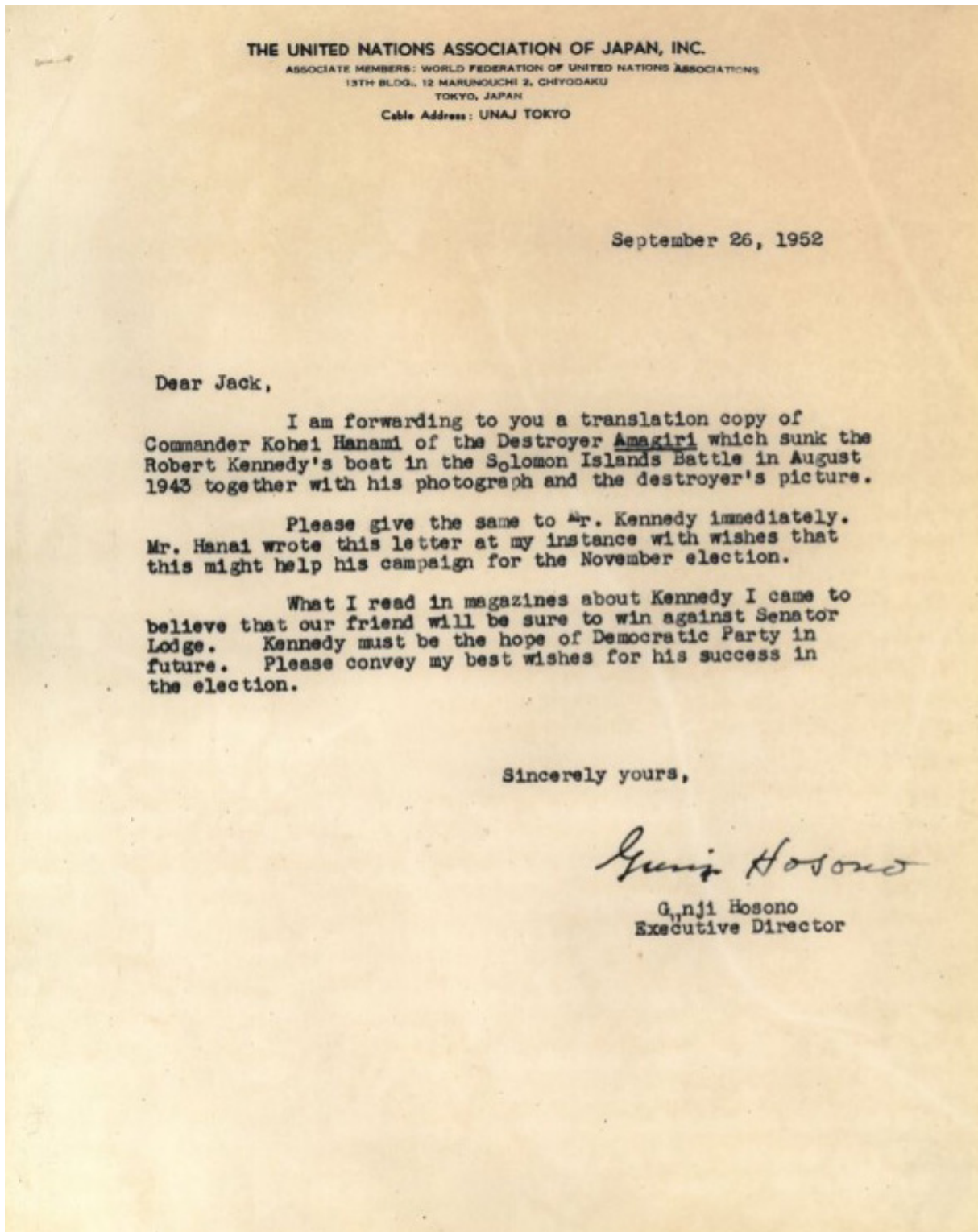
Lt. John F. Kennedy's Letter Home | August 29, 1943



*Joseph P. Kennedy Personal Papers. Family Correspondence.
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.*

