



The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

## AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY

### SIX IMPORTANT PEOPLE FROM OUR NATION'S HISTORY



Grade 5  
United States History and Geography

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#### I. Standards Assessed

##### History-Social Science Content Standards

5.5 Students explain the causes of the American Revolution.

(4) Describe the views, lives, and impact of key individuals during this period.

##### History-Social Science Analysis Skill Standards

###### *Research, Evidence, and Point-of-View*

(2) Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.

(3) Students distinguish fact from fiction by comparing documentary sources on historical figures and events with fictionalized characters and events.

##### English-Language Arts Content Standards

###### *Reading Comprehension*

2.3 Discern main ideas and concepts presented in texts, identifying and assessing evidence that supports those ideas.

###### *Speaking*

2.2 Deliver informative presentations about an important idea, issue, or event....

## English-Language Development Standards (Grades 3–5, Level 4)

*Listening and Speaking*

- (4) Actively participate and initiate more extended social conversations with peers and adults on unfamiliar topics by asking and answering questions, restating and soliciting information.

*Reading Comprehension*

- (2) Generate and respond to comprehension questions related to the text.

*Reading and Listening*

- (5) Recognize and describe themes stated directly in a text.

## Theater Standards

*Connections, Relationships, Applications*

- 5.1 Use theatrical skills to dramatize events and concepts from other curriculum areas

## Visual Arts Standards

*Visual Literacy*

- 5.2 Identify and design icons, logos, and other graphic devices as symbols for ideas and information.



*Our worthy fore Fathers  
Thro' Oceans to Deserts for Freedom they came,  
And dying bequeath'd us their Freedom and Fame. . . .*

—Liberty Song<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> A verse written by Harbottle Dorr, a Boston patriot, as cited in Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 91.

## II. Teacher Background Information

This lesson focuses on six important historical figures in the early history of the United States: Abigail and John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and George Washington. It includes six biographical sketches of individuals followed by several short primary source readings taken from letters, journals, or other writings of the individuals under study. Although three of the historical figures served as presidents of the United States, the focus of these biographies is primarily on their early careers and their service during the American Revolutionary War.

## III. Materials Needed

- Student Handout explaining the “Meeting of the Minds” Activity
- Student Handout on Broad sides
- Poster paper and markers for creating broad sides
- Rubric for scoring Broad sides
- Biographies and primary source readings
- Props for TV studio (e.g., table, chairs, cardboard for constructing microphone, map of the 13 original states as a set backdrop)

## IV. Lesson Activities

1. Divide the class into seven groups. Six groups will be assigned to read short biographies of important individuals of the American Revolutionary period. Several primary source documents follow each biographical sketch. Some vocabulary words used in either the biographical sketches or in the primary source documents have been identified after each of the two sets of readings each group will be given. You should add other appropriate words depending on your class’s reading level. Suggested questions are also included that may be used to stimulate group discussion. The short documents included in each group’s set of readings may include letters, journal entries, quotations, or other short readings to help students understand the character of the individual under study by reading remarks that they have actually written. Students in each group should read and discuss these documents to help them form judgments about their historical character. Each of the six groups should be the same size. If your class is large, you may wish to add one or more biographies such as: Sam Adams, John Hancock, Patrick Henry or any other Revolutionary era figure.
  - Group 1 represents Abigail Adams
  - Group 2 represents John Adams
  - Group 3 represents Benjamin Franklin

- Group 4 represents Thomas Jefferson
- Group 5 represents Thomas Paine
- Group 6 represents George Washington
- Group 7 serves as reporters asking questions of the 6 panelists.

A seventh group, assigned as “reporters”, should have six members or more corresponding to any additional biographies you have added. Each member of this group should be given one of the sets of readings assigned to the previous groups. The “reporter” should become a specialist on one of the historical figures and be able to ask questions of the person representing that individual during the “Meeting of the Minds” activity. In answering questions they should refer to a specific event, action, or quote from one of the primary source readings. There should be ground-rules set for questions, such as no questions that can be answered “yes” or “no” or by describing feelings as either “sad,” “happy,” or “mad.”

The classroom teacher or an aide should act as moderator for a “Meeting of the Minds” television panel show that will culminate the lesson.

### Meeting of the Minds

This is an activity in which selected students will take on the role of an important person in history. Students selected to represent the six historical characters will take on that persona. They may wish to wear a costume or some article of clothing that may have been worn at that time period. For example, the student selected to take the role of Benjamin Franklin might wear a beaver hat while the person acting as Abigail Adams might wear a bonnet and shawl.

The students will meet on a panel and a moderator will ask each to briefly tell about their lives and importance in colonial and revolutionary America. After introducing themselves in character, the moderator will call on students acting as reporters to begin asking questions of the panel. Panel members should attempt to answer these questions as their historical character would have replied.

