

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 5th, 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 5th, 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 11th, 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.