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter and Letter from Kohei Hanami, Former Commander of *Amagiri* Destroyer



*Papers of John F. Kennedy. Senate Files.
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.*

APPENDIX B

continued

166 Kofune, Ubado-mura
Yamagun, Fukushima-ken
Japan
September 15, 1952

The Honorable Robert Kennedy
The United States Congress
Washington, D.C.
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Kennedy,

I am informed from Dr. Gunji Hosono that a warship sunk by a destroyer of the Japanese navy during the Solomon Islands Battle in August 1943 was under your command. This is a big surprise to me as I happened to be the Commander of the destroyer which sunk your ship. When I read the Time magazine of August 18, 1952 which mentioned the battle in question, my memory being refreshed, I can vividly recall what happened at that time.

I regret very much that I missed the opportunity of meeting you during your last visit to Japan. As I was living in the Fukushima Prefecture, northern part of Japan, I could not make contact with you during your brief stay in Tokyo although Dr. Hosono succeeded in locating me after great difficulty. I am looking forward to seeing you in your next visit to Japan.

Now allow me to take this opportunity to tell about myself. I had been the destroyer commander since October 1940. In view of an international crisis at that time the Imperial Japanese Navy was prepared for the worst while attaching the last hope in the eventual success of the America-Japan diplomatic talk. As even we young officers were quite aware of the risk of fighting the combined force of the U.S. and British navies with our inferior naval strength, the attack of Pearl Harbor which was entirely secret to us, therefore, seriously disturbed us.

While the most of our naval officers except the war like minority were naturally pessimistic about the outcome of the war, the unexpected victory at the commencement of the war and the skillful propaganda of the General Tojo's cabinet led us to entertain a wishful thinking for the chance of victory. Following our defeat at the Midway Islands, however, the whole situation changed against Japan and became favorable to the United States which displayed tremendously the strength of war political and the fighting spirit.

I was engaged in the battle of the Solomon Islands following the seizure of Laboul (New Britain Islands.).

*Papers of John F. Kennedy. Senate Files.
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.*

APPENDIX B

continued

I was very much concerned with the situation which then was further aggravated by the successive defeat in the battle of Guadalcanar.

From November 1942 to May 1943 I was assigned to the duty in the Track Islands water. It was early June 1943 I was transferred to Laboul again as the commander of the destroyer Amagiri. From that time the counter-attack of the American force became increasingly offensive. As Americans controlled the air, we were in no more position to attack in daytime and we had to operate in night, attempting in vain to prevent, by destroyer force, the transportation of the American men and munitions.

We met the disastrous defeat in Kure in early June when our flag ship was instantly sunk at the first encounter by your fleet, equipped with radar (which we were not aware) and this was followed by the subsequent defeat with the result that we were forced to retreat to Laboul after the series of the unsuccessful battle.

In one of the night battle in early August 1943, I sighted a bold enemy boat of small size was heading directly toward my destroyer of a larger type. Having no time to exchange gunfire as ships came so close to each other, my destroyer had to directly hit the enemy boat, slicing in two. To my great surprise this boat happened to be the P.T. boat which was under your command.

I take this opportunity to pay my profound respect to your daring and courageous action in this battle and also to congratulate you upon your miraculous escape under such circumstances.

I come to know from the Time magazine that you are going to run for the next election of Senators. I am firmly convinced that a person who practice tolerance to the former enemy like you, if elected to the high office in your country, would no doubt contribute not early to the promotion of genuine friendship between Japan and the United States but also to the establishment of the universal peace.

In my country the election is being held at present for the Diet members. I do wish the best of your success in the coming election in your country.

