



PROFILES IN COURAGE

Teacher's Guide

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

CREDITS:

Starring Douglas Campbell, Nancy Wickwire, Roland Winters, Alan Hewitt, Parley Baer, Henry Beckman, and Laurence Naismith. Written by Andy Lewis. Directed by Michael Ritchie. Produced by Gordon Oliver and Robert Saudek Associates. Inspired by John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning book. **50 minutes.** Guide prepared for Social Studies School Service by Robert D. Barnes, 1983.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the meaning of placing principle before party or region.
- To examine the concepts of free trade and freedom of the seas.
- To discuss problems and opportunities presented by expansion and technology.
- To understand the meaning of moral courage.

BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS:

On June 22, 1807, off the Virginia Capes, the British *H.M.S. Leopard* fired on the American frigate *Chesapeake*. In this unprovoked, peacetime attack, three American sailors were killed, eighteen wounded, and four removed. This was not the first such incident; indeed, in the preceding years as many as 5,000 "American" sailors had been impressed by the British.

American frustration and anger ran high, as the British acted with impunity because they were strong and we were weak. In 1807 the United States had 16 ships of battle, the British more than a thousand. After the *Leopard* incident there were strong calls for action and response on the part of the Republican followers of President Jefferson; but in New England, heavily dependent on trade and cooperation with the British, Federalists were more philo-

sophical. The exception was John Quincy Adams. Adams angrily joined Republican calls for a town meeting in Boston to protest the British attack. His fellow Federalists saw such action as precipitous and counter to New England's best interest.

Yet Adams persisted with this matter of "principle," even when advised by his father, the former president, that "sometimes a man can hold principle quietly."

British harassment and interference with American commerce continued. They remained unresponsive to American protests. It was time for action.

At a private "oval office" meeting with Jefferson, Adams was shocked at the president's suggestion of a total embargo with all of Europe. Adams wanted to punish the British, but felt the cost of an embargo to New England would be too high. Jefferson challenged: "When it comes to the hard business...do you want impressment to stop or not? I believe you have a sense of this country, this whole country."

Jefferson had hooked Adams. Indeed, Adams did have a "sense of country" that was stronger than his loyalty to his New England region. When he urged his fellow New England senators to go along with the embargo, it was country, growth, and change that he used as his themes.

The senators were not impressed. Pickering was blunt: "If you fail us sir, you will not even be re-elected Senator. We can bring it to pass."

Adams not only supported Jefferson's embargo bill, he managed it for the President in the Senate. The bill passed and became law. Adams was defeated for re-election, but he served his country for 31 more years; including as President of the United States and later as a Congressman.

VOCABULARY:

The following words and phrases appear in the program. Teachers may wish to check for student understanding:

impressment	confiscate
freedom of the seas	inhabitation
whistle him back	secession
amiability	Jefferson's creature
tact	virtuous
prudent	quakings of the
Republican	firmament
Federalist	a political man
esteemed	vex
juncture	ruffian
grievances	austere
founded	embargo

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why were the New England Federalists willing to "play down" British acts of violence against American men and ships?
2. Senator Pickering said of Adams: "Someday I may have to whistle him back. I know the tune he listens to...ambition!" What did Pickering mean? Was he at least partly correct? Explain.
3. When Jefferson recommended a total embargo to Congress, what was Senator Hillhouse's reaction? What accusations did he make against Adams?
4. Jefferson told Adams: "I claim your conscience at great cost to yourself, knowing you can't refuse me." What was Jefferson's point? Was he correct? Explain.
5. Jefferson admonished Adams to express his support of the law in New England, because they would listen to him there as to no one else. He said of Adams: "They'll hate him for it, as a man hates conscience, but they'll listen because they know he speaks only reason." Can you think of situations where you have hated the message and resented the messenger, but known that he

or she was right? Give an example.

6. After the passage of the embargo, Adams commented to his wife: "I'm snagged on my character. No, I'm nailed to it." What did Adams mean? How would you describe Adam's character? What were his weaknesses? His strengths? Are you "nailed" to your character?

ACTIVITY:

Have students find ten imported items at home. Their parents can help them make a list of things like imported stereo components, kitchenware, clothes, cars, and so on. Discuss the implications of an embargo of all foreign manufactured goods.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION:

1. Foreseeing that an unanticipated benefit would result from the embargo, Jefferson wrote to his old friend Lafayette:

"Our Embargo...has set us all on domestic manufactures, and I will verily believe, reduce our future demands on England fully one half."

Can Jefferson's belief be supported through your careful research? Was he overly optimistic? Explain.

2. Though we carry on a lively foreign trade, America is constantly seeking new ways to work toward economic self-sufficiency. Discover some of the areas where we are moving toward either greater independence or dependence. Should we work to achieve full economic independence? Explain.
3. Explore the phrase, "freedom of the sea." What national and international laws exist to protect or restrict this concept? Can you identify any recent disputes involving "freedom of the seas"?