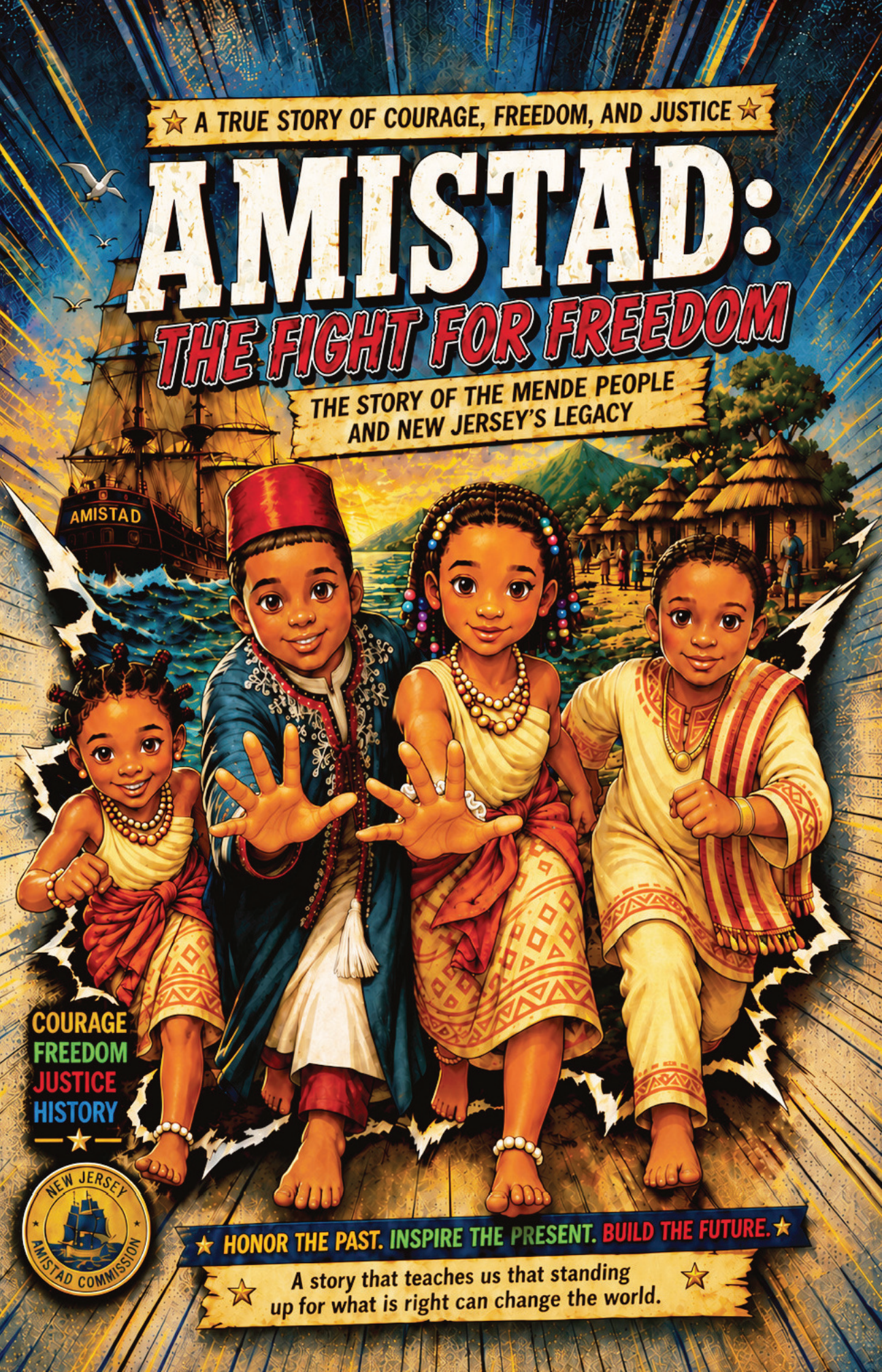
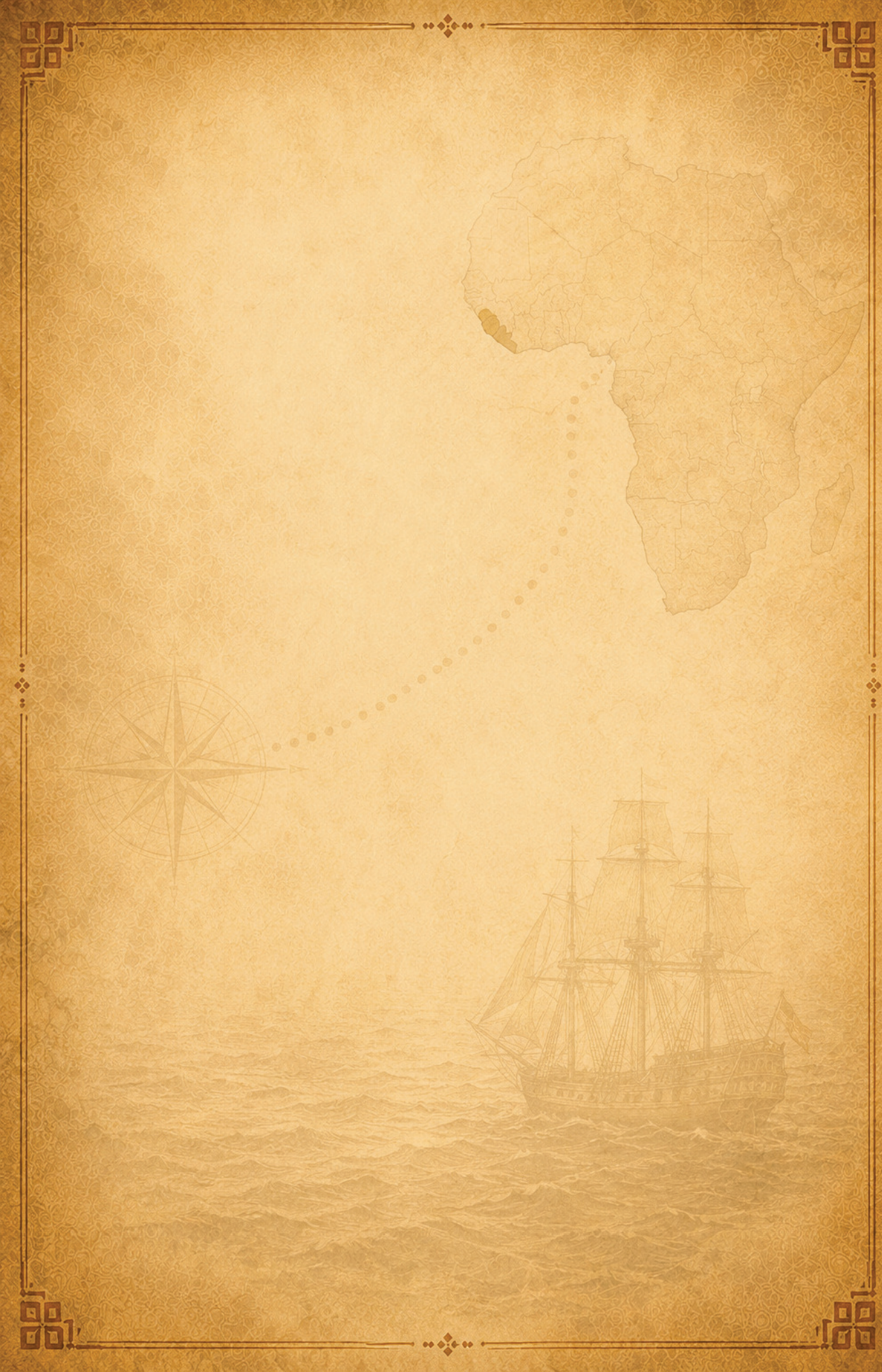

A TRUE STORY OF COURAGE, FREEDOM, AND JUSTICE
AMISTAD:
THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM
THE STORY OF THE MENDE PEOPLE AND NEW JERSEY'S LEGACY
AMISTAD
COURAGE
FREEDOM
JUSTICE
HISTORY
NEW JERSEY AMISTAD COMMISSION
HONOR THE PAST. INSPIRE THE PRESENT. BUILD THE FUTURE.
A story that teaches us that standing up for what is right can change the world.



NEW JERSEY AMISTAD COMMISSION

PRESENTS

AMISTAD:
The Fight for Freedom

The Story of the Mende People
and New Jersey's Legacy

WRITTEN AND DEVELOPED BY
GTC WORLD CHANGERS

DEVELOPED BY
GTC WORLD CHANGERS

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This resource was developed for the New Jersey Amistad Commission to support statewide instructional goals related to African American history and the Amistad story in alignment with the New Jersey Amistad Mandate.

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PROJECT CREDIT

Written and Developed by
GTC World Changers

Developed and produced by
GTC World Changers



EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE STATEMENT

This resource is designed to support K–5 students in understanding the history of the Mende people, the Amistad case, and its lasting impact on American history and education.
All content is intended for educational use and aligns with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and the Amistad Commission's instructional goals.



LEGAL & CONTENT NOTE

This publication is provided for educational purposes only.
All content is subject to review and approval by the New Jersey Amistad Commission.
This resource is intended for educational use and presents historical content in a developmentally appropriate format. It is not intended as a comprehensive legal or historical record.



PUBLISHING INFORMATION

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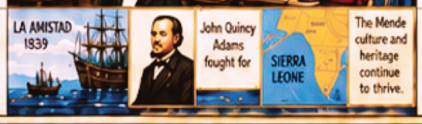
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Explore the True Story of Courage, Freedom, and Justice



This comic book is divided into focus topics to help you follow the journey of the Mende people and New Jersey's legacy.



	FOCUS TOPIC	WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER	PAGES
1		**OUR STORY BEGINS** We meet four friends in New Jersey who are curious about the past.	6–7
2		**THE MENDE PEOPLE** Discover Sierra Leone, the home, culture, and traditions of the Mende people.	8–9
3		**STRANGERS ARRIVE AND CAPTURED** See how life changes when strangers arrive and the Mende people are taken from home.	10–11
4		**A JOURNEY ACROSS THE OCEAN** Follow their difficult journey across the sea on the *Tecora*.	12
5		**HAVANA, CUBA AND LA AMISTAD** Learn how the *Tecora* reached Havana, Cuba, and how some of the Mende people were placed on La Amistad.	13
6		**SENGBE PIEH AND THE PLAN FOR FREEDOM** Meet Sengbe Pieh and learn how courage, wisdom, and unity helped prepare the Mende people.	14
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KNOW THE PAST. UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT. SHAPE THE FUTURE.

