

James Otis challenges searches

1761 | Grade 2 · Read & notice

Words to know

search — look for something

power — the ability to make something happen

limit — a boundary on what is allowed or possible

Look closely



Modern topic illustration created for Massachusetts History Explorers. It is not a historical artifact.

Read the story

James Otis spoke in a Boston court against broad search papers called writs of assistance. Officials used them to search for goods. Otis argued that government power needed limits. He did not win the case.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. What happened in this reading? Tell one fact.
2. Who or what is this reading mostly about?
3. Choose a word from the word bank. Explain it in your own words.
4. Look at the picture and its caption. What does it help you notice? Is it from the time of the event?

Follow-up reading: Otis writes about colonial rights

1764

James Otis wrote about colonists' rights. He questioned taxes made without their consent. People disagreed about Parliament's power. These arguments helped build the road to revolution. A slogan is shorter than a full argument.

How are the two readings alike or different? Tell a partner one connection. Which event came first?

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.2.1: ask and answer questions; RI.2.2: identify a main topic; RI.2.7: use images and words; W.2.2 and SL.2.1: explain and discuss.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: James Otis spoke in a Boston court against broad search papers called writs of assistance. Officials used them to search for goods. Otis argued that government power needed limits. He did not win the case. The argument influenced debates about colonial rights. John Adams remembered it later as important. A later memory is different from a record made on the day of an event.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

Image: Original site illustration.

[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's [HTML page](#). External sources may need adult guidance.