

# The Adams Family of Massachusetts: A Legacy of Justice in Action

Whose rights would they defend today?

“... there is blood of John Adams flowing in my veins. Can that blood ever compromise with arbitrary imprisonment?”

John Quincy Adams, April 14, 1841  
in a letter to his son, Charles Francis Adams

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### Introduction

The purpose of this curriculum unit is for students to learn about the life, career, and sacrifices made by a father and son of Massachusetts. Both John Adams and John Quincy Adams made great contributions to America and our sense of justice.

Throughout the generations of the Adams family, there existed a deeply held philosophy of “justice for all.” There were times when this belief put members of the family at risk for personal harm, injury, or public disgrace.

Each unit in the curriculum represents a daily lesson with a homework assignment. Some homework assignments have been designed to be started in class, then completed at home.

**Lesson One** begins with what is called a K-W-L chart, which records: 1) What students already **K**now; 2) What students **W**ant to know; and 3) What students have **L**earned. On this day, students will fill out the K column and the W column of the chart. At the end of each class, as a wrap up, students go back to the W column and add questions they have, but they also complete the L column as they learn more about the topic. Lesson One also includes the use of the Massachusetts Historical Society’s website. The questions students answer will help them obtain an overall view of the life and career of John Adams.

For homework, students are asked to write a journal entry of what they believed happened on the night of March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1770, the date of the Boston Massacre.

The focus of **Lesson Two** is for students to understand the difference between a primary source document and a secondary source document. Using their homework from the evening before and an eyewitness account from the Boston Massacre Trials, students will learn the value of each type of document.

In **Lesson Three**, students will get an idea of what was happening in colonial Boston before March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1770. Students will also have the opportunity to read diary entries by John Adams on the Stamp Act and the Sugar Act and to view a copy of the entry John Adams made on January 2, 1770. For homework, students will read more excerpts from the diary of John Adams to gain insight into his personal beliefs.

**Lesson Four** begins with a review of events leading to the Boston Massacre. Students will work in groups to analyze several documents relating to the confrontation. Each group will be given a diary entry by John Adams, a copy of Paul Revere’s engraving, a broadside, and another eyewitness account. After reviewing these documents, each group will create a more accurate picture/drawing of what happened that night on King Street.

For homework, students are asked if they would defend the British soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre now that they have a better understanding of what occurred. Students will also identify groups or individuals in our society today who are maligned. For instance, after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Muslim groups, organizations, and individuals were mistreated and viewed negatively. Students are asked to list others whose experience may be the same in our world today.

The purpose of **Lesson Five** is for students to learn about some of John Adams's beliefs and philosophies, and to identify the principles they themselves live by. Students will read diary entries by John Adams and will interpret and identify his beliefs. In groups of two, students will create a definition for the word "justice" and provide a real life example to illustrate their definition. Finally, in class, students will review the philosophy John Adams used to defend the soldiers in the Boston Massacre case and the philosophy behind the Biblical passage of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The partner groups answer questions about which philosophy best represents their beliefs. A class discussion will follow as groups share their ideas.

As a homework assignment, students will write an opening statement for one of the mistreated groups or individuals they identified in the homework assignment the night before. Students will be asked to use the Preamble of the Constitution and the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence to write an opening statement defending the mistreated group or person.

**Lesson Six** will look at the legacy of justice passed down within the Adams family. Students will read two letters written by John Adams to his son John Quincy Adams. Students will also read a letter John Adams wrote to his grandsons. As classwork and homework assignments, students will write their own letters describing the principles they would like to pass on to their families.

**Lesson Seven** is much like Lesson One except the focus turns to John Quincy Adams. Students will fill out the K and W column of the K-W-L chart about what they believe they already know about this man. Students will again be paired in partner groups to use the Massachusetts Historical Society's website to gain a general sense of John Quincy's life and career.

**Lesson Eight** is a review of the Gag Rule, against which John Quincy Adams fought in the House of Representatives for almost a decade. The lesson also includes a March 29, 1841 diary entry by Adams, discussing slavery. After reading the entry, students will be better able to understand his sense of justice and the work he did on its behalf. Other classwork includes a review about the slave trade and the riches one could gain as a result. Students are asked what they would be willing to risk to make a lot of money.

For homework, students will read background information on the Amistad case and write about how they would want a lawyer to defend them if they were caught trading slaves after 1807. Teachers may wish to provide copies of the expense and profit reports for slave trading found in Charles Martin, *The Amistad Affair* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 13-15.

**Lesson Nine** is a review of the meaning of "justice for all." Using the Amistad case, students will determine what is just for both sides involved. Students are asked which side they would defend, and the strategy they would use for a defense. The classwork assignment will also include instruction on the Magna Carta. Students will look at specific laws written in the charter and explain why they think such laws were needed at the time. Supplemental handouts may be provided from John Langdon-Davie, ed. *Magna Carta: A Collection of Contemporary Documents*, Jackdaw No. 3 (New York: Jackdaw Publications, 1972). Finally, students will use documents to define the terms "trial by jury" and "habeas corpus."

For homework, students will read excerpts from John Quincy Adams's diary concerning the Amistad case and interpret what he meant in his writings to learn about his beliefs and

motivations. Students will do the same with a paragraph from the opening statement Adams presented to the Supreme Court.

In **Lesson Ten**, the final lesson, students will read a number of letters written by John Quincy Adams. At this point, students should have a clear definition of what justice is and what one must do to attain it. For further understanding, students will read a diary entry written by John Quincy Adams the day he made his opening argument to the Supreme Court.

Next students will read a letter written by John Quincy Adams to his son Charles Francis Adams, containing the quotation “. . . there is blood of John Adams flowing in my veins. Can that blood ever compromise with arbitrary imprisonment?” Students are asked to read the letter and reflect upon it by answering a series of probing questions.

Then students will read a series of letters from John Quincy Adams to Roger Baldwin and Lewis Tappan informing them of the Supreme Court’s decision on the *Amistad* case, and the letters of two children who were transported on the *Amistad* , written to John Quincy Adams. The lesson ends with Adams’s response to the children.

For their **Final Project**, students will write a speech on John Adams, John Quincy Adams and Justice. Students are allowed to use all resources and handouts from class as well as the Massachusetts Historical Society’s website. Other requirements are listed within the lesson.

Chart

## John Adams

<b>K</b> What do you already know?	<b>W</b> What do you want to know?	<b>L</b> What did you learn?

Lesson 1  
ClassworkName:  
Date:

## The Life of John Adams

1735 – 1826

John Adams was born in Quincy, Massachusetts, a town known as “Braintree” at the time of his birth. His parents were not rich, but he was able to go to college. He graduated from Harvard in 1755. John Adams began studying law in Worcester, then opened his own law practice in Braintree. In 1764, Adams married Abigail Smith. They had five children.

Here are some of the things John Adams did as a Boston Patriot:

- Publicly argued against the Stamp Act. (1765)
  - Served on the Massachusetts General Court (June 1770)
  - Defended the British soldiers in the Boston Massacre Trials (October 1770)
  - Represented Massachusetts at the First Continental Congress (1774)

Using the website listed below, answer the questions about John Adams and his career.

- Go to [www.masshist.org](http://www.masshist.org)
- Click on Adams Family papers
- Click on TimeLine
- Answer each question in a complete sentence and in your own words.

1. What does John Adams do at the Second Continental Congress in 1775?

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1a. What does it mean to be ‘Commander and Chief’? ( use your own judgment)

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2. What else does John Adams do at the Second Continental Congress in June/July of 1776?