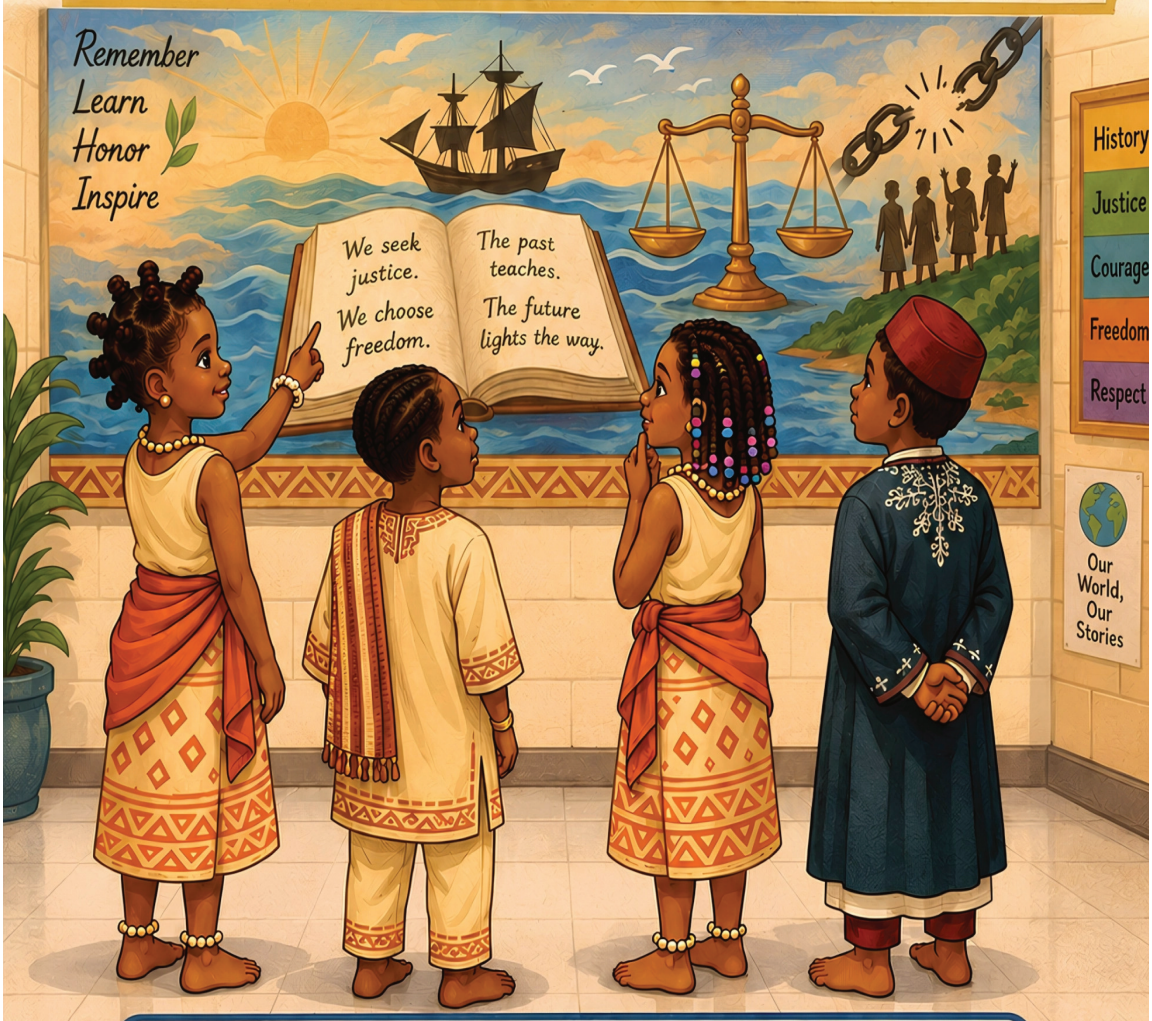
Together, we can make a better world.

Why This Story Matters

The story of the Amistad teaches us about courage, justice, and the fight for freedom.

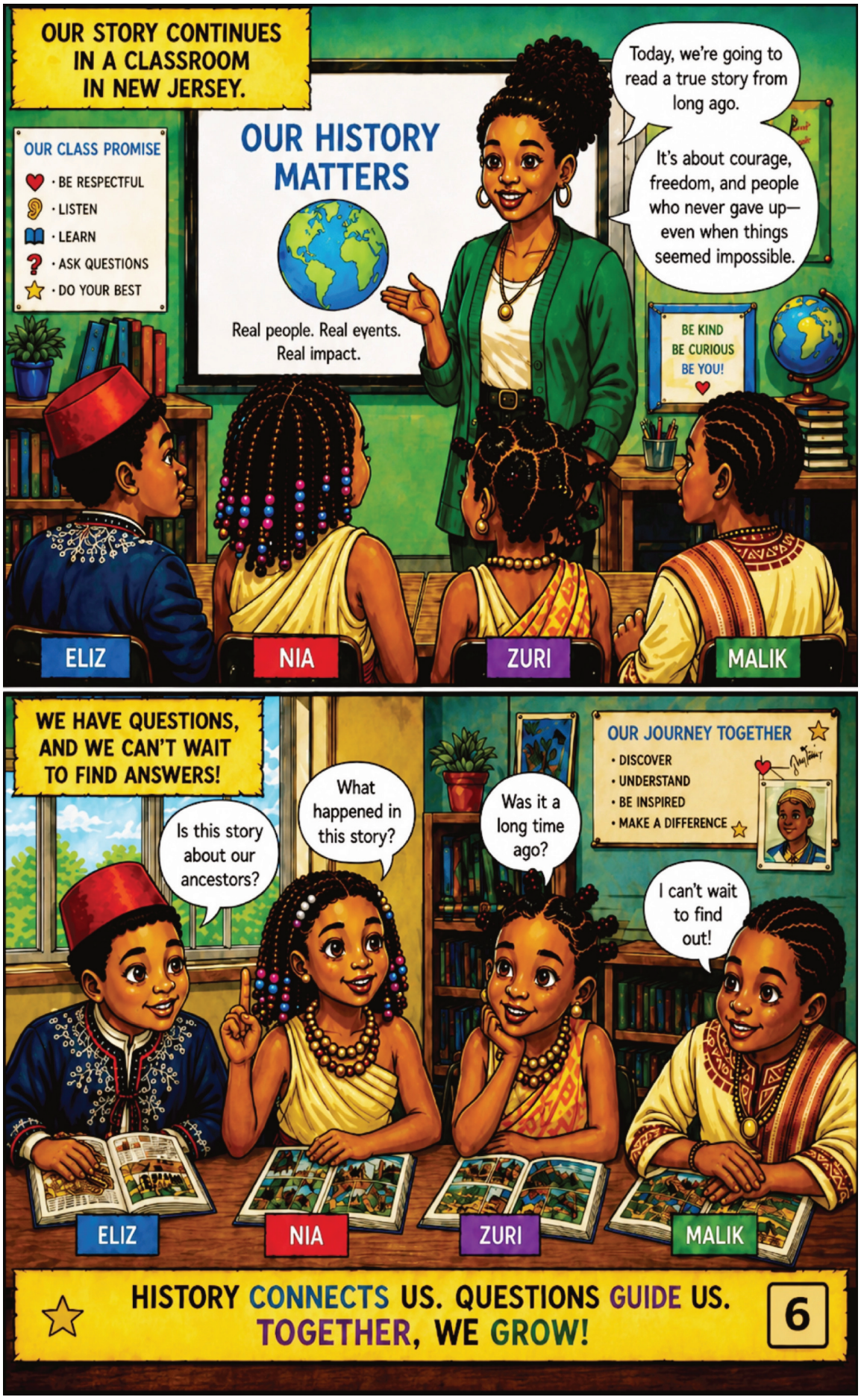
Long ago, the Mende people were taken from their homeland, but they did not give up. Their strength helped change history.

Today, we remember their story so students can learn the truth, honor the past, and understand why freedom matters.



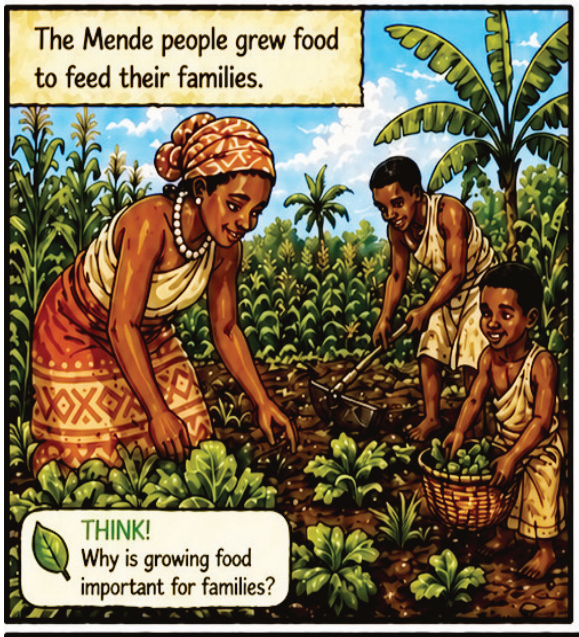
★ THINK ABOUT IT ★

Why is it important to learn true stories from history?


