Handout D—Discussion Guide

1. Adams is referring to the Congress’s resolution to declare independence from Britain.
2. He mentions Otis’s argument against writs of assistance as the beginning point of the American Revolution, the resolution for independence being the culmination.
3. Adams predicts that July 2 will be celebrated as the anniversary festival (or Independence Day).
4. Suggested responses: humbled, cautious, content, proud, or satisfied
5. Suggested responses: jubilant, happy, enthusiastic, pleased, or realistic
6. Adams believes there will be challenges ahead. He expects that it will require sacrifice and hard work to maintain what they have just created. But he welcomes the struggle and believes the new nation will be stronger for it.
7. Adams means that suffering builds character in people as well as in nations. The struggles each individual will face, either as a soldier, elected office-holder, or citizen will mirror the struggles the new nation will face. Both will be stronger—as a furnace or kiln refines and strengthens a piece of pottery.
8. Students should provide evidence for their reasoning. Letter A was written in the morning of July 3, 1776 and Letter B in the evening of July 3, 1776.
9. Private letters, particularly those written to intimates, may be likely to reveal an individual’s true feelings more than something produced for public display. Other students will say that elected officials, as John Adams was when he wrote these letters, are more likely to reveal vulnerabilities and doubts about public policy when they are writing private letters. Some students may suggest that personal writings may also be written for posterity.

Handout A—Samuel Adams

(1722–1803)

1. Adams began to study law but soon turned to a career in business instead. He worked for a time as a clerk for a well-known Boston merchant. When Adams’s father died in 1748, he took over the family brewery. But Adams was a poor manager, and the brewery went bankrupt. Adams next took a job as a colonial tax collector, but he failed in this position too.
2. Adams appealed to both natural and English rights. In “Resolutions of the Boston Town Meeting,” he argued that the law of nature dictated that “no law of the society can be binding on any individual without his consent.” The colonists of Massachusetts, Adams held, were not represented in Parliament. Therefore, the British government could not tax them. In “The Rights of the Colonists,” Adams claimed that the American colonists were “entitled, to all the natural, essential, inherent, and inseparable rights, liberties, and privileges of subjects born in Great Britain.”
3. Adams signed the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation and helped to write the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780.
4. Adams hoped that the country would forever be an “asylum on earth for civil and religious liberty” and “never cease to be free and independent.” He hoped that “Temperance,” “Frugality,” and the old republican spirit of virtuous self-sacrifice for the common good would characterize American society.
5. During the 1760s, Adams became a leader of the Patriot resistance to the British government’s attempt to tax the American colonies. With John Hancock and James Otis, he organized the Sons of Liberty, who took the lead in opposing the Stamp Act of 1765 and the
Townshend Duties of 1767. During the crisis with England, Adams authored many important essays in which he defended American liberty by appealing to the natural and English rights of his fellow colonists. In 1772, Samuel Adams helped to organize Committees of Correspondence across Massachusetts. When Parliament passed the Tea Act the following year, Adams organized the Boston Tea Party. In response, to the Coercive Acts, Adams wrote a letter addressed to all the American colonies in which he called for Americans to unite “in opposition to this violation of the liberties of all.” Elected to the Continental Congress in 1774, Adams became a champion of American independence and signed the Declaration of Independence.

John Dickinson
Handout A—John Dickinson (1732–1808)
1. In 1776, Dickinson still hoped that America and Britain could work out their differences. Dickinson objected to the strong wording of Thomas Jefferson’s draft of the Declaration of Independence. When it became clear that Congress would approve the Declaration, Dickinson left Philadelphia. He could not consent to this fateful step, but he also refused to undermine his countrymen by voting against the measure.
2. In 1786, Dickinson chaired the Annapolis Convention. In 1787, Dickinson headed Delaware’s delegation to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. He favored giving the central government additional powers, but he also wished to preserve the powers of the states. Most of all, Dickinson distrusted any ideas that broke with English and colonial traditions. Illness prevented Dickinson from assuming a larger role in the proceedings at Philadelphia. Nevertheless, Dickinson was one whose views helped produce a document that was acceptable to a broad range of Americans.
3. During the ratification debates, Dickinson composed a series of essays, the Letters of Fabius, in support of the Constitution. The Letters were widely published in 1788. Echoing his words on the floor of the convention, Dickinson advised that the document ought to be tested first: “A little experience will cast more light upon the subject, than a multitude of debates.”
4. Students should recognize the extraordinary amount of writing that Dickinson produced on behalf of American liberty during the Revolutionary period: The Late Regulations Respecting the British Colonies, the resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress, the Letters from a Farmer

Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions
1. Vocabulary
   a. dishonorable
   b. hostile
   c. minimum for survival
   d. until now
   e. uncivilized
   f. disgraceful
   g. approval
   h. effectively

2. Context
   a. Samuel Adams wrote this document.
   b. This document was written in 1774.
   c. The audience for this document was the citizens of Massachusetts and all the other colonies.
   d. The two purposes of this document were to stir opposition to British tyranny and to create a sense of unity among all the colonists.