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3. In 1779, what does John Adams write that is adopted in 1780?

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4. What is John Adams asked to do in September of 1779?

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5. What does John Adams sign in 1782 and who else signs it with him?

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6. On what date does John Adams sign the final peace treaty between America and Britain?

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7. What position is John Adams elected to in 1789?

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8. What happens to John Adams again in 1793?

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9. In 1796, what does John Adams become?

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10. Make a list of three things you think are important that John Adams does while in office from 1797 to 1801

1.

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2.

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3.

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11. What does Thomas Jefferson become in 1801?

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12. What does John Adams do when he is not re-elected? How old is he now? What do you think he will do with his life now?

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## The Life of John Adams

1735 – 1826

Directions: Using your textbook, write a description or a definition for the following terms. Then complete the rest of the assignment.

1. The General Court –

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2. “Taxation without Representation”—

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3. The Stamp Act –

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4. writ of assistance –

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5. The First Continental Congress –

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### An Eye Witness Account

Read the section in your textbook about The Boston Massacre.

Once you have finished reading the section, pretend you were on King Street the night five people were killed and you are writing in your journal or diary about what happened. Describe what the atmosphere was like, what you think caused the problem or who is to blame. Try to write your best account of what you think happened on the night of March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1770.

Write your response on a separate sheet of paper. It may be typewritten as well. Your journal or diary must have the date at the top of the page.

Lesson 2  
Classwork

Name:  
Date:

## A PRIMARY SOURCE VS. A SECONDARY SOURCE

Using your homework assignment and the handout given to you to read, compare what you wrote about the Boston Massacre and what the document says about the Boston Massacre. Make a list of what they both say that is similar and make a list of what they say that is different.

The SIMILARITIES between your account and the document	The DIFFERENCES between your account and the document

Review Questions:

1. Which account do you think was better, yours or the handout? Explain.
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2. Which account is a primary source document and which is a secondary source document?

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3. Which do you think is better, a primary source or a secondary source? Explain.

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Based on what you have done so far, write a definition for each:

A primary source document is

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A secondary source document is

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Circle the items you think are a primary source and draw a rectangle around what you consider a secondary source. Place a question mark on the items you are unsure about.

Newspaper	Diary	Book	Poster	Painting	Clock
Clothing	Furniture	Bones	Letters	History Book	Map

Choose three of the above items and explain why all three are primary sources.

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Choose three of the above items and explain why all three are secondary sources.

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Are there any items that can be both? Explain.

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## Eye Witness Accounts of the Boston Massacre

### Jane Whitehouse

I live nigh the Centinel. Heard a noise. Went out. Ask'd the Centinel whats the matter. He didn't know. Some people came and said there's the Centinel, the bloody back Rascal, let's go kill him. They kept gathering throwing Snow balls, Oyster Shells and chunks of Wood at the Centinel. Beat him from out of his Box to the steps. A space after saw a party coming from the Main Guard, an Officer which proved to be Capt. Preston with them. He desired his Men to halt and the Centinel to recover his Arm, fall into his Rank and march up to the Main Guard. The Centinel fell in and the men wanted to move forward to the Guard house but could not for the Riot. The people called out fire, damn you why don't you fire, you cant kill us. I steppd to the Party. Heard a Gentleman ask the Capt. if he was going to order his men to fire. He said no Sir by no means, by no means. A Man—the Centinel—then pushed me back. I step'd back to the corner. He bid me go away for I should be killed. A Man came behind the Soldiers walkd backwards and forwards, encouraging them to fire. The Captain stood on the left about three yards. The man touched one of the Soldiers upon the back and said fire, by God I'll stand by you. He was dressed in dark coloured Cloaths. I don't remember he had a Surtout or any lace about him. He did not look like an Officer. The man fired directly on the word and clap on the Shoulder. I am positive the man was not the Captain. My attention was fixed on him, for the people said there's the Officer damn him lets kill him. I am sure he gave no orders. I saw the People throw at them. I saw one man take a chunk of wood from under his Coat, throw at a Soldier and knocked him. He fell on his face. His firelock out of his hand. Near the little run of water by the Sentry box. He was the right hand Soldier. This was before any firing. The man recovered himself and took up his firelock. The chunk was thrown a few minutes before the man clap'd the Soldier on the back. The second gun went off about a minute after the first. I didn't hear any body say fire between the first and second Gun.

### James Woodall

I came into King Street, saw a great number of People there and a party of Soldiers and an Officer at the Main guard and followed them to the Custom house. The Sentry box was in the Gutter and the Centinel fell in with the Soldiers. They were drawn up. I saw one Soldier knock'd down. His Gun fell from him. I saw a great many sticks and pieces of sticks and Ice thrown at the Soldiers. The Soldier who was knock'd down took up his Gun and fired directly. Soon after the first Gun I saw a Gentleman behind the Soldiers in velvet or blue or black plush trimd with gold. He put his hand towards their backs. Whether he touched them I know not and said by God I'll stand by you whilst I have a drop of blood and then said fire and two went off and then the rest to 7 or 8. I stood between Capt. Preston and the Lane. The Captain, after, seemed shocked and looked upon the Soldiers. I am very certain he did not give the word fire. I did not hear the word but once till after all the firing. They said 'twas only Powder and bid them fire. I saw one Person speak to the Captain when the first gun was

fired. The people at the time of firing were about 4 yards distant. The Soldiers were in a single rank. The Gentleman behind had a Wigg.

L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel, ed., *The Legal Papers of John Adams*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), 3: 75-78.

Classwork

Date:

## What's happening in Boston?

Fighting the French and Indian War in America cost Great Britain millions of dollars. They wanted the colonists to help with the debt, so the Parliament passed several laws or acts to have the colonists pay taxes. The colonists believed the British government did not have the right to tax them because the colonists did not have a representative in the British government. The colonists believed laws were being passed without their consent. The King, who owned the colonies, did not believe he needed to have the permission of the colonists to pass laws.

A writ of assistance allowed an officer to enter a home and search wherever he liked. He could also remove objects from the home. The officer neither had to get permission from the court before conducting his search nor did he have to have a reason to search the premises. The only limitation is that the search had to be done during the daytime with another public official.

What do you think about this law?

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What would you do about it?

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### The Sugar Act:

- Increased the number of American goods that could be shipped only to England or its territories.
- Required ships to unload their entire cargo, pay a tax on it, and reload. If items were acquired somewhere else, a tax had to be paid on those items too.
- Created a court to hear cases that violated the Sugar Act.
- If a merchant was accused of breaking the law, it was his responsibility to prove his innocence. Even if he was successful, the Sugar Act did not allow the arresting officer to be sued for damages or in other words, repay the owner for his losses.

What do you think about this law?

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Lesson 3  
Classwork

If you were a storekeeper in Boston, would you raise the cost of your goods to cover your extra expenses under the *Sugar Act*?

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The *Stamp Act* required individuals to buy paper, already stamped with an official seal, for documents such as diplomas, marriage licenses, contracts, mortgages, bills of sales, pamphlets, and newspapers. The pre-stamped paper was brought over from England and all documents had to be printed on this paper to be official. The courts in the colonies had to use the stamped paper in order for the court proceedings to be official.

What do you think about this law? Are you for it or against it? Explain.

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What would happen if people were against this law? Would you want the courts to close in protest? Explain.