OUR STORY CONTINUES IN A CLASSROOM IN NEW JERSEY.
OUR CLASS PROMISE
• BE RESPECTFUL
• LISTEN
• LEARN
• ASK QUESTIONS
• DO YOUR BEST
OUR HISTORY MATTERS
Real people. Real events. Real impact.
Today, we're going to read a true story from long ago.
It's about courage, freedom, and people who never gave up—even when things seemed impossible.
BE KIND
BE CURIOUS
BE YOU!
ELIZ
NIA
ZURI
MALIK
WE HAVE QUESTIONS, AND WE CAN'T WAIT TO FIND ANSWERS!
Is this story about our ancestors?
What happened in this story?
Was it a long time ago?
I can't wait to find out!
OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER
• DISCOVER
• UNDERSTAND
• BE INSPIRED
• MAKE A DIFFERENCE
ELIZ
NIA
ZURI
MALIK
HISTORY CONNECTS US. QUESTIONS GUIDE US. TOGETHER, WE GROW!
6


THE STUDENTS OPEN THE BOOK AND BEGIN A JOURNEY INTO HISTORY!
Let's learn more about this story!
LEARN
THINK
GROW
AMISTAD
A STORY OF COURAGE AND FREEDOM
FLIP!
PRESENT-DAY SIERRA LEONE, WEST AFRICA
GUINEA
Freetown
Mende Homeland
ATLANTIC OCEAN
LIBERIA
Long ago, in a land of rivers, forests, and strong communities, lived the Mende people.
LOOK CLOSELY! What do you notice about their village and the land?
Wow! This is amazing!
Be Kind
You Matter
Courage
Respect
Justice
History
They had rich traditions and cultures.
People, land, and history— all connected.
Let's keep reading and learning!
AFRICA
THINK ABOUT IT! Why do you think it's important to know our history?
OUR JOURNEY INTO THE AMISTAD STORY IS JUST BEGINNING.
TURN THE PAGE!
7

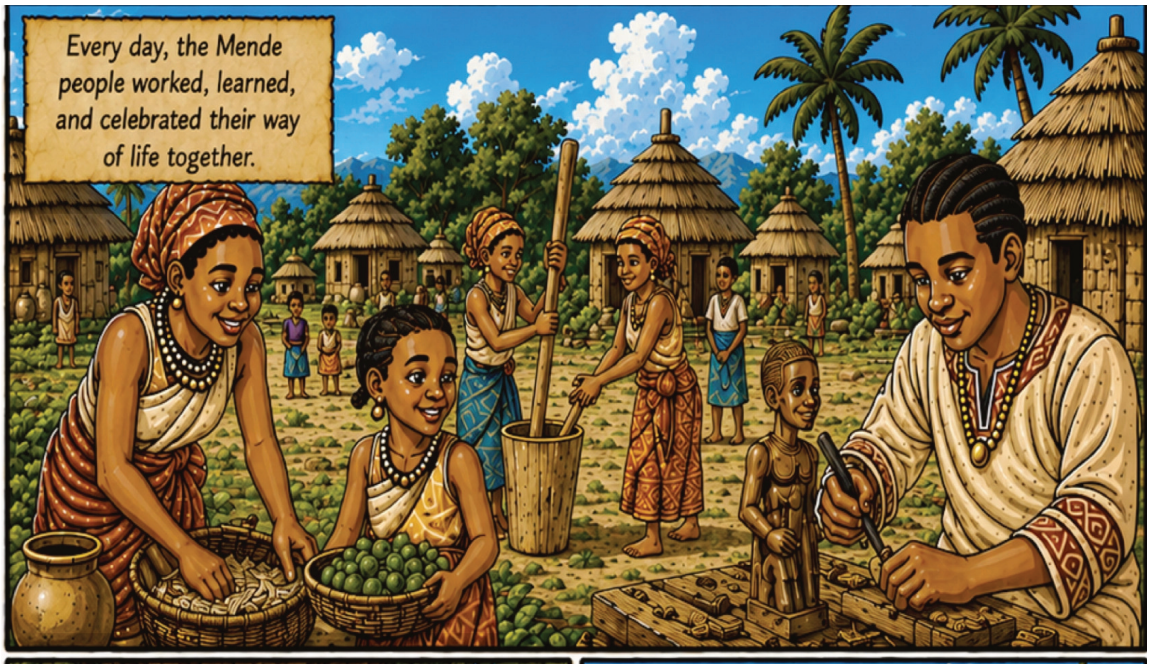


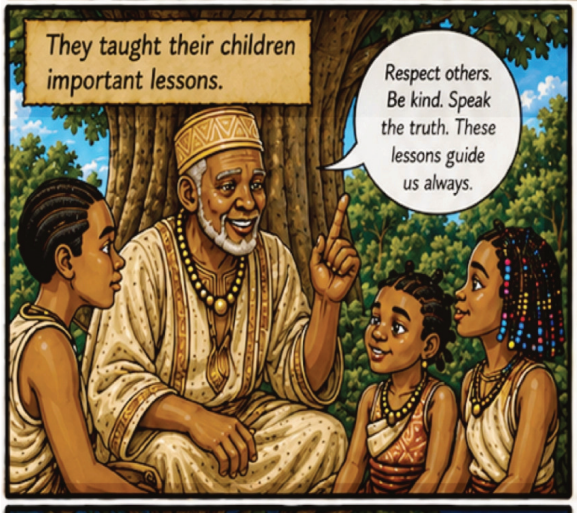




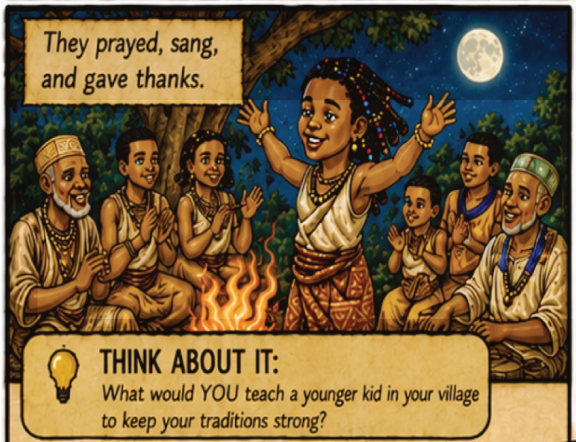


THINK ABOUT IT! What are some things that are important in your community or family today? _____











THINK ABOUT IT:
What would YOU teach a younger kid in your village to keep your traditions strong?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

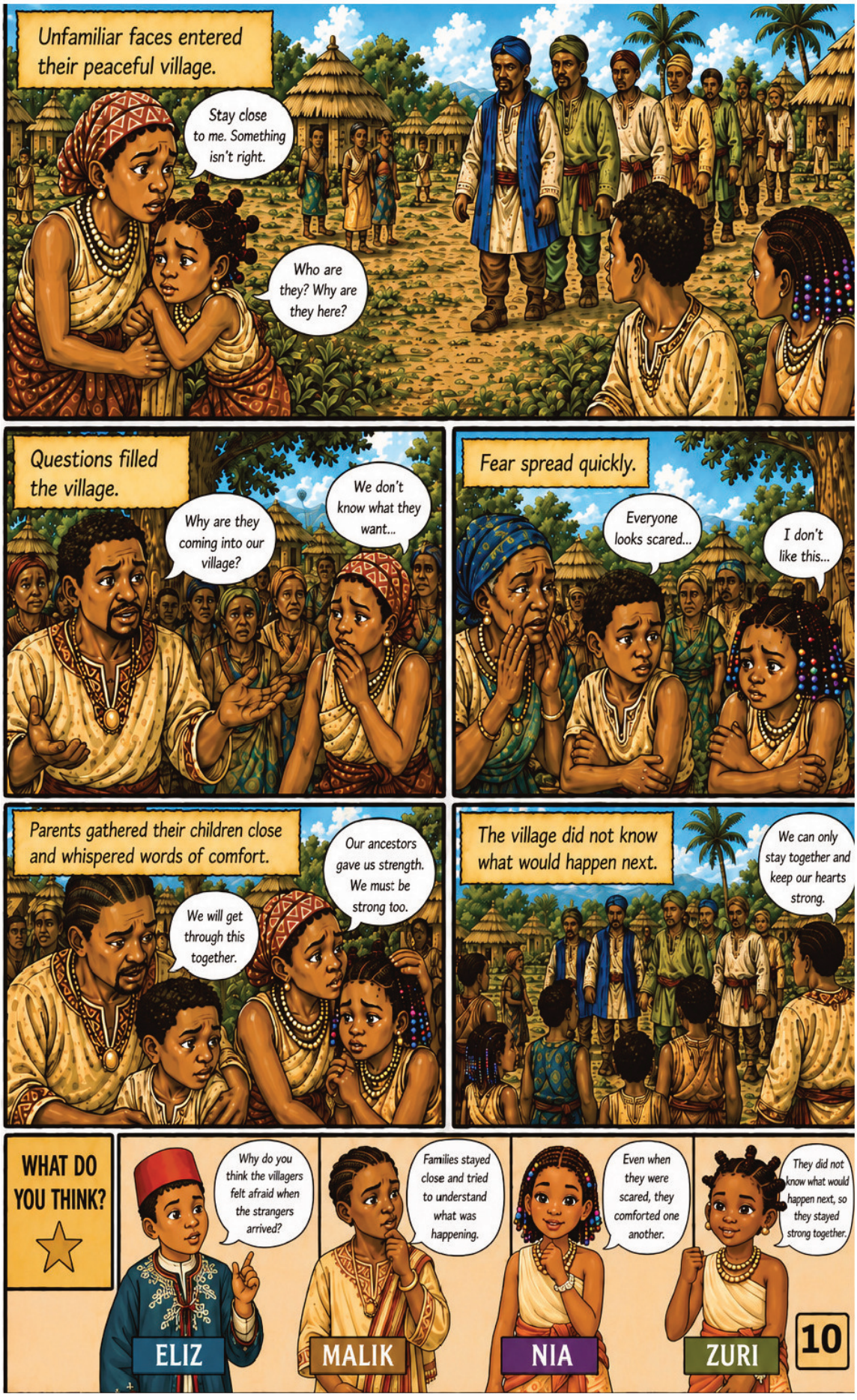








EVEN THE STRONGEST VILLAGES CAN FACE CHANGE.
STAY CURIOUS. STAY BRAVE. STAY TOGETHER.


Unfamiliar faces entered their peaceful village.
Stay close to me. Something isn't right.
Who are they? Why are they here?
Questions filled the village.
Why are they coming into our village?
We don't know what they want...
Fear spread quickly.
Everyone looks scared...
I don't like this...
Parents gathered their children close and whispered words of comfort.
We will get through this together.
Our ancestors gave us strength. We must be strong too.
The village did not know what would happen next.
We can only stay together and keep our hearts strong.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Why do you think the villagers felt afraid when the strangers arrived?
ELIZ
Families stayed close and tried to understand what was happening.
MALIK
Even when they were scared, they comforted one another.
NIA
They did not know what would happen next, so they stayed strong together.
ZURI
10

The strangers took the Mende people away from their homes.

THINK ABOUT IT:
How would you feel if you were taken away from your home without a choice?

Hurry up. Get on the ship.

STEP... STEP...

They were forced onto a ship called the Tecora.

The journey was long and very hard.

CREAK...

They did not know where they were going or what would happen next.

