

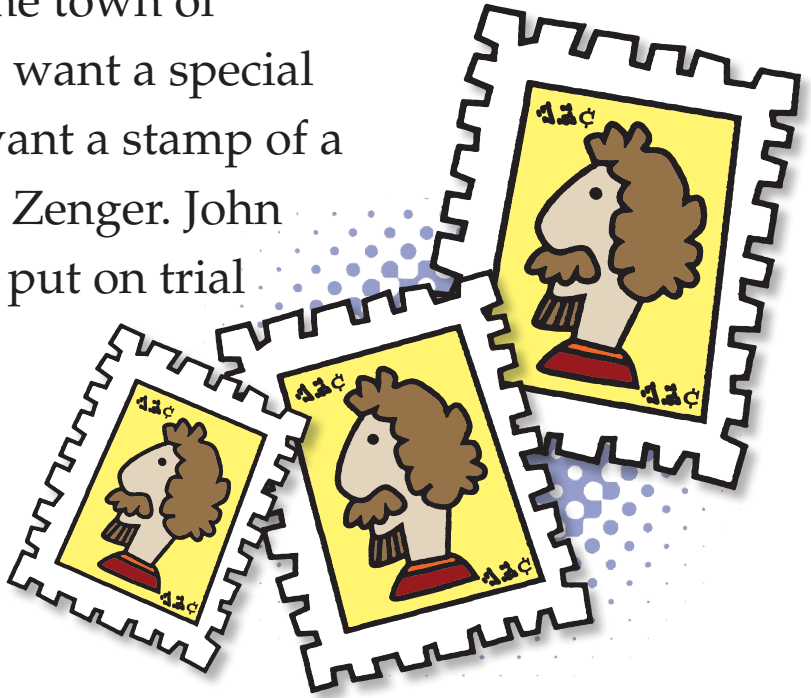
THE TRIAL OF John Peter Zenger

by Lois Grippio



A Stamp for Eastchester

School children in the town of Eastchester, New York, want a special postage stamp. They want a stamp of a man named John Peter Zenger. John Peter Zenger was once put on trial in Eastchester. He was put on trial because he told the truth!



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Make Inferences

Why was the trial of John Peter Zenger unusual?

An Unfair Leader

The trial of John Peter Zenger took place in 1735. America was still part of England. The governor of New York was a man named William Cosby. People in New York did not pick Cosby. He was sent from England.

William Cosby would not let some men vote. This made people in Eastchester very angry. They wanted others to know that Cosby was unfair.



READ & RESPOND

Make Inferences

Why might people want a governor they choose themselves?

John Peter Zenger Speaks Out

John Peter Zenger ran a newspaper. He wrote in his paper about William Cosby. Everyone who read the paper learned of Governor Cosby's unfair actions.

Governor Cosby had Zenger put in jail! He said that the stories in Zenger's newspaper told lies. He claimed that the lies hurt him. Zenger stayed in jail for ten months before he even had a trial.



a printing press



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Make Inferences

Was William Cosby was a good governor? Explain.



Trial by Jury

At last the trial began. A jury would decide if John Peter Zenger was guilty. Did he tell lies that hurt the governor? If he did, the jury would have to say he was guilty.

The jury heard the governor's side of the story first. They heard about Zenger's newspaper stories. They were told that no one had the right to print bad things about the governor.

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Main Ideas and Details

What was the job of the jury in John Peter Zenger's trial?

Zenger's Story

A lawyer told John Peter Zenger's side of the story. "What you heard was true," he said. "The stories in the paper did say bad things about the governor."

The lawyer didn't stop there. "However, the stories were honest," he said. "They told the truth about what Governor Cosby did."



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Make Inferences

If the stories were honest, did John Peter Zenger tell lies?

A Big Decision

Finally, both sides were finished. The people on the jury thought about all they had heard. Then they made their decision.

It only took the jury ten minutes to make up their minds. They said that John Peter Zenger was not guilty!



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Main Ideas and Details

Whom did the jury agree with?



Remembering a Leader

John Peter Zenger was a leader. The men in the jury were leaders, too. They stood up for the right to tell the truth.

That is why the children of Eastchester want a postage stamp. They want to remind us of the trial of John Peter Zenger. They want to remind us of a right that keeps our country strong.

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Make Inferences

Do the children of Eastchester think John Peter Zenger was a good man? Explain.

Reread and Respond



1 How was John Peter Zenger a leader? Explain.

Hint

For clues, see pages 156 and 160.

2 Why do you think the jury took only ten minutes to decide that John Peter Zenger was not guilty?

Hint

For clues, see page 158.

3 How do the children of Eastchester show that they care about people from their town's past?

Hint

For clues, see page 154.