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Lesson 3  
Classwork

Name:  
Date:

### What is the response of John Adams?

The people of Boston refused to buy the stamped paper required by the Stamp Act. Colonists also attacked the homes of Andrew Oliver, a stamp distributor, and Thomas Hutchinson, the assistant governor.

The Massachusetts court system had to use the stamped paper because without it, nothing was considered official. When the courts ran out of the paper, British authorities decided to close the courts until the paper arrived. It was 3,000 miles between Boston and London and the trip across the Atlantic took four to six weeks. John Adams, along with two other lawyers, was asked to go to the judges of the Superior Court and argue that the courts should be opened and should be allowed to use un-stamped paper. The courts, however, were closed for a number of months.

This is what John Adams said to the judges:

*“The Stamp-Act was made where we are in no Sense represented, therefore, no more binding upon us, than an Act which should oblige us to destroy One Half of our Specie. . . A Parliament of Great Britain can have no more Right to tax the Colonies than a Parliament of Paris.”*

[ in Hiller B. Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), 44.]

What does Adams mean by this statement? What example(s) is he using to make his point?

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Does John Adams’s argument make sense? Why shouldn’t the colonists pay for the stamped paper?

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Lesson 3  
Homework

Name:  
Date:

## John Adams's Diaries: What do they tell about what he believed?

*Tuesday, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1765*

*"The national Attention is fixed upon the Colonies. The Religion, Administration of Justice, Geography, Numbers, &c. of the Colonies are a fashionable Study. But what wretched Blunders do they make in attempting to regulate them. They know not the Character of Americans."*

L. H. Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962), 282.

1. What does John Adams mean when he writes "the Administration of Justice?"

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2. What does he mean by "what wretched blunders do they make in attempting to regulate them?"

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3. What does John Adams mean by "they know not the character of Americans?"

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*Wednesday, January 1, 1766*

*"We are now upon the Beginning of a Year of greater Expectation than any, that has passed before it. This Year brings Ruin or Salvation to the British Colonies. The Eyes of all America, are fixed on the British Parliament. In short Britain and America are staring at each other.—And they will probably stare more and more for sometime."*

(*Diary of John Adams*, 1:282)

*Thursday, January 2, 1766*

*"At Phyladelphia, the Heart and Hand fire Company has expelled Mr. Hewes [Hughes] the Stamp Man for that Colony. The Freemen of Talbot County in Maryland have erected a Jibbet before the Door of the Court House 20 feet High, and have hanged on it, the Effigies of a Stamp Informer in Chains, in Terrorem, till the Stamp Act shall be repealed, and have resolved unanimously to hold in Utter Contempt and Abhorrence every Stamp Officer, and every Favourer of the Stamp Act, and to have no*

*Communication with any such Person, not even to speak to him, unless to upbraid him with his Baseness.— So tryumphant is the Spirit of Liberty everywhere.— Such an Union was never before known in America. In the Wars that have been with the french and Indians, a Union could never be effected.—I pitty my unhappy fellow Subjects in Quebeck and Hallifax for the great Misfortune that has befallen them [...] Hallifax consists of a sett of Fugitives and Vagabonds, who are also kept in fear by a Fleet and an Army. But can no Punishment be devised for Barbadoes and Port Royal in Jamaica? For their base Desertion of the Cause of Liberty? Their tame Surrender of the Rights of Britons? Their mean, timid Resignation to slavery? [. . .] They deserve to be made Slaves to their own Negroes. But they live under the scortching Sun, which melts them, dissipates their Spirits and relaxes their Nerves. Yet their Negroes seem to have more of the Spirit of Liberty, than they. I think we sometimes read of Insurrections among their Negroes.”*

*(Diary of John Adams 1:284-285)*

1. How many colonies are mentioned in this diary entry and what kinds of things are happening?

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2. After reading the January 1<sup>st</sup> and January 2<sup>nd</sup> entry, what do you think is the mood of people living in the colonies at this time?

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3. What does Adams mean by the “Spirit of Liberty”? He mentions it more than once in this entry for January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

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4. What do these diary entries reveal about John Adams’s personal beliefs? Write at least three ideas.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson 4  
Classwork

Name:  
Date:

## *“Thanksgiving for the Repeal of the Stamp-Act”*

*(Diary of John Adams, 1:316)*

1765	1768	1770
The Stamp Act is repealed	Soldiers are stationed in the colonies	The Boston Massacre

By 1770, 16,000 people lived in Boston. About 600 were soldiers of the British Army. They were called “lobsterbacks” by the townspeople because of the red coat they wore as part of their uniform. The soldiers and the people of Boston did not get along because the colonists thought the soldiers were sent to enforce laws they did not want and therefore limited their freedom. Some colonists did not believe the soldiers were sent for their protection.

Several incidents that preceded the Boston Massacre on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1770:

### Event 1

On February 28, 1770, a mob of people formed outside a British tax collector’s house in Boston’s North End. This tax collector was also believed to be an informant for the British government. The protestors showed their anger by throwing rotten food, ice, and stones at the tax collector’s house as well as calling him names. The crowd was out of control. Suddenly, something flew through the window and hit the tax collector’s wife. Her husband grabbed the gun, which was unloaded and waived it out the window to warn the crowd. When they kept up, he loaded the gun and fired into the crowd. Christopher Seider, an eleven-year-old boy, was shot, and died later that evening.

Read what John Adams wrote in his diary about the funeral for Christopher:

*Feb. 26, 1770*

*“When I came into Town, I saw a vast Collection of People, near Liberty Tree— enquired and found the funeral of the Child, lately kill’d by Richardson was to be attended. Went into Mr. Rowes, and warmed me, and then went out with him to the Funeral, a vast Number of Boys walked before the Coffin, a vast Number of Women and Men after it, and a Number of Carriages. My Eyes never beheld such a funeral. The Procession extended further than can be well imagined.*”

*This Shewes, there are many more Lives to spend if wanted in the Service of their Country.*

*It Shews, too that the Faction is not yet expiring – that the Ardor of the People is not to be quelled by the Slaughter of one Child and the Wounding of another. “*

(Diary of John Adams, 1:349)

What did John Adams mean when he wrote the lines that are underlined?

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Ebenezer Richardson, the tax collector, was charged with murder. According to English law, if you were found guilty of murder, the punishment was death. He was found guilty of killing Christopher Seider, but the King pardoned him.

#### Event 2

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, three days before the Boston Massacre, there was a fight between a group of Bostonians and a group of soldiers. Oftentimes, the soldiers in the British Army would do extra work to earn money. This incident took place at John Gray’s Ropewalk. A British soldier came to the ropewalk looking for work. A rope maker asked him if he wanted work. The soldier said yes. The man then said to him, “Well then go clean my outhouse!” The soldier said, “Go clean it yourself!” Eventually, the soldier and a group of rope makers were fighting. The soldier was able to get away, but he returned with more soldiers and the fight started again. Men on both sides were injured.

#### Event 4

The next night, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the soldiers returned to the ropewalk and another fight broke out. That night, one of the rope makers believed he heard a threat from one of the soldiers. He thought the soldier said “there were a great many townspeople who would eat their dinners on Monday next who would not eat any on Tuesday.” One of the soldiers involved in the fight would later be charged with murder in the Boston Massacre.

## Lesson 4 Classwork

March 5<sup>th</sup> – What happened?

Paul Revere's famous engraving of the Boston Massacre is not a true representation of what happened on the evening of March 5, 1770. Using the information below—from a broadside, a series of eyewitness accounts, and the Revere engraving—your group must come up with a more accurate drawing of what happened that evening.

