

265-year-old love letters opened for first time

9th November 2023



For 265 years, 104 letters written to French sailors by their loved ones sat on a shelf in a government building in the U.K. They were never opened, until recently. They were read for the first time in two and a half centuries. The letters were on the

French warship Galatée. The ship was captured by the British Navy in 1758 during the Seven Years' War of 1756-1763. The sailors on the Galatée were captured before they had time to open and read their mail. The letters were taken to London, where they were put in storage and forgotten about, gathering dust. An academic from Cambridge University said the letters were in an archive in London. He said many of them were love letters.

A group of academics read and studied the letters. Lead researcher Renaud Morieux said the messages provided a rare and unique look into history. The writers were from poor people and rich people; from fiancés, parents, siblings and wives. The writing showed the differences in levels of literacy among the classes of French society. Professor Morieux said the letters were important documents. He said: "They reveal how we all cope with major life challenges...like pandemics or wars. We have to work out how to stay in touch, how to care for people, and how to keep passion alive. Today, we have Zoom. In the 18th century, people only had letters, but what they wrote about feels very familiar."

Sources: [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com) / [france24.com](https://www.france24.com) / [msn.com](https://www.msn.com)

Writing

Writing love letters is important. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

love / letters / sailors / shelf / government building / ship / war / London / dust / researcher / rare / unique / history / parents / siblings / documents / staying in touch

True / False

- 1) Over one hundred 265-year-old letters have been read for the first time. T / F
- 2) The letters were taken from soldiers on a battle field. T / F
- 3) The British Navy took the letters during the Seven Years' War. T / F
- 4) An academic said most of the letters were love letters. T / F
- 5) The letters allowed academics to look at a special part of history. T / F
- 6) All of the letters were written by rich people. T / F
- 7) Some of the letters were written during a pandemic. T / F
- 8) The article says all of the letters were written with great passion. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. recently | a. head |
| 2. captured | b. brothers / sisters |
| 3. gathering | c. record office |
| 4. academic | d. special |
| 5. archive | e. emotion |
| 6. lead | f. taken prisoner |
| 7. unique | g. manage |
| 8. siblings | h. educator |
| 9. cope | i. a short time ago |
| 10. passion | j. collecting |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of love letters?
- b) Have you ever written a love letter?
- c) Are love letters better on paper or as a text?
- d) Would you like to read the old love letters?
- e) Are there any dangers in writing love letters?
- f) What do people write about in love letters?
- g) Do you think love 265 years ago was different than today?
- h) How important is letter writing?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. written to French sailors | a. dust |
| 2. for the first time in | b. by the British Navy |
| 3. The ship was captured | c. touch |
| 4. they were put in storage and | d. of literacy |
| 5. gathering | e. two and a half centuries |
| 6. a rare and | f. challenges |
| 7. differences in levels | g. forgotten about |
| 8. cope with major life | h. unique look into history |
| 9. stay in | i. alive |
| 10. keep passion | j. by their loved ones |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Have you ever received a love letter?
- Is love between rich people different than between poor people?
- Who do you write letters to?
- How much do you like receiving a physical letter?
- How do you cope with major life challenges?
- How can we keep passion alive?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- in a eorvnengtm building
- the first time in two and a half ntieurcse
- The ship was ductarep by the British Navy
- they were put in oarsegt
- An dmaecaci from Cambridge University
- the letters were in an hearvci
- a rare and eqiuun look into history
- differences in levels of rtcleiya
- cope with major life echseqlanl
- mipedncas or wars
- how to keep ioanssp alive
- what they wrote about feels very faimrlia

Answers – Synonym Match

1. i	2. f	3. j	4. h	5. c
6. a	7. d	8. b	9. g	10. e

Role Play

Role A – A Lover

You think a lover is the best person to get a letter from. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their people. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these to get a letter from (and why): king or queen, famous actor or English teacher.

Role B – A Famous Actor

You think a famous actor is the best person to get a letter from. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their people. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these to get a letter from (and why): lover, king or queen or English teacher.

Role C – A King or Queen

You think a king or queen is the best person to get a letter from. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their people. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these to get a letter from (and why): famous actor, lover or English teacher.

Role D – An English Teacher

You think an English teacher is the best person to get a letter from. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their people. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these to get a letter from (and why): king or queen, famous actor or lover.

Speaking – A Letter

Rank these with your partner. Put the best people to get a letter from at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| • A lover | • A king or queen |
| • A best friend | • A parent |
| • A rich person | • An English teacher |
| • A famous actor | • The lottery people |

Answers – True False

1	T	2	F	3	T	4	F	5	T	6	F	7	F	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.