

United States v. The Amistad

U.S. Supreme Court

How does the Court's reasoning change once it asks how the Africans came to be held rather than simply who possessed them?

TOTAL TIME	TUMBLETA PASSAGE LOCATION
30 minutes	Majority opinion - unlawful captivity and status of the Africans

TEACHER SETUP

Open the work in the Enhanced Reader and cue the span using the START and END anchors below.

START	these negroes ought to be deemed free
END	the said negroes be declared to be free, and be dismissed from the custody of the Court
PASSAGE ID	sec-amistad-opinion-01

THE MOVE

Analyze how a legal argument turns on reclassifying the facts that control the case.

WHY THIS PASSAGE

The opinion distinguishes lawful property claims from people seized and transported unlawfully. Once the factual category changes, the legal consequences change with it.

MARK

Underline facts about capture and transportation. Circle legal conclusions tied to those facts. Box the point where status is reclassified.

NOTICE

- Which fact makes the ownership claim unstable?
- How does the opinion connect evidence to legal category?
- Why does classification matter more than possession alone?

THINK

Answer provisionally: How does the Court's reasoning change once it asks how the Africans came to be held rather than simply who possessed them? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response. Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and say why.

STRONG ANSWER

The opinion's key move is to treat the Africans' status as a question of unlawful seizure, not ordinary property possession. That factual reclassification changes which legal rules can apply.

EVIDENCE

Use one fact about captivity and one legal consequence.

WATCH FOR

Do not retell the Amistad story. Track the reasoning from fact to legal category.

SOLO

Read independently.

SUPPORTED

Narration + highlighting.

LISTENING

Listen; same evidence task.

STUDENT PAGE · GRADE 12 · LESSON 347

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WORK	United States v. The Amistad
TUMBLETA PASSAGE LOCATION	Majority opinion - unlawful captivity and status of the Africans

Your teacher will open or cue the work in the Enhanced Reader. Use the location and verbatim anchors below to confirm the assigned span.

START

these negroes ought to be deemed free

END

the said negroes be declared to be free, and be dismissed from the custody of the Court READ / LISTEN TO THE ASSIGNED PASSAGE SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration and highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the assigned passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. **MARK** Underline facts about capture and transportation. Circle legal conclusions tied to those facts. Box the point where status is reclassified.
2. **NOTICE** Which fact makes the ownership claim unstable? How does the opinion connect evidence to legal category? Why does classification matter more than possession alone?
3. **THINK** Answer provisionally: How does the Court's reasoning change once it asks how the Africans came to be held rather than simply who possessed them?
4. **WRITE** Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.
5. **CLOSE** Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and say why.