Paul Revere's engraving: [http://www.masshist.org/database/onview\\_full.cfm?queryID=178](http://www.masshist.org/database/onview_full.cfm?queryID=178)

Broadside:

*A Monumental Inscription on the Fifth of March* (Boston: Isaiah Thomas, 1772)

**AMERICANS!**  
 Bear in Remembrance  
 The **HORRID MASSACRE!**  
 Perpetrated in King-street, Boston,  
 New-England,  
 On the Evening of March the Fifth, 1770.  
 When Five of your fellow countrymen,  
**GRAY, MAVERICK, CALDWELL, ATTUCKS,**  
 and **CARR**  
 Lay wallowing in their Gore!  
 Being *basely*, and most *inhumanly*  
**MURDERED!**  
 And **SIX** others badly wounded!  
 By a Party of the **XXIXth Regiment,**  
 Under the command of Capt. Tho. Preston.  
 Remember!  
 That Two of the Murderes  
 Were convicted of **MANSLAUGHTER!**  
 By a Jury, of whom I shall say  
**NOTHING,**  
 Branded in the hand!  
 And *dismissed,*  
 The others were Acquitted,  
 And their Captain **PENSIONED!**  
 Also,  
 Bear in Remembrance  
 That on the 22nd Day of February, 1770.  
 The infamous

**EBENEZER RICHARDSON, Informer,**  
**And tool to Ministerial hirelings,**  
**Most *barbarously***  
**MURDERED**  
**CHRISTOPHER SEIDER,**  
**An innocent youth!**  
**Of which crime he was found guilty**  
**By his Country**  
**On Friday April 20th, 1770;**  
**But remained *Unsentenced***  
**On Saturday the 22nd Day of February, 1772.**  
**When the Grand Inquest**  
**For Suffolk county,**  
**Were informed, at request,**  
**By the Judges of the Superior Court,**  
**That Ebenezer Richardson's *Case***  
***Then lay before his Majesty.***  
**Therefore said *Richardson***  
**This day, March Fifth! 1772,**  
**Remains unchanged!!!**  
**Let these things be told to Posterity!**  
**And handed down**  
**From Generation to Generation,**  
**'Till Time shall be no more!**  
**Forever may AMERICA be preserved,**  
**From weak and wicked monarchs,**  
**Tyrannical Ministers,**  
**Abandoned Governors,**  
**Their Underlings and Hirelings!**  
**And may the**  
**Machinations of artful, designing wretches,**  
**Who would ENSLAVE THIS People,**  
**Come to an end,**  
**Let their NAMES and MEMORIES**  
**Be buried in eternal oblivion,**  
**And the PRESS,**  
**For a *SCOURGE* to Tyrannical Rulers,**  
**Remain FREE.**

## Eyewitness Accounts:

### Joseph Helyer

Hearing the bell ring I repaired to the middle Town. Passed up Cornhill. The Street was still. Went down to the Custom house. Saw some people about the Centinel who was on the steps. Heard some young voices say fire if you dare. Some people came along and told the Boys not to molest the Centinel. I went up King street near the foot of the Town house. Met 8 or 10 Soldiers coming down. I observed a Commission officer with them. I heard a Person say to the Officer you need not or you won't fire upon them, you have nothing to do but to keep them off. The Soldiers went to the Custom house. As soon as they got there I heard a confused noise and went down and found them in a rank intire. Whether  $\frac{1}{2}$  moon or strait I know not, with their Bayonets charged. Just after I passed the last Man on the left a gun was fired on the right. In about 20 seconds a second. In about 10 seconds a third. The last man but one fired on the left last. I heard no orders. It appeared to me the Soldiers who fired acted pure nature. I mean they acted and fired by themselves because of their being disciplined and fired without orders. I saw no contest between the Soldiers and Inhabitants that could justify their firing and when I saw the men lying in the Street I could not believe they were dead. After the firing the Captain said dont fire upon the Inhabitants. When I went to the Custom house there were but about 30. At least about 100 or 60. The Sentry box was not in the Gutter.

### Captain James Gifford

About 10 OClock went to the Main Guard and found Capt. Preston. He told me he had sent a Party to Protect the Centinel. That the Mob attacked them so furiously that they fired upon them.

*The Prisoner asked did you ever know an Officer order Men to fire with their Bayonets charged:*  
answer no.

### Thomas H. Peck

I was at home when the Guns were fired. I heard 'em distinct. I went up to the main guard and addressed myself to the Captain and said to him What have you done? He said, Sir it was none of my doings, the Soldiers fired of their own accord, I was in the Street and might have been shot. His character is good as a Gentleman and Soldier. I think it exceeds any of the Corps.

### Harrison Gray jr.

About  $\frac{1}{4}$  after 9 went into the Street and saw about 60 Persons round the Centinel insulting him. I advised 'em to let him alone and told 'em if he had offended 'em that was not the place to resent it. They continued noisy and said damn him let him fire he has but one Gun. I told 'em he was so near the Guard he could have a party presently. They continued very noisy and I went in to Mr. Paine's.

### John Gillespie

About 7 o'Clock, in the forestreet, towards the South end met a number of Inhabitants coming down with Sticks and Clubs. After, was told the Bell rang for fire, but was told by Mr. Freeman there was no fire but the People were fighting somewhere with the Soldiers. Some people said by God lets go to their assistance. Came to the Guard House. Saw a great many People there. Went home and heard the Guns fired.

### Lieutenant Governor

I suppose I need not mention any thing which preceded my coming into King Street. I was pressed by the people almost upon the Bayonets. The People cried the Governor. I called for the Officer. He came from between the Ranks. I did not know him by Moon light. I had heard no circumstances. I inquired with some emotion, How came you to fire without Orders from a Civil Magistrate? I am not certain of every word. I cannot recollect his answer. It now appears to me that it was imperfect. As if he had more to say. I remember by what he said or his actions I thought he was offended at being questioned. Before I could have his full answer the people cried to the Town house, to the Town house. A Gentleman by me (Mr. Belknap) was extremely civil. I thought he press'd my going into the Town house from a concern for my safety. I was carried by the crowd into the Council Chamber. After some hours Capt. Preston was brought there to be examined. I heard him deny giving Orders. I am very sure it did not occur to me that he had said anything in answer to my question in the Street which would not consist with this denial. My intention in going up was to enquire into the affair. I have no particular intimacy with Capt. Preston. His general character is extremely good. Had I wanted an Officer to guard against a precipitate action I should have pitched upon him as soon as any in the Regiment.

L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel, ed., *The Legal Papers of John Adams*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), 3: 75-78.





Lesson 5  
Classwork

Name:  
Date:

## The Philosophies of John Adams

What is a philosophy?

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*“The next Morning I think it was, sitting in my office, near the Steps of the Town house Stairs, Mr. Forrest came in [. . .] With tears streaming from his Eyes, he said I am come with a very solemn Message from a very unfortunate Man, Captain Preston in Prison. He wishes for Council, and can get none [. . .] I had no hesitation in answering that Council ought to be the very last thing that an accused Person should want in a free Country. That the Bar ought in my opinion to be independent and impartial at all Times And in every Circumstance. [. . .] and if he thinks he cannot have a fair Tryal of that Issue without my Assistance, without hesitation he shall have it.”*

*(The Legal Papers of John Adams, 3: 292-293)*

As you read in the diary entry above, consider that John Adams believed everyone deserved a fair trial in a free country. This was a belief he lived by.

