

The Great Writ: Relief from Unlawful Imprisonment

A core American principle – fiercely advocated by President John Adams – is that America is a nation of laws, not men, and criminal defendants deserve due process and legal representation, whether or not they can afford an attorney.

Format

The Easy Essay allows students to articulate their feelings on the topic in only 100 words. Each question can be assigned daily or over the course of five weeks. During Nevada's Law Month, a total of \$500 in prizes was awarded to the top three essays submitted during the contest. Teachers can choose to award prizes or use this exercise to encourage written expression on the topic.

Question 1:

The writ of habeas corpus is one of the earliest civil liberties, sometimes known as the Great Writ. What might happen if a government was allowed to take prisoners without a reason?

Question 2:

Are the reasons for denying or suspending habeas corpus legitimate, according to the Constitution?

Question 3:

At times in our nation's history the writ of habeas corpus has been suspended during times of rebellion or threat of invasion. Why may it be necessary to suspend habeas corpus during these times?

Question 4:

In the American system of justice, defendants are provided an attorney to represent them in court if they are unable to afford the services of an attorney. Is this appropriate?

Question 5:

Should terror detainees have the right to habeas corpus?