With personal regards,

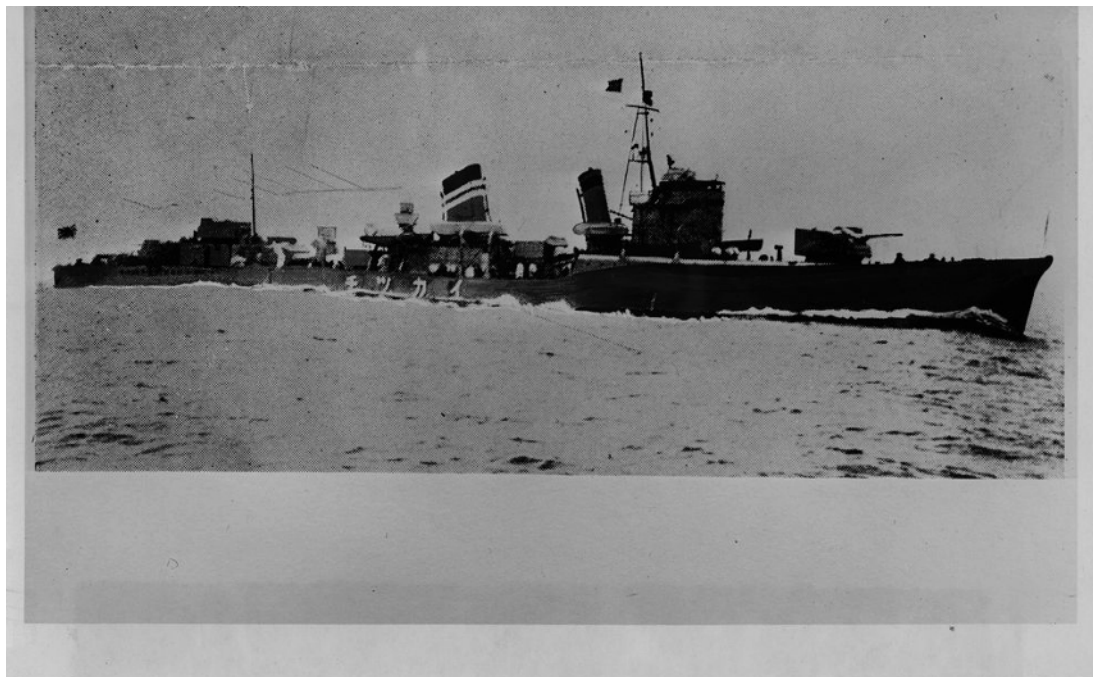
Sincerely yours,

(Signed)
Kohei Hanami
Former Commander of the
Destroyer "AMAGIRI"

*Papers of John F. Kennedy. Senate Files.
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.*

APPENDIX B

continued



*Photographer unknown. Papers of John F. Kennedy. Senate Files.
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.*



Above: photograph of the Amagiri, the Japanese destroyer that collided with John F. Kennedy's PT-109 boat.

Left: photograph of Kohei Hanami, commander of the Amagiri, the Japanese destroyer that collided with John F. Kennedy's PT-109 boat during World War II.

*Photographer unknown. Papers of John F. Kennedy. Senate Files.
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.*

APPENDIX C

Primary Source Analysis and Guiding Questions

Use the questions below to guide your analysis of the primary source.

MEETING AND GREETING THE PRIMARY SOURCE

Type (check all that apply)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> Email | <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chart | <input type="checkbox"/> Patent | <input type="checkbox"/> Presidential Document |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speech | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional Document |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram | <input type="checkbox"/> Identification Document |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum | <input type="checkbox"/> Court Document |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | | |

Write 2-3 sentences describing the document. Pretend the person you are explaining it to cannot see the document. (Think about characteristics like handwritten vs. typed, one or more than one author, stamps, markings, or anything unique about the document).

BASIC SOURCE PARTS

Complete the right side of the table for the primary source.

Who was the author / creator?	
Who was the reader / receiver?	
When was it from?	
Where was it from?	

MAKING SENSE OF THE PRIMARY SOURCE

Write 1-2 sentences describing what this primary source is about.

Who was the intended audience of this primary source?

USE AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

What was happening during this time? Does the primary source mention and specific people or events of the period?

What other primary or secondary sources could be used to help you better understand this event or topic?

If someone made this primary source today, what would be different and the same? Why?