*“But, it may be said with equal Truth, that all Magistrates, and all civil officers, and all civil Government, is founded and maintained by the sins of the People. All armies would be needless if Men were universally virtuous.”*

*(Diary of John Adams 18 Dec. 1760, 1: 184)*

What is he trying to say? Explain his thoughts in your own words.

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Write a statement of your own personal philosophy. The saying “do unto others as you would like done to you”, is a philosophy. What principle do you live your life by? Write it on the lines below.

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## Lesson 5 Classwork

“Innocence should be protected more than guilt be punished”

Or

“An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”

What does each statement mean?

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Which one of the above statements do you most agree with in a situation where a person has been harmed or injured? Explain your reason for choosing one statement over the other.

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Lesson 5  
Classwork and Homework

Name:  
Date:

## Who would you defend today?

### Writing an Opening Statement

Choose one group from your list on last night's homework and write an opening statement to defend them from being mistreated in our society today.

Using the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution, the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence and your own personal philosophies, defend that person's rights to the Superior Court of Massachusetts.

Your opening statement must:

- Include a list of rights you believe your client has.
- Use statements from either the Bill of Rights or the Declaration of Independence to support your ideas.
- Include what your client has done, if anything, and the reason they should not be punished.

You may use this page to brainstorm and you may write your first draft on the next page or on a separate sheet of paper.



Lesson 6  
Classwork

Name:  
Date:

## John Adams letter to his son John Quincy Adams

*My Child*

*Yours of March 20/31 I have received.*

*I am well pleased with your learning German for many Reasons, and principally because I am told that Science and Literature flourish more at present in Germany than any where. A Variety of Languages will do no harm unless you should get an habit of attending more to Words than Things.*

*But, my dear boy, above all Things, preserve your Innocence, and a pure Conscience. Your morals are of more importance, both to yourself and the World than all Languages and all Sciences. The least Stain upon your Character will do more harm to your Happiness than all Accomplishments will do it good. – I give you Joy of the safe Arrival of your Brother, and the Acknowledgement of the Independance of your Country in Holland. Adieu.*

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 28 April 1782, in *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 4, ed. L. H. Butterfield, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973), 317.

1. What principle (s) is John Adams trying to pass on to his son?

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2. What beliefs would you like to pass on to your son or daughter? Look back at the personal philosophy statement you wrote in Lesson 5.

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Lesson 6  
Homework

Name:  
Date:

This is a letter from John Adams to his son John Quincy Adams, written in 1801. At the time of this letter, John Adams is living full-time in Massachusetts after failing to be re-elected to the Presidency. In February of 1801, Thomas Jefferson had become the third President of the United States. Mr. Adams is sixty-six years old and John Quincy Adams is now thirty-four years old and has a family.

Quincy Sept. 12, 1801

*My Dear Son,*

*The 11<sup>th</sup> of September is reckoned among the happiest days of my Life: The Navy Officers who composed the Court Martial on Capt. Little, came out to visit me with Mr. Shaw who brought me good favor of the 9<sup>th</sup> dated at Philadelphia; informing me of your Arrival on that day with my Daughter and Grandson in as good health as could be expected. You do not expressly say whether you intend to accompany Mrs. Adams to Washington or not. If you do it will be much more than three weeks before I shall have the pleasure to embrace you. But knowing that you are on American ground, I shall not be impatient However this may be I hope you will consider my House as your home for yourself your Lady and son, as well as for your and her Servants and Domesticks. We can accommodate you all as well as Destiny intends that you and I ought to be accommodated, at least untill you have Time to deliberate on your future Arrangements.*

*It is fortunate that your Brother was the first to see you in America. He can tell you every thing, and will not deceive you. He is prudent as well as intelligent, honest as well as candid.*

*I have many projects in my head to communicate to you, for your Establishment, which however must be a very modest very humble very unassuming. I shall leave them all to your choice knowing – very well knowing that your Judgment is better than that of your affectionate Father.*

*John Adams*

*J. Q. Adams Esq.*

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, 12 September 1801; Letterbook 7 March 1797-20 June 1797; Massachusetts Historical Society.

What does the letter reveal about how John Adams feels about his son?

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Lesson 6  
Homework

Name:  
Date:

Below a letter written by John Adams in 1815. At this time, John Adams is eighty years old and he is writing to his grandsons, George Washington Adams and John Adams 2nd, as they are traveling to Europe.

Quincy May 3rd. 1815

*Dear George and John*

*I adress myself to both of you as equally dear to me and because the difficulty with which I write, will not allow me to write seperately to each. Our anxiety for you and for your Father Mother, Brother, Uncle Aunt and little first and Second Cousin: have been greater than you can conceive. Some relief however We have received from Vessels you met at Sea, one of which brought a Letter from Mr. Ticknor to his Father and another from Mr. Everett to his mother, both agreeing that you were all well and you pursued your Studies as you ought. You have now been out Eighteen days and may be near the Port of your destination. You will find yourselves on your Arrival at Liverpool in a new World. Every thing will surprise you. Be upon your guard. Remember your youth and inexperience, your total Ignorance of the great World, be always modest, ingenuous, teachable, never assuming or forward, treat all People with respect; preserve the Character of youthful Americans, let nothing unbecoming ever escape your lips or your Behaviour. You have Characters to Support, Reputations to acquire; I may Say, you have the Character of your Country, at least of its Chil[d]hood and youth to Support.*

*I could have wished that you Should have read before your departure Dr. Watts's Improvement of the Mind and even Mr. Lock's conduct of the Understanding. You will there find better Advice than I can give you.*

*I wish you to have each a Pencil Book, always in your Pockett, by which you may minute on the Spot any remarkable thing you may See or hear. A pocket Ink horn, any cheap thing of the kind, and a Sheet or two of paper, ought always to be about you. A Journal; a Diary is indispensable. "Studium Sine Calamo, Somnium." Without a minute Diary, your Travels, will be no better than the flight of Birds, through the Air. They will leave no trace behind them. Whatever you write preserve. I have burned, Bushells of my Silly notes, in fitts of Impatience and humiliation, which I would now give anything to recover. "These fair Creature are thyself." And would be more useful and influential in Self Examination than all the Sermons of the Clergy.*

*Enter into no disputes, upon public affairs, national or European. Say you are too young, too inexperienced, too little read, and too ill informed, to hazard your Judgment on any of these great Things. Leave to your Father the Interests and honor of your Country. There they will be Safe. Be not provoked by any misrepresentations of your Country. This is a hard Lesson but you must learn it.*

*Write to me my dear Boys by every Ship. While my heart beats it will be anxious for your good Behaviour and consequent happy and useful Lives.*

*John Adams*

John Adams to George Washington Adams and John Adams 2d., 3 May 1815 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://masshist.org/digitadams>.

To view a digital image of this letter, go to <http://www.masshist.org/adams/apmanuscripts/JA1815May3p1lg.html>

1. What is John Adams’s message to his grandsons?

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2. Why do you think it is important for John Adams to communicate this message to his grandsons?

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Lesson 7  
K - W - L  
Chart

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic:

John Quincy Adams.

<b>K</b> What do you already know?	<b>W</b> What do you want to know?	<b>L</b> What did you learn?