TECORA

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

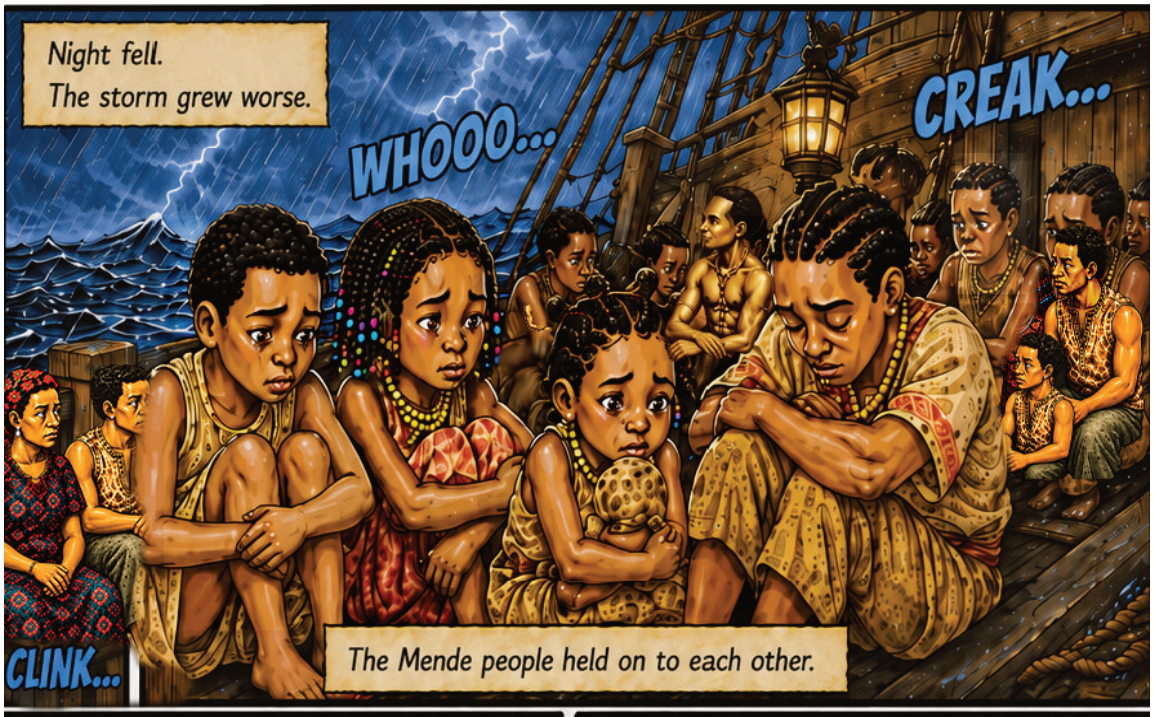
ELIZ: How would you feel if you were taken away from your home?

MALIK: They were forced onto the Tecora and did not know where they were going.

NIA: The journey was long and scary, and they missed home.

ZURI: Even then, they stayed close and held on to one another.

THE JOURNEY IS LONG AND SCARY, BUT THEY HOLD ON TO EACH OTHER.
STAY RESILIENT. STAY KIND. STAY TOGETHER.





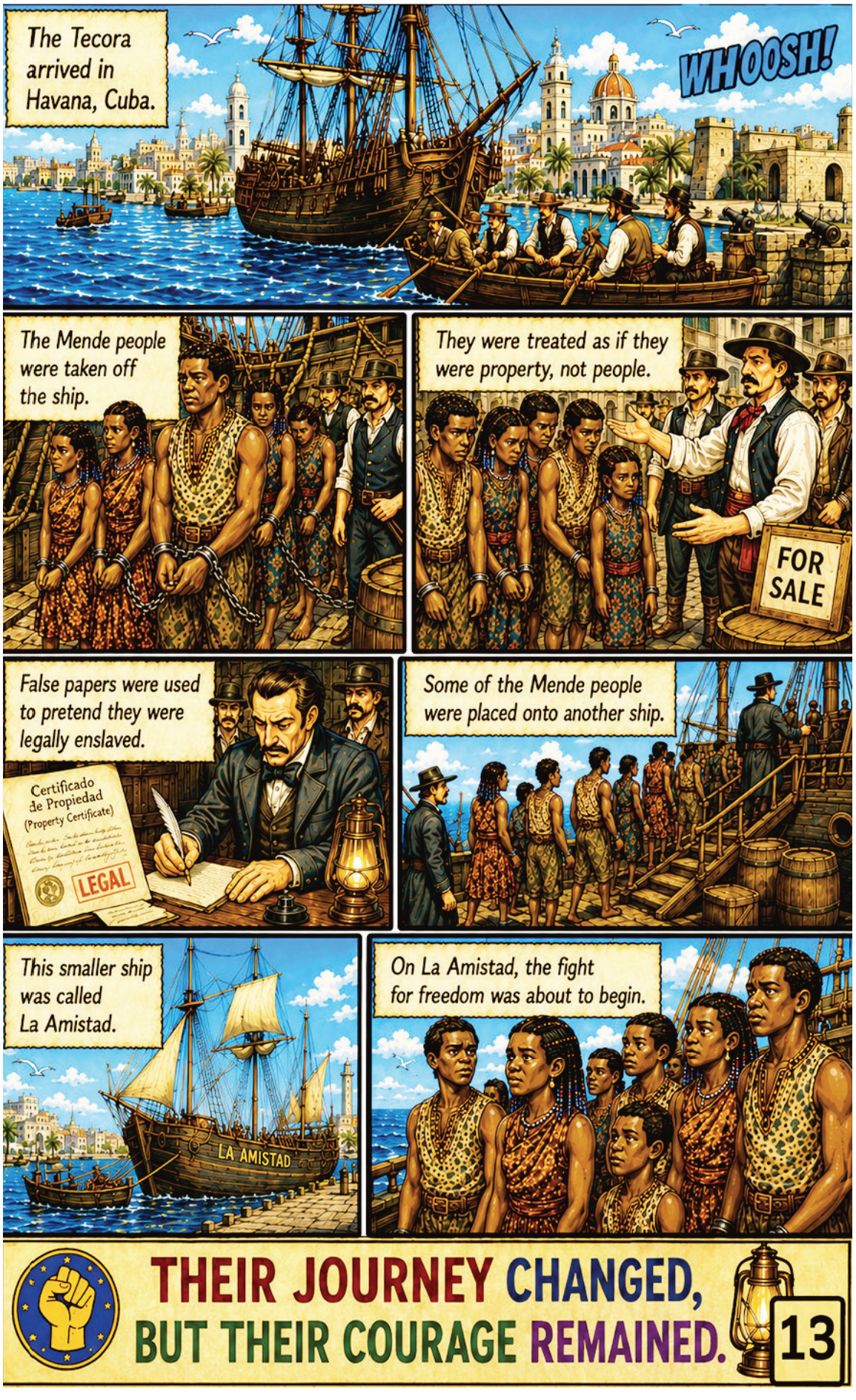




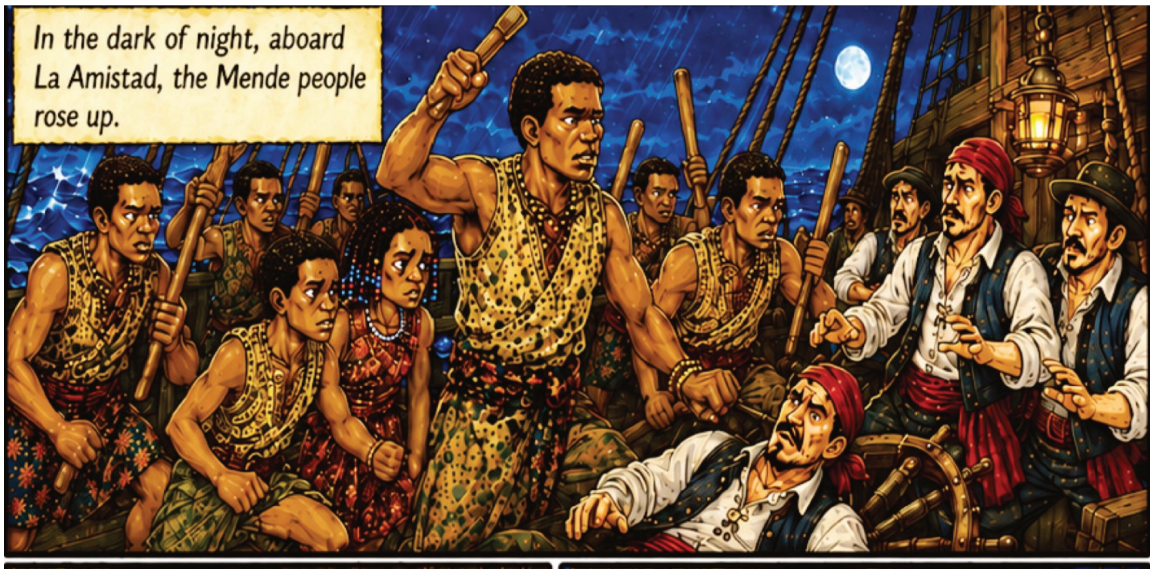


HOPE LIGHTS THE WAY THROUGH ANY STORM.

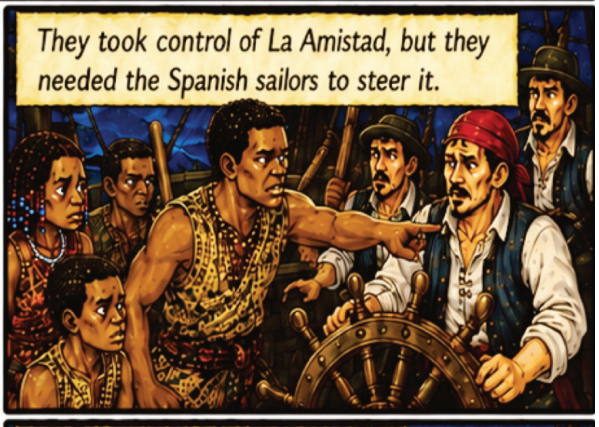
STAY BRAVE. STAY FAITHFUL. STAY TOGETHER.

