John Hancock
Handout A—John Hancock (1737–1793)

1. In 1768, British customs officials seized one of Hancock’s merchant vessels, the Liberty. They claimed that the ship’s captain had failed to pay import duties. The captain was following the orders of Hancock, who wanted to challenge the legality of the duties. The incident sparked violence, as the Sons of Liberty organized a mob to protest the Liberty’s seizure. The Liberty incident made Hancock a hero among American Patriots and a nuisance to British authorities.

2. Many thought Hancock was vain and self-important. A member of the elite class and a man of commerce, he did not hesitate to conduct business with English merchants. He was always well groomed and attired in fine clothes. Adams was a failed businessman who cared little for fame or for his personal appearance. A Puritan, he disdained displays of wealth and chided those who purchased “baubles” produced by English manufacturers.

3. Hancock had signed the Articles when he served in the Continental Congress. Fearful of centralized government power, he was at first critical of the Constitution. But Hancock agreed to support ratification. He presided over the Massachusetts ratifying convention in 1788.

4. Hancock put himself at great personal risk by becoming the first person to publicly sign the Declaration of Independence. This made him guilty of treason. Some students may say he relished the bold gesture and the way it added to his reputation as a maverick; others may say it demonstrates his courage and devotion to the cause of American independence.

5. Some will agree with John Adams and argue that Hancock played a key role in the Patriot movement in Boston, providing not only money but also leadership of the resistance. He challenged the power of the British to tax colonial imports in 1768, when his ship, the Liberty, was seized. At the national level, he presided over the Continental Congress and boldly signed the Declaration of Independence. Others will say that he simply wrote checks for Samuel Adams and took his orders.

Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions

1. Vocabulary
   a. declaring
   b. hostility
   c. actions
   d. claims
   e. admirably
   f. persistent
   g. hate
   h. judgment
   i. spiriting

2. Context
   a. John Hancock wrote this document.
   b. This document was written in 1774, on the anniversary of the Boston Massacre.
   c. The audience for this document was the citizens of Boston.
   d. The purpose of this document was to raise anti-British sentiment and support for the Patriot cause.

Handout D—Analysis: John Hancock on the Anniversary of the Boston Massacre

1. “Thank you for reminding our fellow colonists how dangerous standing armies can be. The British troops need to leave.”
2. “I can’t believe this Hancock character won’t back down. He’s talking trash about our troops and encouraging rebellion. He must be stopped!”

Answer Key
3. “I feel so good and appreciated for the risks I take every day to defend my community. I am so glad Hancock is rallying others to support me.”
4. “He needs to take it easy. Why can’t he be more moderate? We can reconcile with Britain. We are Englishmen!”
5. “He is so wrong about me. I am not unfit to live in civil society; I am doing my job. If they’d stop acting like hoodlums, we wouldn’t have to treat them like hoodlums.”
6. “I wouldn’t have minded if he would have addressed the women, sisters, and mothers of the colonies. I also feel vaguely insulted at his calling it ‘effeminate’ to back down.”
7. “Wow, he’s making good points about what government should be about. I think the colonies need to unite against Britain.” Or “He’s being too radical. Massachusetts is risking alienating the other colonies.”

John Jay
Handout A—John Jay (1745–1829)
1. Congress sent Jay to Spain for financial aid and recognition of the new nation, and he was sent to Paris to negotiate a peace treaty with Britain.
2. George Washington appointed Jay to be the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
3. Jay’s Treaty accomplished its goal of avoiding war, but the treaty was unpopular because many people thought it was lopsided, making too many concessions to the British.
4. Jay refused to sign the Declaration of Independence because he believed in the colonies’ historical attachment and loyalty to Britain. He favored a moderate approach and hoped the colonies could reconcile their relationship with Britain. Some students may agree with his decision to hold to his personal convictions even in the face of public pressure. Others may believe he should have yielded more quickly to the majority’s wishes.
5. Throughout his years of public service, Jay had battled against slavery. In 1785, he created the New York Manumission Society that advanced abolition on a local as well as state level through boycotts and lawsuits. As governor, Jay fought for the emancipation of slaves. As a result of consistent efforts, Jay signed an emancipation bill passed by the New York legislature in 1799. His state set an example for the nation.

Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions
1. Vocabulary
   a. agree
   b. entering the country
   c. bringing
   d. able
   e. acceptance
   f. inconsistent
   g. contradiction

2. Context
   a. This document was written in 1819.
   b. John Jay wrote this document.
   c. This is a letter.
   d. The purpose of this document was to express Jay’s position on slavery in the new states.

Handout D—Analysis: Founding Documents
Jay’s main idea: Slavery should not be allowed in the new states, and should be gradually abolished in all the states.
A.
1. Congress has the power to regulate, and it is implicit that Congress can make new regulations for NEW states.
2. Congress can make new regulations for new and old states after 1808.
3. “Persons” means “Slaves.”