Lesson 7  
Classwork

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The Life of John Quincy Adams

1767 – 1848

John Quincy Adams was born on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1797 in Braintree., Mass. He was the second oldest child of John and Abigail Adams. At the age of eight, he watched the Battle of Bunker Hill with his mother. He traveled to Europe at the age of eleven and would learn to speak more than one language. At fourteen, he attended Leyden University in the Netherlands. He married Louisa Catherine Johnson in 1787 and they had four children. All of their children would die by 1834, except for their third oldest child, Charles Francis Adams. John Quincy Adams would live to be eighty and his son Charles would live a long life as well.

Here are some of the things John Quincy Adams did during his lifetime:

- In 1794, President George Washington appoints him minister to the Netherlands.
- In 1802, he becomes a member of the Massachusetts State Senate.
- In 1803, he is elected to the United States Senate and supports the Louisiana Purchase when other representatives of Massachusetts do not.
- In 1811, the President of the United States, James Madison, requests he serve on the Supreme Court, but he declines.

Using the website listed below, you and your partner must answer the questions about John Quincy Adams his life and career.

- Go to [www.masshist.org](http://www.masshist.org)
- Click on Adams Family papers
- Click on TimeLine
- Answer each question in a complete sentence and in your own words.

1. What does John Quincy Adams sign in 1814?

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2. In 1817, what appointment does the U.S. President give John Quincy Adams? Who holds this position today?

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3. What agreement does he make with Spain in 1819?

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4. What happens to Adams in November of 1824 and February of 1825?

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5. Make a list of three goals he wants to accomplish in this new role.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

6. What takes place over a year later, on Independence Day?

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7. What happens to John Quincy Adams in 1828?

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8. Two years later, what is his position and how many years will he hold this position?

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9. In 1835 what does John Quincy Adams help to create? Have you heard of it? If you have explain what it is.

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10. What happens in May of 1836?

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11. Make a list of three things John Quincy Adams does between 1841 and 1848 that you think are very important and explain why.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

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Lesson 8  
Classwork

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the information on the Gag Rule from the National Archives at [http://www.archives.gov/exhibit\\_hall/treasures\\_of\\_congress/Images/page\\_10.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/treasures_of_congress/Images/page_10.html)

From the time the Gag Rule was passed in the House of Representatives in 1836, John Quincy Adams began a campaign to have the ruling revoked. Nine years later, he succeeded and the Gag Rule was rescinded.

By the time the Gag Rule was repealed, John Quincy Adams would only serve three more years in Congress. He would pass away in February of 1848, but it is clear that even in his old age he continued to fight for justice.

Below is a portion of John Quincy Adams' diary entry from March 29th, 1841. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

(The underlines have been added by the creator of this worksheet to facilitate the activities in the lesson)

*Washington, Mon. 29 March 1841*

*[. . .] I am yet to revise for publication my argument in the case of the Amistad Africans, and in merely glancing over the Parliamentary slave – trade papers lent me by Mr. Fox, I find impulses of duty upon my conscience, which I can not resist, while on the other hand, the magnitude, the danger, the insurmountable burden of labour to be encountered in the undertaking to touch upon the slave-trade. No one else will undertake it. No one but a Spirit unconquerable by Man, Woman or Fiend, can undertake it, but with the heart of Martyrdom [. . .] to put down the African Slave trade—and what can I upon the verge on my seventy-fourth birthday, with a shaking hand, a darkening eye, a drowsy brain and with all my faculties, dropping from me, one by one, as the teeth are dropping from my head, what can I do for the cause of God and Man? for the progress of human emancipation? for the suppression of the African slave-trade? Yet my conscience presses me on – let me but die upon the breach.*

John Quincy Adams Diary. Vol. 41: 292, *The Diaries of John Quincy Adams: A Digital Collection*. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/>

To view a digital image of this document, go to: [http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/doc.cfm?id=jqad41\\_292](http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/doc.cfm?id=jqad41_292)

1. Review the first underlined phrase. What do you think John Quincy Adams means?

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2. In your life, do you feel a sense of duty? What do you feel obligated to do with your life?

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3. What is John Quincy Adams considering as he writes the next phrase that has been double underlined?

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4. From the diary excerpt, identify two reasons that John Quincy Adams may not get involved with the slave trade issue.

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5. In the end, do you think John Quincy Adams will fight to eradicate the slave trade? Use a quotation from the diary entry to support your answer.

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Lesson 8  
Classwork

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Transatlantic Slave trade was outlawed in 1807. Several countries, including America, Britain, and Spain, agreed to no longer travel to the coast of Africa, capture or buy Africans, bring them across the Atlantic Ocean, and sell the Africans as slaves. This law did not mean that slavery was over. Slavery continued to exist in America for over fifty more years. But after 1807, it was illegal to buy slaves in Africa and transport them across the ocean.

Even though the transatlantic slave trade was illegal, do you think people obeyed the law?

“Slavery was strictly a business”

Charles Martin, *The Amistad Affair* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 13.

1. What do you think about the above quotation? Why is it true? Why do you agree or disagree with it?

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2. Review the expense reports from *The Amistad Affair* (pp. 13-15). Would you go against the law, and risk your life to make a three month voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, to become instantly wealthy? Explain your answer.

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- If you could make \$40,000 after only three months of work, would you take the risk and trade slaves?
  - What business would you practice today to become instantly wealthy?
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The Africans who became known as the *Amistad* captives were from the West Coast of Africa. Many of them did not come from the same tribe or village. Most were probably from the Gallinas coast and the colony of Sierra Leone where an infamous Spanish slave trader named Pedro Blanco dominated slave trading. On an island in the Gallinas called Lomboko, Pedro Blanco loaded a ship with African captives and sent it off to the Americas.

Once the ship arrived in Havana, Cuba, a Spaniard named Jose Ruiz purchased forty-nine Africans and another Spaniard, Pedro Montes, bought four African children. They chartered Ramon Ferrer, the owner and captain of the *Amistad*, to take them along with their “property” to Puerto Principe on the other side of the Cuban island.

On June 30, 1839, as they were traveling to Puerto Principe, there was a mutiny by the Africans on the *Amistad*. Led by Sengbe Pieh (better known in U. S. history as Joseph Cinque), the Africans killed Captain Ferrer and his cook, and wounded Pedro Montez. Two Africans were also killed, and two white sailors escaped. Sengbe ordered the two Spaniards, Montes and Ruiz, to steer the ship back to Africa. They did as they were told during the day, but at night, they continued to sail west toward the United States, and away from the continent of Africa. Two months later, an American Navy ship under the command of Lt. Commander Thomas Gedney brought the *Amistad* into port in Connecticut. The Africans were put in jail on charges of murder and mutiny. The Spanish government and Commander Gedney sued for a percentage of the “lost property” that had been recovered, including the “slaves” and other cargo on the ship.



Lesson 9  
Classwork

Name:  
Date:

## Justice for All?

Directions: Answer the questions for both groups involved.

Ruiz and Montes	The Amistad Captives
How were they mistreated?	How were they mistreated?
What did they do wrong?	What did they do wrong?
Why do they deserve justice?	Why do they deserve justice?
If justice is served, what should they receive? Why?	If justice is served, what should they receive? Why?

Which group would you defend in court? Choose one side only.

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**What is your reason for choosing this side?**

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**Strategy: What laws do you know of today that would support your above statement?**

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Lesson 9  
Classwork

Name:  
Date:

## The Magna Carta

The Magna Carta, or the Great Charter is a legal document that is a symbol of liberty and justice. The Magna Carta was written in 1215 by noblemen in England and signed by King John. In general, the document stated that the King had to abide by certain rules instead of doing whatever he wanted. For example, the King had to have the consent of others before he could do certain things like raise taxes or collect fees.