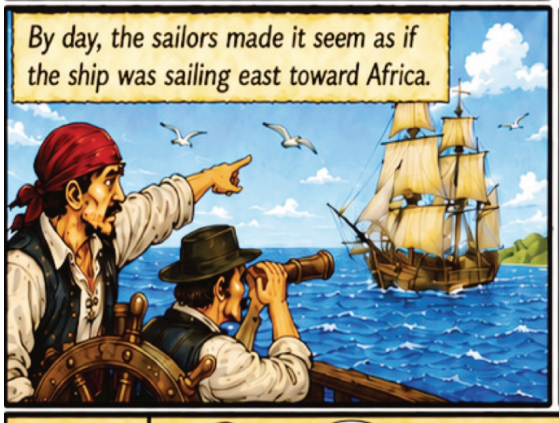

The Tecora arrived in Havana, Cuba.
WHOOSH!
The Mende people were taken off the ship.
They were treated as if they were property, not people.
FOR SALE
False papers were used to pretend they were legally enslaved.
Certificado de Propiedad
(Property Certificate)
LEGAL
Some of the Mende people were placed onto another ship.
This smaller ship was called La Amistad.
LA AMISTAD
On La Amistad, the fight for freedom was about to begin.
THEIR JOURNEY CHANGED, BUT THEIR COURAGE REMAINED.
13

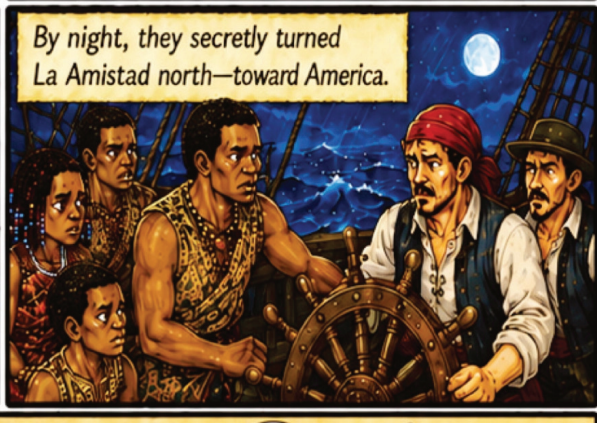

On La Amistad, one man helped lead the fight for freedom.
His name was Sengbe Pieh. The Spanish called him Joseph Cinqué. In Sierra Leone, he was a husband, a father, and a farmer.
Now aboard La Amistad, the Mende people were tired and hungry, but they were not broken.
We did not survive the Tecora to die in chains.
One night, Sengbe found a loose iron nail. Slowly, he used it to unlock his shackles.
Freedom starts here.
Sengbe shared a plan. The others listened carefully.
Tonight, we take our freedom back.
Together.
They were ready.
COURAGE MEANS STANDING UP, EVEN WHEN YOU ARE AFRAID.
14











WHAT DO YOU THINK?







Freedom takes courage. It also takes wisdom.



Near Long Island, La Amistad was stopped.

You are our prisoners now!

THEIR FREEDOM WAS TAKEN AGAIN, BUT THEIR COURAGE DID NOT BREAK..

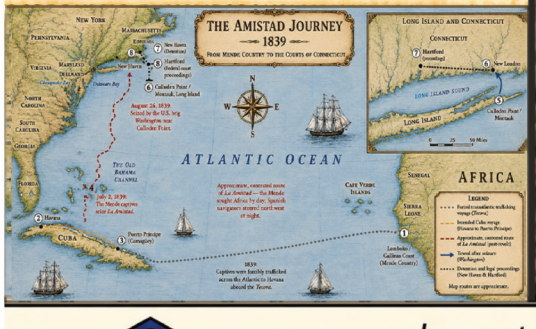
They were taken ashore on Long Island.

Soon, they were taken to jail.

Why are we locked in here?

They do not understand our story...

They were far from home, and people did not yet understand what had happened to them.

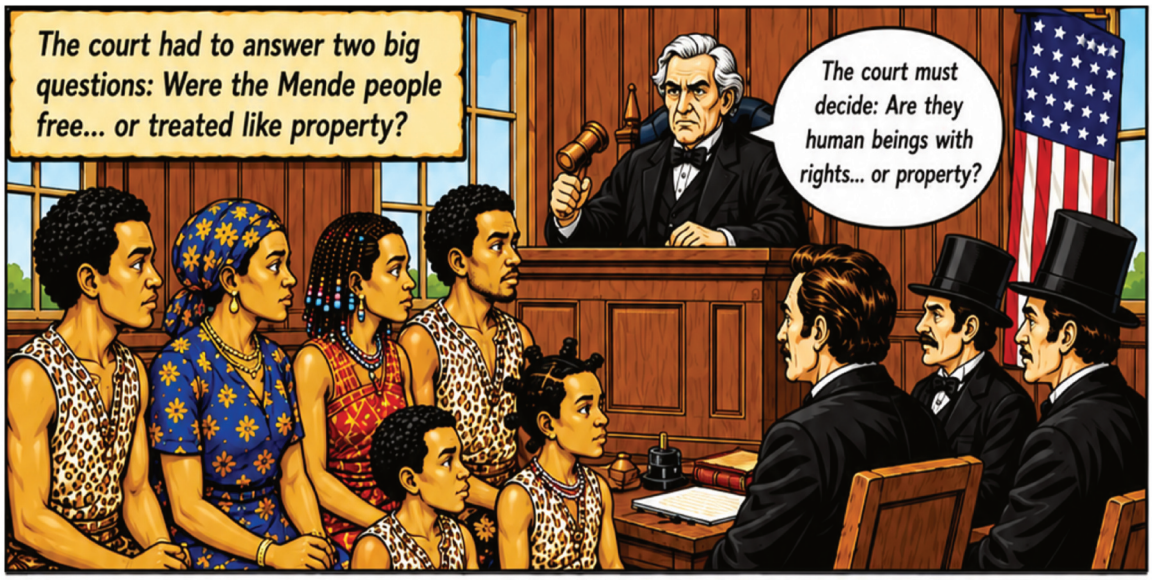


Soon, their case went to court.

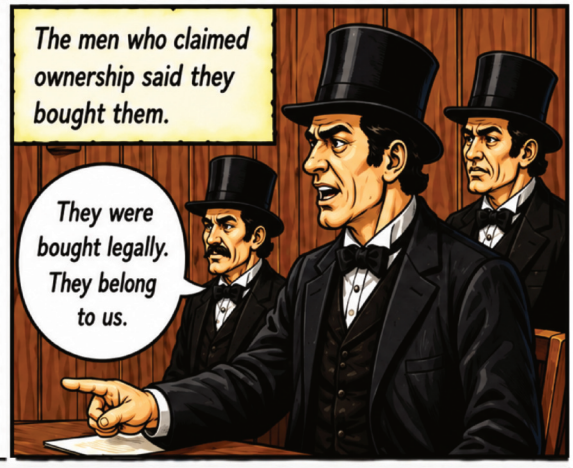
We will make sure they are heard in court.

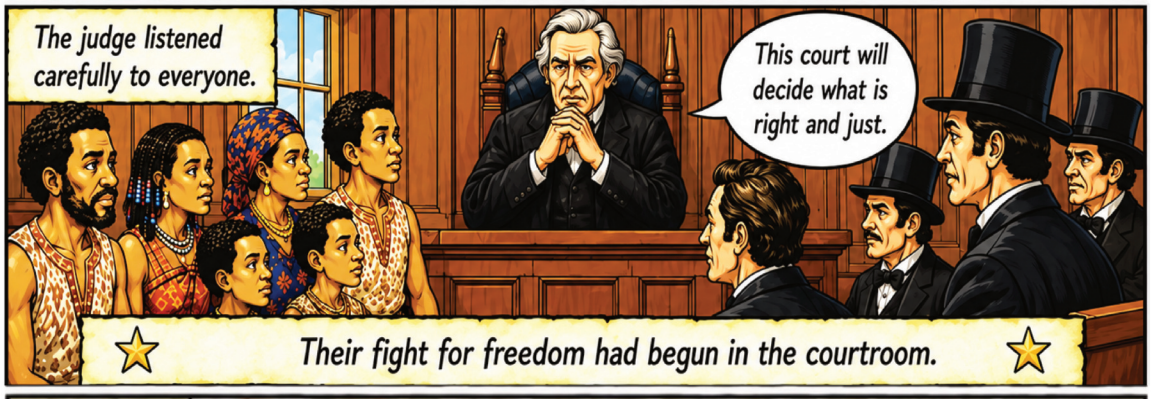
In court, people listen, ask questions, and decide what is fair.
Everyone deserves to be heard.

THINK ABOUT IT: *Why is it important for people to be heard before a decision is made?*

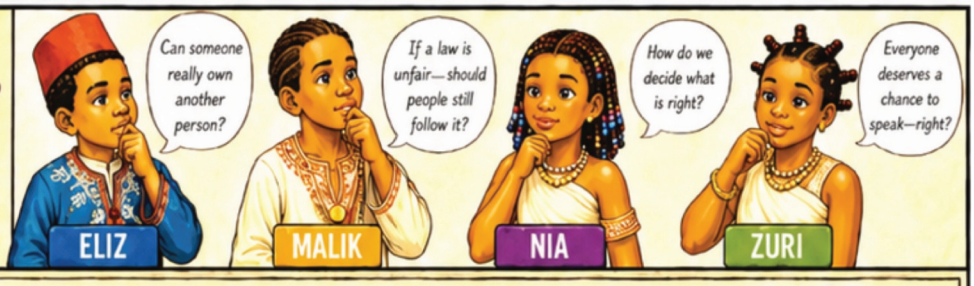








WHAT DO YOU THINK?



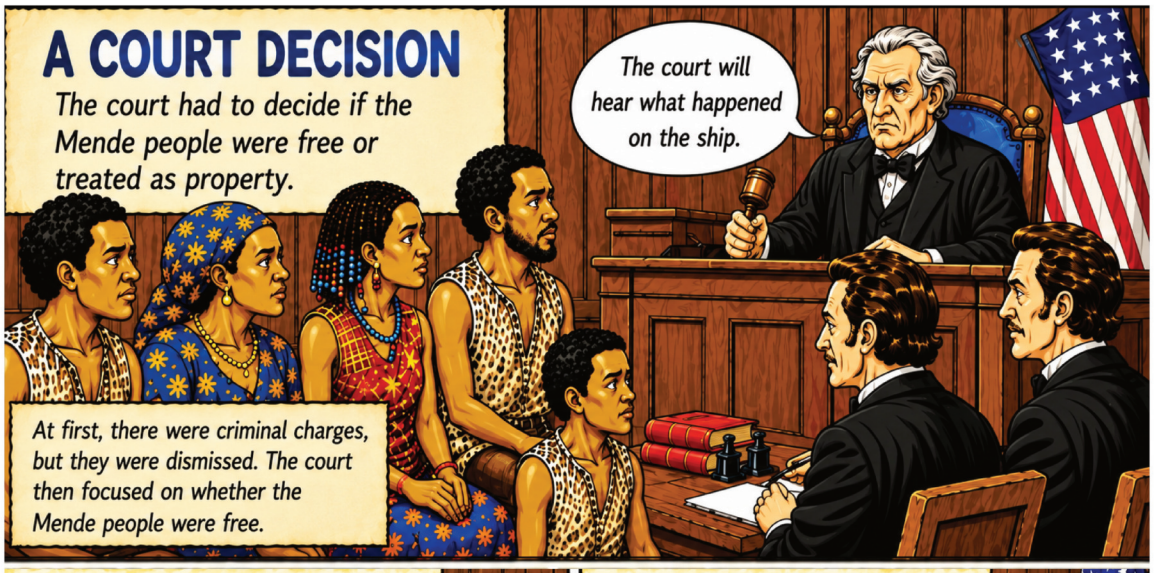


A civil case is about fairness between people.
It helps decide rights, responsibilities, and what is just.



