

Words to Know before You Go!

American Revolution

Espionage

Federalist Papers

Ratify

Chief Justice

Patriot

Loyalist

Conspiracy

Fun Facts

John Jay was the eighth of ten children.

Today King's College, the school where John Jay was educated, is called Columbia University.

John was almost kicked out of college when he refused to tell on some of the other students who had broken some furniture.

There were only two people in John's graduating class: Richard Harison and John himself.

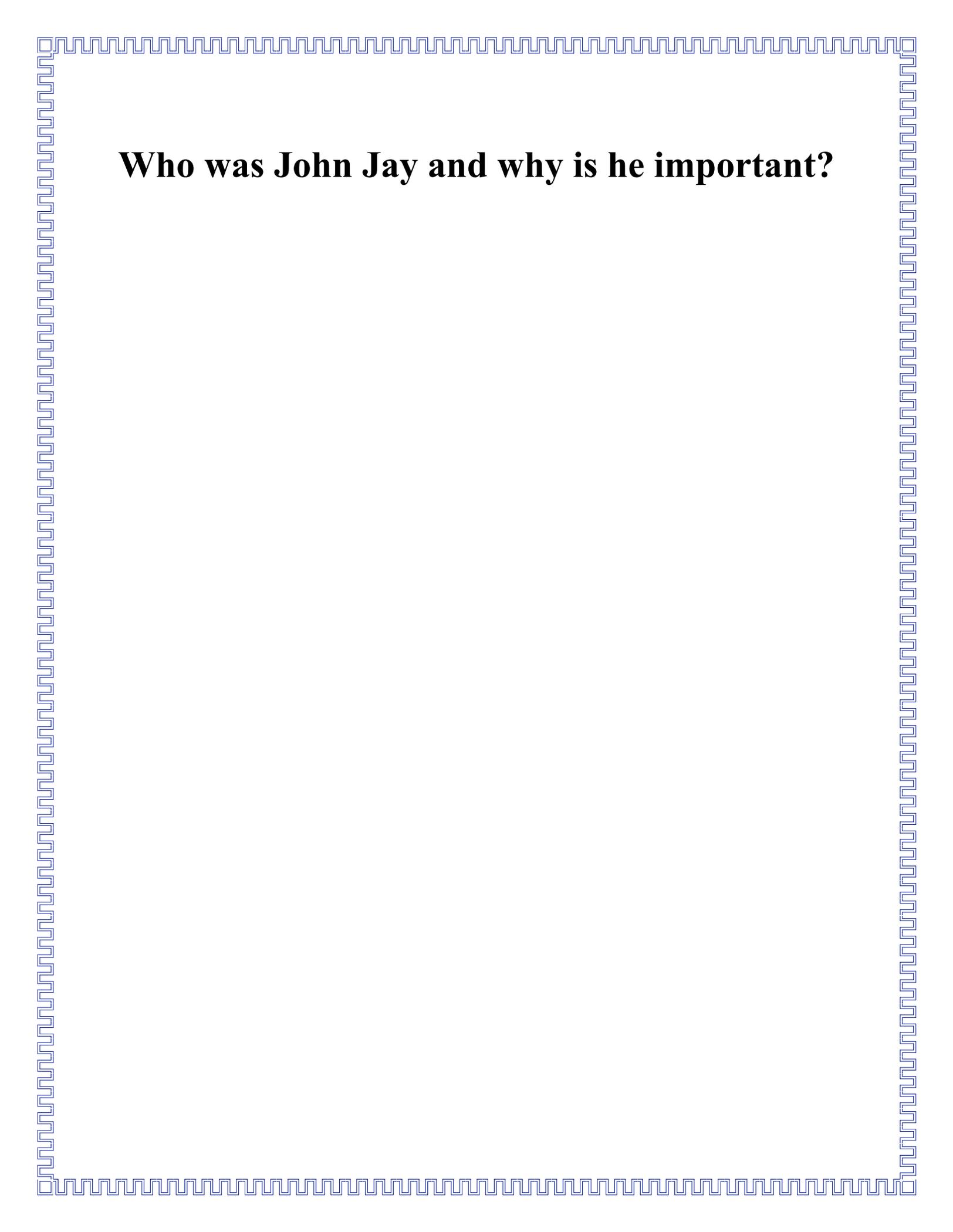
Before proposing to Sarah, John had asked another woman to marry him. She said no.

When John and Sarah were married in 1774, John was 28 years old and Sarah was only 17!

John's brother James invented a type of invisible ink.

When John was negotiating the Treaty of Paris, his wife Sarah stayed in Ben Franklin's house in Passy, France until their daughter Nancy was born. Ben Franklin was a famous printer, publisher and inventor.