Part I: Here is a list of laws from the Magna Carta. For each one, write the reason you think the law was needed at the time.

1. "No man shall be forced to perform more service for a knight's fee or other free holding of land than is due from it."

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2. "No one can levy an aid from his free men except to ransom his person, make his eldest son a knight and to marry his eldest daughter."

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3. "There shall be a standard measurement for wine, ale and corn throughout the kingdom. There shall be a standard width for cloth...weights are to be standard similarly."

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Part II: What do these laws mean? Do they sound familiar?

1. "No freeman shall be seized or imprisoned or stripped of his rights or possessions or outlawed or exiled except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land."

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2. "To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice."

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**Part III: Using the handout titled, "England in 1215" \*, write the reason the following items were written into the Magna Carta.**

a. weights and measures

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b. wages

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c. fines

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**Part IV: Using the second handout titled, "Magna Carta, What it was and What it was not",\* write a definition or a description of the following terms.**

a. trial by jury

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b. habeas corpus

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(from John Langdon-Davie, ed. *Magna Carta: A Collection of Contemporary Documents, Jackdaw No. 3* (New York: Jackdaw Publications, 1972))

Lesson 9  
Homework

Name:  
Date:

The writ of *habeas corpus* was used in the defense of the *Amistad* captives. The lawyers for the Africans argued that because the Africans were kidnapped from their homeland unlawfully, their imprisonment in a Connecticut jail was also illegal and they should be allowed to return to Africa. Their lawyer Roger Baldwin made this argument all the way to the Supreme Court. John Quincy Adams also presented an opening statement before the Court. By the time the case reached the Supreme Court, however, some of the Africans had died.

Below is an excerpt from John Quincy Adams's diary. The entry was made a month before he presented his statement to the Supreme Court on behalf of the *Amistad* captives. The entry mentions *The Antelope*. This was a court case very similar to the *Amistad*, but it occurred nineteen years earlier.

When he wrote this entry, John Quincy Adams was seventy-three years old.

(The underlines do not appear in the original manuscript. They have been added by the creator of this worksheet to facilitate the lesson)

*January 14, 1841*

*[. . . ] I went therefore into the Supreme Court library room and took out the volume of Wheaton's Reports containing the case of the Antelope — I read as much of it as I could — and longed to comment upon it as I could — but I have neither time nor head for it — nothing but the heart. [. . .]*

John Quincy Adams Diary, Vol. 41: 218, *The Diaries of John Quincy Adams: A Digital Collection*, Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/>

To view a digital image of this document, go to: [http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/doc.cfm?id=jqad41\\_218](http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/doc.cfm?id=jqad41_218)

1. What do you think John Q. Adams meant when he wrote what is underlined above ?

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## Lesson 9 Homework

*January 16, 1841*

*This day the motion signed by Mr. Baldwin and myself and filed by him in the Supreme Court to dismiss the appeal by the United States from the Decree of the District and Circuit Courts, in the case of the Amistad captives, was to have been argued Saturday being by the rules of the Court the weekly day for the argument of motions – I was not half prepared and went to the Court with a heavy heart, full of undigested thoughts of the justice of my cause; and deeply desponding of my ability to sustain it. When the court was opened the Chief Justice, Roger B. Taney said that the court had thought it best to postpone the Amistad case to await the arrival of Judge Story, who was expected to her here on Monday or Tuesday [...]. The postponement of the case afforded me a momentary relief, but, left a state of suspense scarcely less distressing than the agony of the ordeal itself.*

John Quincy Adams Diary, Vol. 41: 220, *The Diaries of John Quincy Adams: A Digital Collection*, Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/>

To view a digital image of this document, go to: [http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/doc.cfm?id=jqad41\\_220](http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/doc.cfm?id=jqad41_220)

1. What do you think he means by “the justice of my cause?”

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Now read the following excerpt from the opening statement to the Supreme Court by John Quincy Adams. Then answer the question below.

ARGUMENT  
OF  
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

May it please your Honors —

In rising to address this Court as one of its attorneys and counsellors, regularly admitted at a great distance of time, I feel that an apology might well be expected where I shall perhaps be more likely to exhibit at once the infirmities of age and the inexperience of youth, than to render those services to the individuals whose lives and liberties are at the disposal of this Court which I would most earnestly desire to render. But as I am unwilling to employ one moment of the time of the Court in anything that regards my own personal situation, I shall reserve what few

observations I may think necessary to offer as an apology till the close of my argument on the merits of the question.

I therefore proceed immediately to say that, in a consideration of this case, I derive, in the distress I feel both for myself and my clients, consolation from two sources—first, that the rights of my clients to their lives and liberties have already been defended by my learned friend and colleague in so able and complete a manner as leaves me scarcely anything to say, and I feel that such full justice has been done to their interests, that any fault or imperfection of mine will merely be attributed to its true cause; and secondly, I derive consolation from the thought that this Court is a Court of JUSTICE. And in saying so very trivial a thing, I should not on any other occasion, perhaps, be warranted in asking the Court to consider what justice is. Justice, as defined in the Institutes of Justinian, nearly 2000 years ago, and as it is felt and understood by all who understand human relations and human rights, is—

“Constans et perpetuá voluntas, jus suum cuique tribuendi.”

“The constant and perpetual will to secure to every one his own right.”

And in a Court of Justice, where there are two parties present, justice demands that the rights of each party should be allowed to himself, as well as that each party has a right, to be secured and protected by the Court. This observation is important, because I appear here on the behalf of thirty-six individuals, the life and liberty of every one of whom depend on the decision of this Court. The Court, therefore, I trust, in deciding this case, will form no lumping judgment on these thirty-six individuals, but will act on the consideration that the life and the liberty of every one of them must be determined by its decision for himself alone.

John Quincy Adams, *Argument of John Quincy Adams Before the Supreme Court of the United States, in the Case of the U. S. Appellants, vs. Cinque, and others, Africans, captured in the Schooner Amistad . . .*, (New York: S.W. Benedict, 1841).

**Write three things John Quincy Adams says Justice is or should allow.**

a.

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b.

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c.

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Lesson 10  
Classwork

Name:  
Date:

“Make justice run down our streets as a stream”

(John Quincy Adams to Hon. Oliver Wolcott, 16 April 1801, Adams Family Papers, Mass. Historical Society)

Read the following diary entry John Quincy Adams wrote the day he presented his opening argument to the Supreme Court of the United States. Then answer the questions that follow.

*Washington, Wednesday, February 24, 1841*

[. . .] *When that was opened Josiah Randall and Mr. Polk now a Clerk in the Department of War were admitted as Attornies and counsellors of the Court and Chief Justice Taney announced to me that the Court were ready to hear me. The judges present were Taney, Story, Thompson, McLean, Baldwin, Wayne Barbaum and Catron. Judge Mc Kinlay has been present during any part of this trial. The courtroom was full, but not crowded and there were not many Ladies. I had been deeply distressed and agitated till the moment when I rose, and then my spirit did not sink within me-with grateful heart for aid from above, though in humiliation for the weakness incident to the limits of my powers, I spoke four hours and a half with sufficient method and order to witness little flagging of attention by the judges or the auditory, till at half past 3 O’Clock, when the Chief Justice said the Court would hear me further to-morrow. Mr. Baldwin mentioned that he would stay and hear me to morrow, but that he should be obliged to leave the city on Friday to return home. The structure of my argument so far as I have yet proceeded is perfectly simple and comprehensive-needing no artificial division into distinct points, but admitting the steady and undeviating pursuit of one fundamental principle, the ministraton of Justice. I then assigned my reason for invoking Justice, specially aware that this was always the duty of the court; but because an immense array of power, the executive administration investigated the minister of a foreign nation hadsbbeen brought to bear in this case on the side of injustice - I then commenced a review of the Correspondence between the Secretary of State and the Spanish Ministers Calderon and Argail, which I analyzed with critical research as far as I was able, but with not half the acuteness nor with a tenth part of the vigour which I would have applied had they been at my command-[. . .]*

John Quincy Adams, *The Diaries of John Quincy Adams: A Digital Collection* (Boston, Mass.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2008) <http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries>

1. What is your definition of justice?

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2. Where do you or did you get your ideas about justice? Explain

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Read the following letter John Quincy Adams wrote to his son Charles Francis Adams a couple of months after defending the *Amistad* captives.