A COURT DECISION

The court had to decide if the Mende people were free or treated as property.



At first, there were criminal charges, but they were dismissed. The court then focused on whether the Mende people were free.

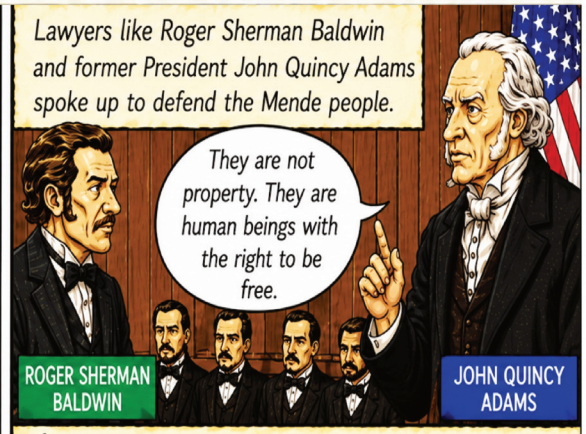
People told the court what they saw and what happened.



★ *A translator helped the court understand.*

JAMES COVYE (MENDE INTERPRETER)

Lawyers like Roger Sherman Baldwin and former President John Quincy Adams spoke up to defend the Mende people.



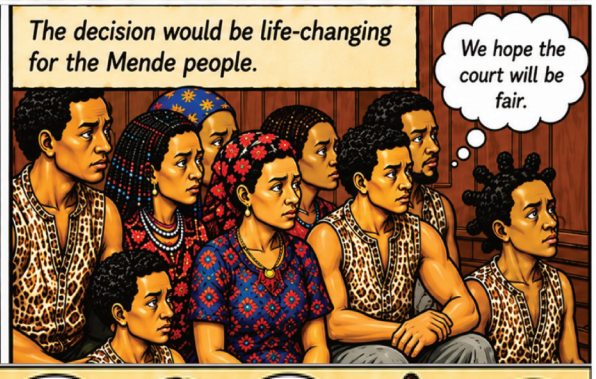
★ *Both sides tried to show what is right.*

The judge listened carefully. The court had to decide.



★ *It was the judge's job to decide.*

The decision would be life-changing for the Mende people.



THINK ABOUT IT!





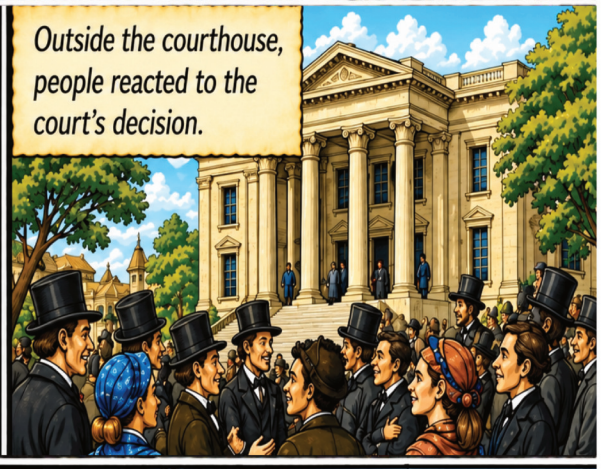


The court listened carefully to decide if the Mende people were free. The decision would change their lives forever.



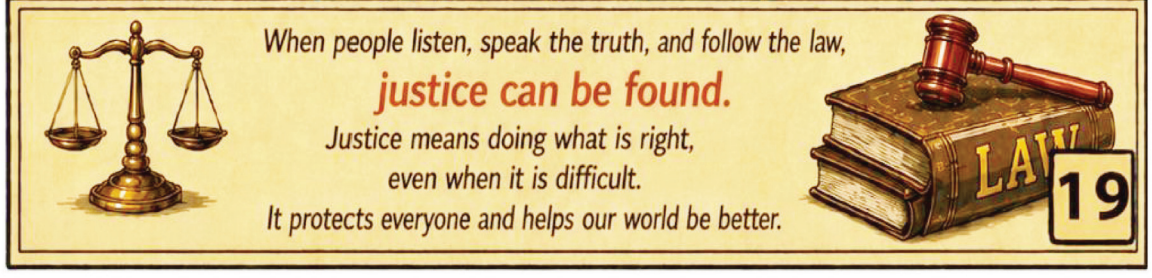

The court made its decision.
The Mende people are not property. They are free.

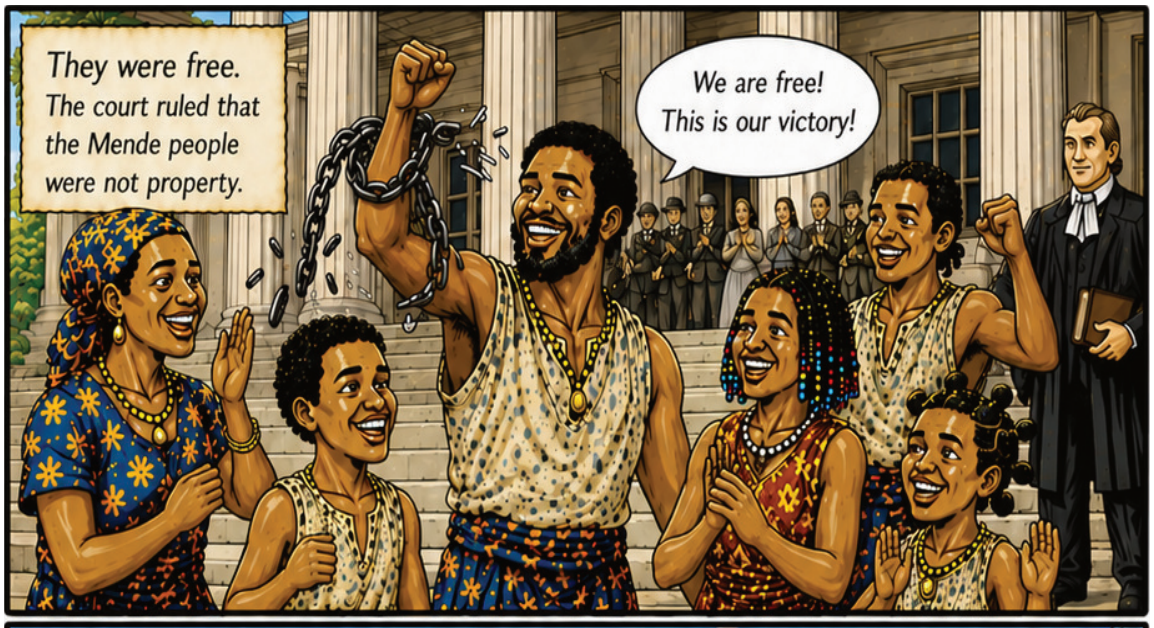

They heard the words they had been waiting for.
We are free...
Thank you...

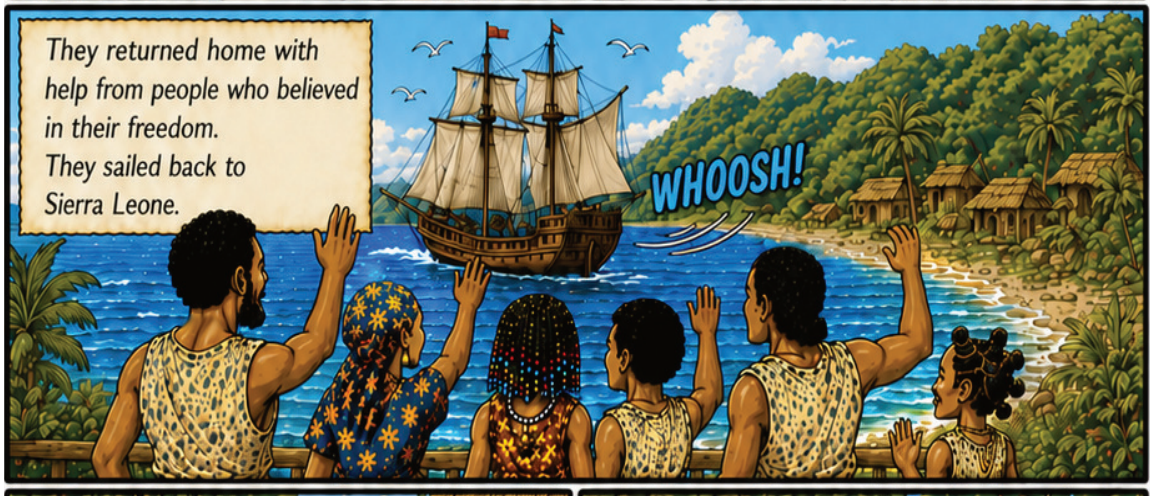

Outside the courthouse, people reacted to the court's decision.

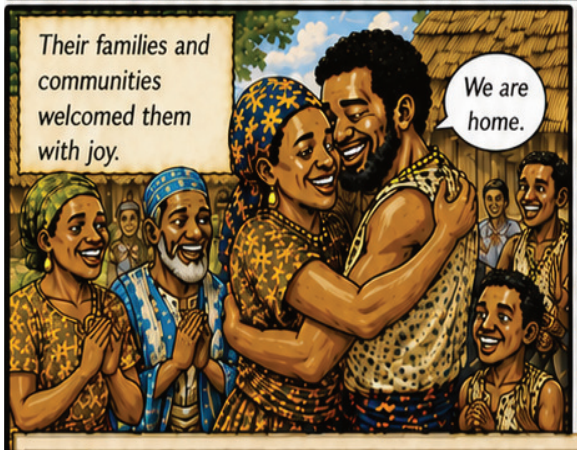

After a long journey, families were together again.
Justice had been found.