John Jay was good friends with George Washington. In fact, when Washington was sworn in as President of the United States, John Jay was standing on the same balcony.



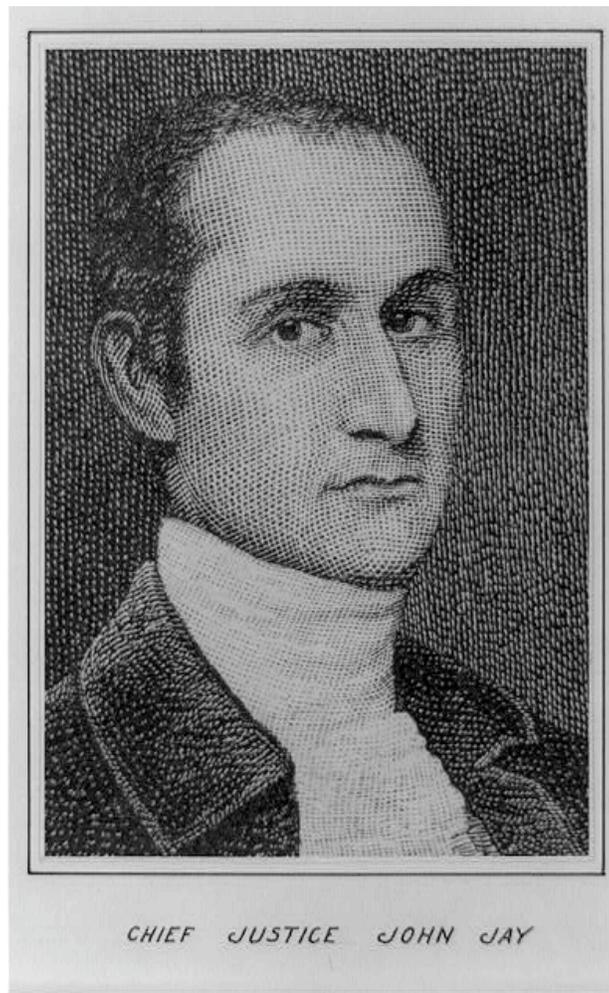
Who was John Jay and why is he important?

John Jay was a founding father of our nation. A man of many talents he served his country as a legislator, diplomat, governor and the first chief justice of the United States Supreme Court.

He was born in New York City in 1745 into a well-to-do family. Jay's ancestors were French Huguenots and Dutch. He grew up on the family farm in the town of Rye in Westchester and was sent to King's College when he was 14. After graduation he worked in a law office where he studied to become a lawyer.

In 1774, John married Sarah Livingston (called "Sally") whose father was the governor of New Jersey. In the same year he was elected to the Continental Congress, which was organized to protest England's actions against the American colonies.

Angered because England refused to respond to the colonies' grievances, Jay decided to support American independence.



When the war began, he was sent to Spain to try to try to raise money for the American cause. His wife came with him, leaving their young son Peter with his grandparents. Sally gave birth to 2 daughters in Spain, although the first died shortly after birth.

After the British surrender at the battle of Yorktown, Jay went to Paris where he helped to draw up the treaty which ended the Revolutionary War. During their stay in France, Sally gave birth to another daughter.

When the Jays returned to the United States, John became secretary of foreign affairs. He soon decided that the government was too weak for the new nation to survive. He supported the adoption of a new constitution to establish a strong central government. Several of the *Federalist* papers (newspaper essays urging New Yorkers to approve the proposed Constitution) were written by John Jay.



Sarah Livingston Jay

The Constitution was ratified in 1789, establishing the government we have today. Our first president George Washington appointed John Jay to be the nation's first chief justice of the Supreme Court. Jay helped the court get started and set up many of the rules by which it operates today.

In 1794 John Jay was sent by President George Washington to London to try to resolve some of the problems our nation was still having with Great Britain. The result was the Treaty of 1794, also known as the Jay Treaty. At the time the treaty was very controversial in America because many Americans felt that Jay had made too many concessions to Britain. Today it is generally agreed that the Jay Treaty prevented a war between the America and Britain during a time when the nation was still very young and did not have the endurance to withstand another war.

When John Jay returned to America he became the Governor of the State of New York, an office which he held for two terms. As governor, he considered the passage of a law gradually freeing the slaves in New York one of his greatest achievements.

In 1801, Jay retired to his farm in Bedford with is wife Sally and three of their five children. Unfortunately Sally died in May 1802 after living at the Bedford farm for only five months. After Sally's death, John never remarried. He lived at the Homestead managing his farm and experimenting with new plants and farming methods. A religious man, he became President of the American Bible society. John died in 1829. He was buried in the family cemetery in Rye, New York.



John Jay Homestead State Historic Site in Katonah, New York