*Washington 14 April 1841*

*My dear Charles,*

*There is a saying of some Juvenalian satirist that the most important part of a woman's Letter is always to be found in the Postscript, but I have fallen short even of the female capacity of coming to a point; for in my last letter intended as answer to yours of the 18<sup>th</sup> of last month, I did not leave room even for a Postscript, to touch upon the most important points and they were accordingly overlooked—*

*There are first the Letters of my mother – and secondly Mr. Grace's Heraldry. As to the next Edition of the Letters, I give you leave to select such of my fathers as you think suitable for publication. I suppose I shall be with you before they will be wanted by the printer- but if not I have entire confidence in your judgement and leave all to your discretion\_\_*

*As to Mr. Grace's blazoning [?] it is all Arabic or Phrenology to me. I should be willing to admit Mr. Grace as at least a first cousin, and would constitute him Garter*

*King at arms to all the great families, with whom he links us, if he could teach me but the alphabet of the heraldic language which I never learnt. In the year 1783, I saw in the British Museum that signature and seal of Saer de Quincy appended to the original parchment of Magna Charta—I knew before, that we claimed to be lineally descended from him, but until then I had never thought of it as a thing to be remembered— I was then sixteen years of age and on seeing that signature and Seal I said to myself, there is blood of that man and there is blood of John Adams flowing in my veins. Can that blood ever compromise with arbitrary imprisonment?*

*You remember that last fall in some of our arguments about the capture of the Amistad Africans by Lt. Gedney on the soil of Long Island, and their transportation to New London without warrant from a Civil Magistrate, I seemed to you over tenacious of the great principles of Magna Carta, and over heated with indignation, at what I considered a gross violation of it in that case— And God knows what you and others thought of me when I consented to go before the Supreme Court of the United States to plead for the lives and liberty of thirty six Negroes against the whole Executive power of this Union, bent upon their destruction— Now I must tell you that my opinions and my feelings at that time were not a little influenced by reminiscences of the Seal and Signature of Saer de Quincy appended to the old parchment in the British Museum, which I had seen in 1783— You tell me that it is a great relief to you, that my cause is settled and well settled: and you warn me against the repetition of an experiment so afflictive to my family— I thank you for the warning;*

*“And this commandment all alone shall live*

*“Within the book and volume of my brain*

*“Unmixed with base matter”*

*The agony of soul that I endured [and] suffered from the day that I pledged my faith, to argue the cause of the Africans, before the Supreme Court till that when I heard Judge Story deliver the opinion and decree of the Court, was chiefly occasioned by the reprobation of my own family, both of my opinions and my conduct, and their [fear?] at the calamities which they anticipated they would bring upon them. The Signature and Seal of Saer de Quincy to the old parchment were with a clear conscience almost my only support and encouragement, under the pressure of a burden upon my thought that I was to plead for more, much more than my own life; and I promise you that I never will repeat the experiment, unless it should again be in the decrees of Providence so to fashion the course of events as to remind me with irresistible impulse of Magna Carta, Saer de Quincy and the old Parchment in the British Museum.*

As part of your answer for each of the following questions, be sure to explain what you mean. Write your answers in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What are the risks you take when you defend someone who is unpopular?
2. Is the risk worth it when your family and friends do not support you? Explain.
3. Is the risk worth it if you look bad?
4. Is the risk worth it when your country looks bad?
5. What is more important? That the innocent are free or that punishment is handed out when there has been a crime committed?

### Is there a Reward for Defending Justice?

*Roger S. Baldwin Esq. New Haven  
Washington 9. March 1841.*

*Dear Sir*

*The decision of the Supreme Court in the Case of the Amistad has this moment been delivered by Judge Story —The Captives are free—*

*The decision of the District Court placing them at the disposal of the President of the United States to be sent to Africa is reversed—They are to be discharged as free —  
The rest of the decision of the Courts below including Lieutenants Gedney's claim for Salvage affirmed—*

*I requested the clerk Mr. Carroll to transmit the order of the Court to the Marshal as soon as possible —He says it can not be issued till after the Court rises tomorrow.*

*Yours in great haste and great joy—*

John Quincy Adams to Roger S. Baldwin, 9 March 1841, Letterbook 20 (Nov. 1839 – 19 Nov. 1845 “Private”), Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

*Lewis Tappan Esqr. New York  
Washington 9 March 1841*

*Dear Sir,*

*The captives are free!—*

*The part of the decree of the District Court which placed them at the disposal of the President of the United States to be sent to Africa is reversed.—They are to be discharged from the custody of the Marshal—free —*

*The rest of the decision of the Courts below is affirmed —*

*“Not unto us—Not unto us”*

*But thanks—thanks—in the name of humanity and justice to you*

John Quincy Adams to Lewis Tappan, 9 March 1841, Letterbook 20 (Nov. 1839 – 19 Nov. 1845 “Private”), Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

In a letter to Roger Baldwin, the attorney for the *Amistad* captives, John Quincy Adams included this in the postscript:

*Roger S. Baldwin, Esqr. New Haven*

*Washington 25 Janry. 1841*

*[. . .]*

*P.S. Will you have the goodness to inform Kale and Kinna, that I have received their Letters with great satisfaction. Let them know that I think of them, hope for them, and pray for them, night and day. They have made so great progress in their studies that I exhort them to persevere in them with unabating assiduity.*

John Quincy Adams to Roger S. Baldwin, 25 January 1841, Letterbook 20 (Nov. 1839 – 19 Nov. 1845 “Private”), Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

See the letters that were written to John Quincy Adams by Kinna and Kale, two children on the *Amistad*.

Kinna: <http://www.masshist.org/cabinet/january2003/kinna.htm>

Kale: <http://www.masshist.org/cabinet/january2003/kale.htm>

**Class Discussion:** Answer these questions in preparation for a class discussion.

1. Are there rewards for standing for justice?

2. Do the rewards outweigh the sacrifices made?

Lesson 10  
Homework

Name:  
Date:

## Final Project

### Assignment:

Imagine you are a representative of the State of Massachusetts and you must give a speech about John Adams, John Quincy Adams and justice.

Review information gathered from the website, primary source documents, the K-W-L charts, handouts, classwork and homework assignments as well as other information to help you write about these two men and their ideas about justice. It is not a report about their lives, but about their personal beliefs.

The speech must have:

- A title
- An opening paragraph that grabs the attention of the audience
- A reference to at least two primary source documents ( letters, diaries etc.)
- At least two quotations from each of the men

The documents and quotations used in the speech must reveal what each man believed about justice.