The activity can be developed into a program to be presented to other classes or could be videotaped and shown at a parent night program.

Members of the groups representing historical figures will read and discuss the biography and primary source documents. They should also be given time to do further research on the person assigned to their group. Instruct each group to select one member willing to assume the identity of the historical figure to represent that person in a “Meeting of the Minds” activity.

All students should become involved, not just the student elected to take on the role of the historical person. They should read the short biography and the primary source readings included in the group handout. In addition, they should look up the person in an encyclopedia or a book on early American history. You may also wish to recommend some appropriate websites if students have access to the Internet. The selected bibliography on pages 53–55 includes some books and websites that would be helpful in conducting research.

Members of these six groups who do not have speaking roles during the panel discussion are to construct “broad­sides” to represent the beliefs of the individual they researched. Broad­sides should be done in pairs or triads, depending on the size of the group. This “group involvement” activity could take several forms. The broad­sides can be posted around the classroom, printed and distributed to other class members during the panel discussion, or, students could stage a demonstration using their broad­sides as placards in support of important points that are made by their historical personality during the panel discussion. Students with non-speaking parts should also become a cheering section for the student that they chose to represent the historical figure they researched.

This lesson includes information on broadsides (see Student Handout 2 on pages 8–9). The broadsides may serve as a form of assessment. Scoring should be based on criteria given to the students in advance. The criteria should stress both historical accuracy and creativity. A rubric is provided on page 10 and may be used or adapted by the teacher.

It is the reporter's responsibility to read that biography and prepare questions to ask during the Meeting of the Minds activity. As a reporter the person can direct his/her questions to the person they researched or to the entire panel.

### **ADAPTATION of the Panel TV Program**

You may wish to adapt the "Meeting of the Minds" activity in order to insure that every member of the class is equally involved. One alternative may be to eliminate the group representing the reporters and have reporters selected from each group. If you choose this alternative, it will become necessary to add at least two or three additional biographies. Select historical figures based on short biographies you may have in your school or classroom library. The students in each group should come up with five to eight questions and rehearse their answers for the television interview. They should decide who will serve as the reporter and who will answer each question.

## **“Meeting of the Minds”**

In a “Meeting of the Minds” activity, some of you will take on the personality of several important people in history. First, you must study about that historical person you were assigned so that you can learn as much as you can about his or her life and basic beliefs. After reading about the important figure from history, you will take on the role of that person on a panel with other famous people from history. Each person on the panel will take a few minutes to tell something about their life and important work. After everyone on the panel has been introduced, reporters, who have read about these historical people, will ask questions of the panel. Each person on the panel will answer as if it were the person from history answering the question.

For this activity the class will be divided into seven groups. One group will be assigned as newspaper reporters and will become experts on one of the six historical people that will be on the panel. It is the purpose of the newspaper reports to get as much information as they can by asking questions of members of the panel. The remainder of the class will be divided into six groups. Each group will be assigned an important American from the Revolutionary War era. The entire group will read and discuss the handout about their person from history. The handout will include a short biography and some letters, journal entries, or other material written by that person. You should read these primary source documents and put them in your own words. There are a few questions included with your handout that may help you discuss the life and beliefs of the person you have been assigned.

You will also be given time to look up the person your group has been assigned in an encyclopedia, history books, biographies, or on the Internet. Once you have studied about that person, you should decide on one person from your group to serve on the panel. Others in your group should create “broadsides” to tell about the great person your group represents. You will be given a handout explaining Early American Broadsides. You will use the broadsides you constructed to advertise the importance of your historical figure.



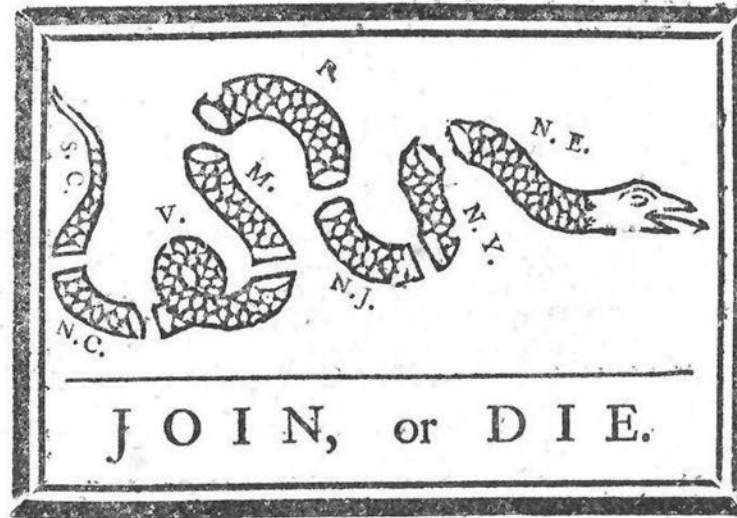
[illegible]

One example of an effective colonial  
broadside might have Benjamin

Franklin's 1754 cartoon "Join, or Die" along with a paragraph trying to get the colonies to unite. The cartoon shows a rattlesnake cut into pieces representing the colonies. Separated into pieces the snake was not a threat but if united it could strike at an enemy.