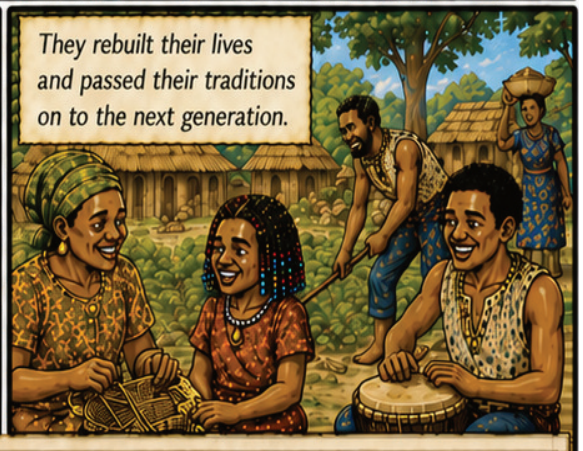

THINK ABOUT IT!
Why do you think the judge said the Mende people are not property?
ELIZ
How would you feel if you were waiting for a decision like this?
MALIK
Why is it important for courts to make fair decisions?
NIA
What does justice mean to you?
ZURI


When people listen, speak the truth, and follow the law,
justice can be found.
Justice means doing what is right,
even when it is difficult.
It protects everyone and helps our world be better.
LAW
19



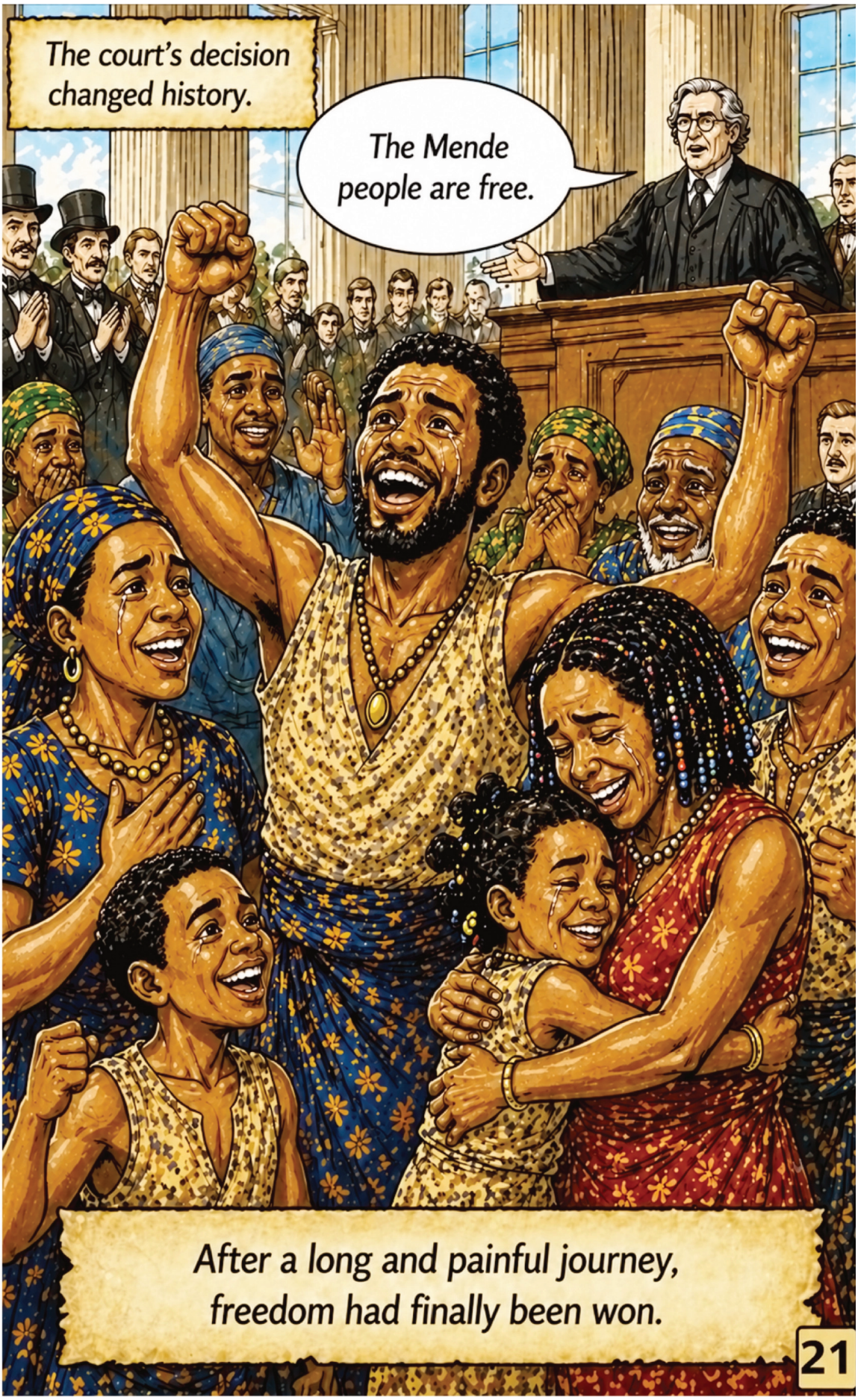


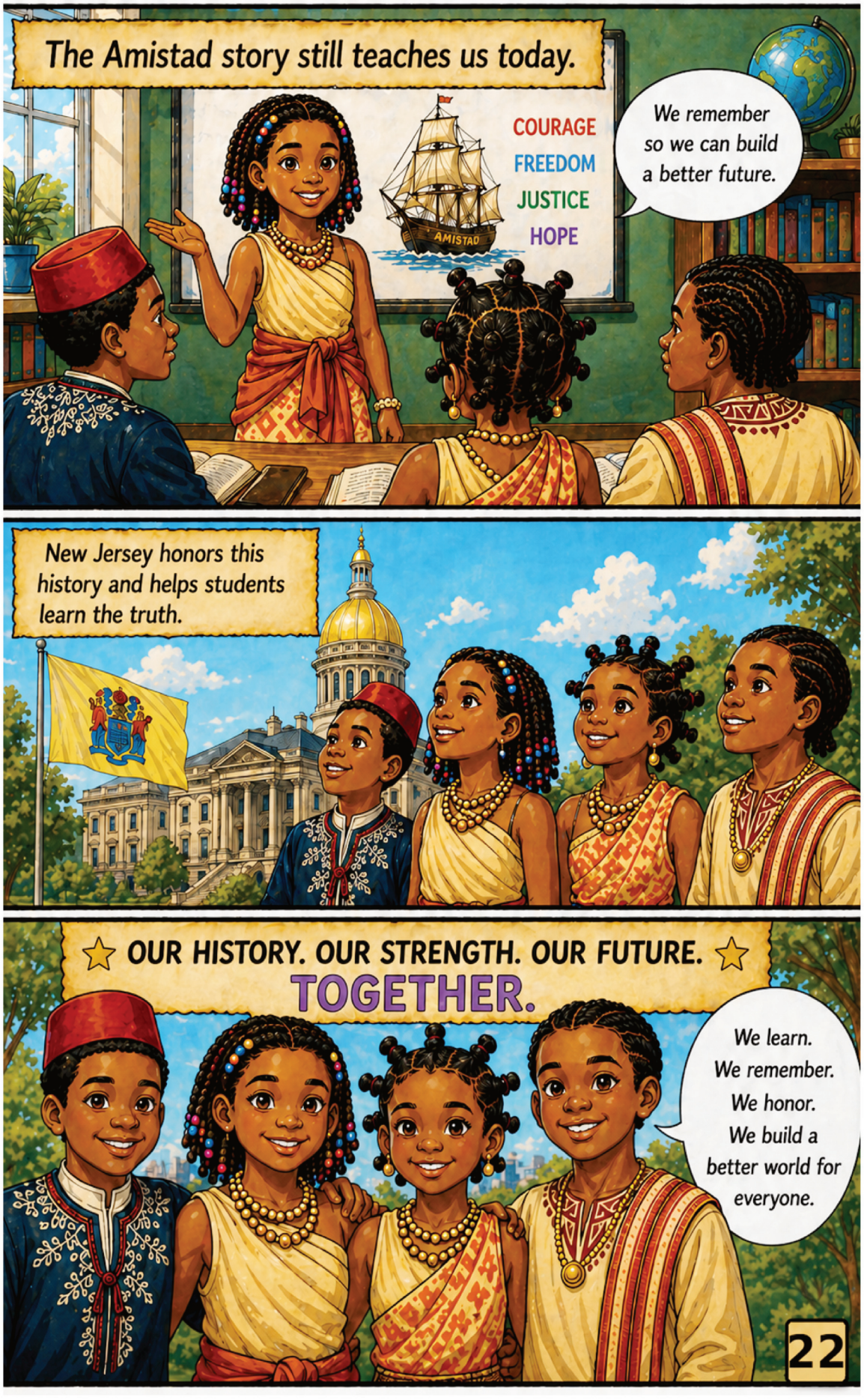




Freedom is more than leaving a place.
It is the right to live with dignity, to be treated as human, and to build a future with hope.

THINK ABOUT IT:
What do you think freedom means to the Mende people after everything they went through?


The court's decision changed history.
The Mende people are free.
After a long and painful journey, freedom had finally been won.


