



## John Adams | Lesson Plan

How did John Adams contribute to the founding of the United States?

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Students will explore John Adams' pivotal role in advocating for American independence, his contributions as a diplomat, and his leadership as the second President of the United States. They will understand how Adams' decisions helped shape the nation's early years and set precedents for future governance.

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify the key life events of John Adams.
- Explain John Adams' contributions to American independence and his role in the early U.S. government.
- Describe the impact of John Adams' presidency on U.S. foreign policy and political development.
- Evaluate the significance of John Adams' leadership in maintaining peace and advocating for principle-based governance.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Continental Congress:** The assembly of delegates from the American colonies that managed the colonial war effort against Britain and declared independence.
- **Declaration of Independence:** The document declaring American independence from Britain, adopted on July 4, 1776.
- **Quasi-War:** An undeclared naval conflict between the United States and France from 1798 to 1800.
- **Alien and Sedition Acts:** Laws passed in 1798 allowing the government to deport foreigners and restricting speech critical of the government.
- **Federalist Party:** The political party led by John Adams and Alexander Hamilton that supported a strong national government.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2

**Academic Subject Areas:** Biography, U.S. Presidents, Historical Figures

### What You'll Need

- Video: Guess or Mess: John Adams (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: Guess or Mess: John Adams (Click [Here](#))
- PragerU Kids biographical book: John Adams (Download [Here](#))
- Large paper or poster board for each group, along with markers



## Lesson Plan: Watch and Complete (45 minutes)

### **Introduction to John Adams: (5 minutes)**

1. Begin with a brief discussion about the Founding Fathers and their contributions to American independence. Ask students if they know any key figures who played roles in declaring independence or forming the early government.
2. Display the John Adams digital book using an electronic device. Briefly highlight Adams' significance as the 2nd President, his advocacy for independence, and his leadership in early American diplomacy and governance. Show images from the digital book to give a visual overview of his life and achievements.

### **Adams History Huddle: (25 minutes)**

1. Read the "Meet John Adams" section on page 2 together as a class, with the teacher leading this page to model fluent reading and set the tone for the lesson.
2. After completing the teacher-led reading, explain that students will now explore other key aspects of Adams' life in small groups.
3. Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different section of the digital book to explore:
  - Group 1: *Young John, Interesting Facts* (page 3)
  - Group 2: *Early Career, John and Abigail* (page 4)
  - Group 3: *The American Revolution* (page 5)
  - Group 4: *After the War* (page 6)
  - Group 5: *President* (page 7)
  - Group 6: *Retirement, Friends Until the End* (page 8)
  - Group 7: *Legacy* (page 9)
4. Allow time for each group to read their assigned section, taking turns reading aloud. As students read, they should discuss the main ideas.
5. Provide each group with a large piece of paper or a poster board and markers to write down key points and any interesting facts or quotes they find.
6. Allow each group one to two minutes to present their findings to the class. After each presentation, provide time for classmates to ask questions and discuss the content.

### **Worksheet Workshop: (15 minutes)**

1. Hand out individual copies of the worksheet to each student. Explain how to fill out each section of the worksheet with these instructions:
2. **Timeline:** Students should select key dates and events mentioned throughout the digital book. The following are recommendations, but the teacher and students can use other dates mentioned in the book:
  - 1735 - Birth of John Adams
  - 1776 - Declaration of Independence
  - 1797-1801 - Presidency
  - 1800 - Treaty of Mortefontaine (ending Quasi-War with France)

3. **Interesting Quote:** Have students choose a meaningful quote from the book to fill in the quote section on their worksheet.
4. **Interesting Fact:** Ask students to select an interesting fact about John Adams that stood out to them and write it in the space provided.
5. **Vocabulary Builder:** Instruct students to choose a word from the Glossary on page 10 that they find interesting and use it in a sentence that conveys its meaning.
6. **Multiple Choice:** Explain that students should complete the multiple-choice section of the worksheet individually. (Note: The multiple-choice section corresponds to the Guess or Mess episode about John Adams and can also be used to play along while watching. See “Extension Activity” below.)

### **Reflection Round-Up: (10 minutes)**

1. Briefly summarize the key points covered about John Adams, focusing on his life, contributions to American independence, and his presidency.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to recall one fact about John Adams and share it with a partner. Encourage them to discuss why that fact was significant.
3. Give each student a sticky note or index card and ask them to answer one of these three sample reflection questions:
  - What did you find most interesting about John Adams?
  - How do you think Adams’ decision to avoid war with France impacted the United States?
  - Can you think of a modern issue that relates to something John Adams dealt with?
4. **Bonus Activities:** If time allows, let students complete the puzzle on page 2 by finding hidden letters throughout the book. They can also explore and engage with other interactive activities included in the book.

### **Extension Activity: (20 minutes)**

*Guess or Mess* Trivia Show: After the lesson, students can participate in the *Guess or Mess* trivia show for John Adams—direct students to the multiple-choice section of the worksheet. Students can play along with the contestants to see if they can answer the trivia questions correctly.

### **PragerU 5-Minute Videos:**

Did you know that PragerU has a comprehensive video catalog of U.S. Presidents in an easy-to-watch 5-minute format? Enhance this lesson plan with one of our insightful, engaging, and educational videos, which provide students with a deeper dive into the lives and legacies of America’s leaders. To view *John Adams & Virtue: Making America*, click [here](#).

### **Don’t have time for a full lesson? Quick Activity (30 minutes)**

Read the *John Adams* book together as a class, with students taking turns reading aloud. Then, watch the *Guess or Mess* video and play along with the trivia questions.