The Amistad story still teaches us today.
COURAGE
FREEDOM
JUSTICE
HOPE
AMISTAD
We remember so we can build a better future.
New Jersey honors this history and helps students learn the truth.
OUR HISTORY. OUR STRENGTH. OUR FUTURE.
TOGETHER.
We learn. We remember. We honor. We build a better world for everyone.
22


Across New Jersey, students learn the full and true story of the Amistad and the fight for freedom.
This is the story of courage and the fight for freedom.
THE AMISTAD
A story of courage, resistance, and the fight for freedom.
COURAGE
FREEDOM
JUSTICE
They study primary sources, ask questions, and think carefully about the past.
PRIMARY SOURCES
Help us understand real events.
AMISTAD
1839
A story of courage, resistance, and the fight for freedom.
AMISTAD NARRATIVE
AMISTAD TRIAL
Communities come together to share culture, celebrate history, and learn from the past.
OUR STORIES
OUR ROOTS
OUR FUTURE
AMISTAD LEGACY
The New Jersey Amistad Commission, created in 2002, ensures that schools teach this history with truth, respect, and pride.
NEW JERSEY
AMISTAD
COMMISSION
Established 2002
Honoring the past.
Inspiring the future.
WILLIAM D. PAYNE
CRAIG A. STANLEY
William D. Payne and Craig A. Stanley sponsored the Amistad Bill.
KNOW THE PAST. SHAPE THE FUTURE.
23

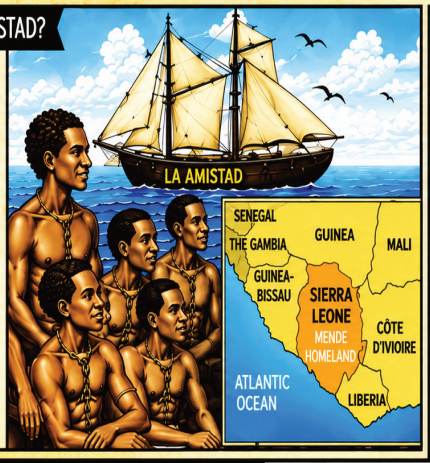

What we learn from history shapes the choices we make today.
BE CURIOUS BE KIND BE BRAVE
TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE
OUR IDEAS OUR ACTIONS OUR IMPACT
STAND FOR JUSTICE
EVERY VOICE MATTERS
They reflect on what they learned and who they want to become.
TODAY I CHOOSE TO GROW
I can make a difference.
Courage. Freedom. Justice.
Eliz, Malik, Nia, and Zuri share what they learned with others.
LEARN SHARE REMEMBER
Sengbe Pieh's courage shows us one voice can change history.
And every voice still matters today.
The Amistad story continues with every student who learns it, lives it, and shares it.
FREEDOM COURAGE JUSTICE HOPE
OUR HISTORY • OUR VOICES • OUR FUTURE

HISTORICAL NOTE

Facts to Remember

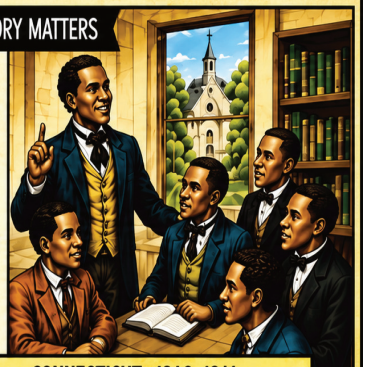
1 WHAT IS THE AMISTAD?

The Amistad story is based on the true history of Mende people from West Africa. In 1839, they were kidnapped, taken across the Atlantic aboard the Tecora, illegally sold in Havana, Cuba, and placed aboard La Amistad. Led by Sengbe Pieh, they fought for their freedom.



2 WHY THIS STORY MATTERS

This story shows the Mende people's brave struggle for freedom and teaches us about African and African American history. It helps us understand the importance of fighting for what is right.



CONNECTICUT—1840–1841

While their case moved through the courts, the Mende learned to read and write English.

3 ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY AMISTAD COMMISSION

The New Jersey Amistad Commission was created by state law in 2002. It helps schools, teachers, and communities learn and teach African and African American history accurately.



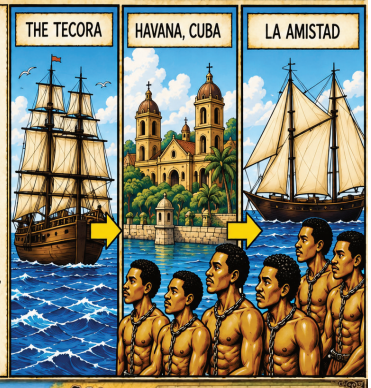
THE COMMISSION WORKS TO:

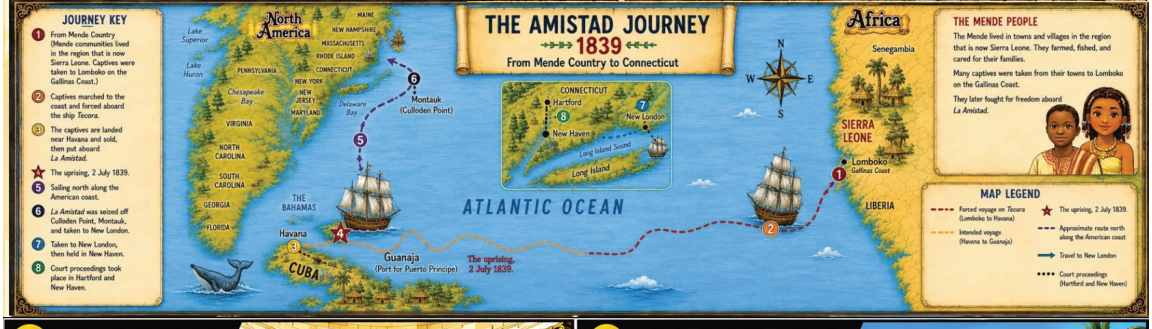
- ☑ Support Education
- ☑ Promote Accurate History
- ☑ Strengthen Communities



4 THE TECORA AND HAVANA

In 1839, Mende people were kidnapped near the Gallinas coast in present-day Sierra Leone and taken aboard the slave ship Tecora to Havana, Cuba. There, they were illegally sold. Fifty-three people, 49 adult men, three girls, and one boy, were placed aboard the coastal schooner La Amistad for a voyage toward Puerto Príncipe, Cuba, led by Sengbe Pieh, they rose up and took control of the ship.





5 THE COURT CASE

The Mende people's fight for freedom led to a landmark case. In 1841, the United States Supreme Court ruled that they were free.



6 A LEGACY OF FREEDOM

Thirty-five survivors left New York aboard the barque Gentleman in late November 1841. They reached Freetown, Sierra Leone, in January 1842. Their courage is a powerful reminder of justice, freedom, and equality.



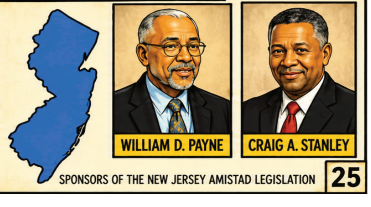
7 WE ALL HAVE A ROLE

We can honor the Amistad legacy by learning the truth, teaching others, and building a future where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.



8 THE AMISTAD LEGACY IN NEW JERSEY

The Amistad events occurred from 1839 to 1841. More than 160 years later, New Jersey Assemblymen William D. Payne and Craig A. Stanley sponsored the Amistad legislation. It was enacted on August 27, 2002. The Commission helps ensure that African and African American history is taught accurately.



SPONSORS OF THE NEW JERSEY AMISTAD LEGISLATION



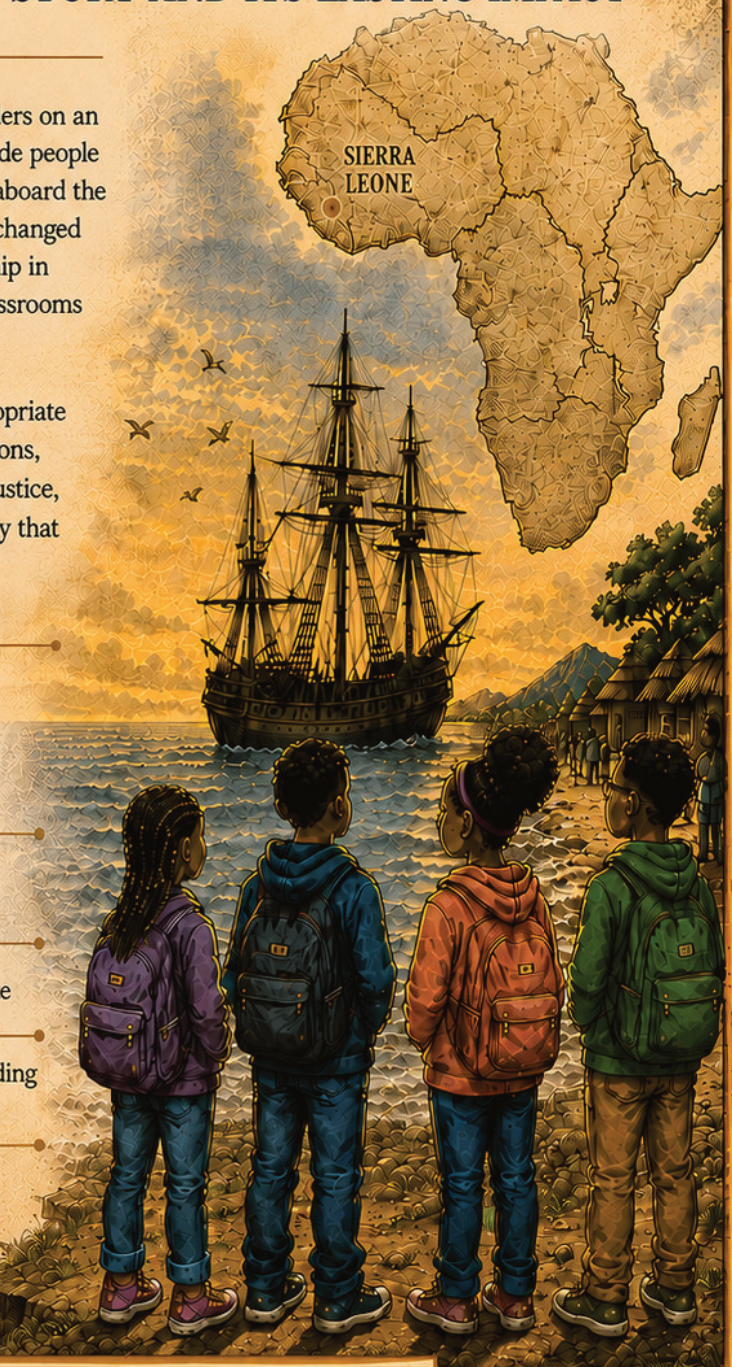




A K–5 EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE ON THE AMISTAD STORY AND ITS LASTING IMPACT

This comic book takes young readers on an incredible journey—from the Mende people of Sierra Leone to the bold revolt aboard the Amistad, the court decisions that changed history, and New Jersey's leadership in ensuring this story is taught in classrooms across the state.

Through a developmentally appropriate narrative and supporting illustrations, students will learn how courage, justice, and determination created a legacy that continues to inspire today.



THIS RESOURCE:

- Designed for K–5 students
- Supports New Jersey Student Learning Standards
- Aligns with the Amistad Mandate
- Encourages historical understanding and civic awareness
- Supports classroom instruction and guided discussion

DEVELOPED FOR

THE NEW JERSEY AMISTAD COMMISSION

WRITTEN AND DEVELOPED BY

GTC World Changers

This resource was developed for the New Jersey Amistad Commission to support accurate, culturally responsive, and standards-aligned instruction for K–5 students.