Rattlesnakes were popular representations of the colonies at the time of the American Revolution. A broadside showing American victories

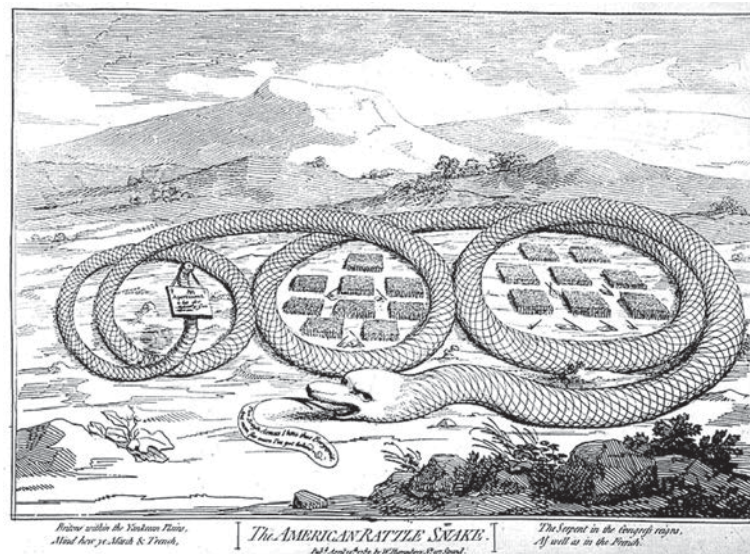




Benjamin Franklin, "Join or Die"

*Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia), May 9, 1754 Newspaper Serial and Government Publications Division,  
Available: Library of Congress <<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/us.capitol/one.jpg>>

over the British could use a picture of this cartoon of a rattlesnake coiled around two British armies that surrendered at Saratoga (1777) and Yorktown (1781) and waiting to catch the British in the open space in the snake's coiled tail. A Broadside with this image would include information about the two great American victories in the war or it might be used to encourage men to enlist in the army or perform some other act to show patriotism.



James Gillray, "The American Rattle Snake" (London: W. Humphrey, April 1782).  
Library of Congress, *John Bull & Uncle Sam: Four-Centuries of British American Relations*  
Available: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/british/images/57vc.jpg>

**Rubric for Scoring  
Student Created Broadsides**

SCORE	CONTENT	ORGANIZATION	STYLE
<b>4</b>	<p>States a clear position on an issue and is historically accurate</p> <p>Provides brief quote to support the position</p> <p>Presents a central idea or position</p> <p>Includes a graphic directly related to the issue</p>	<p>Neat and attractively designed poster that dramatically calls attention to an issue</p> <p>Easy to read and not cluttered</p>	<p>Uses vivid descriptive language</p> <p>Contains few, if any errors in grammar, capitalization, and spelling</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>States a position on an issue; information is historically accurate</p> <p>Includes an appropriate graphic that calls attention to the issue</p>	<p>Neat and well designed poster</p> <p>Easy to read and not cluttered</p>	<p>Uses descriptive language</p> <p>May contain a few errors in grammar, capitalization, and spelling</p>
<b>2</b>	<p>May use a descriptive sentence relating to an issue; may not be completely accurate</p> <p>Graphic design may not clearly relate directly to the issue</p>	<p>Difficult to determine how the Broadside relates to a specific issue</p> <p>Cluttered</p>	<p>Poorly constructed sentences</p> <p>May contain a number of errors in grammar, capitalization, and spelling</p>
<b>1</b>	<p>May state a position on an issue but not in clear or concise language; lacks accuracy</p> <p>No graphic is used to call attention to the poster</p>	<p>Poorly designed poster</p> <p>May either be cluttered with non-related information or lacking detail</p>	<p>Contains numerous errors in grammar, capitalization, and spelling</p>

## Abigail Adams



Abigail Smith Adams was born in Massachusetts in 1744. She was the second of four children. Her father was a Congregational minister. Her mother was a member of the prominent Quincy family. The Smiths and Quincys were well-known families in the Massachusetts colony. Important people often came to their home. As a young girl, Abigail would sit and listen to them during their visits. Although she did not attend school, Abigail was educated at home. Even as a young girl she would spend time reading in her father's library. Everyone recognized that she was a very intelligent girl.

She was introduced to John Adams, a lawyer from Braintree, Massachusetts. They wrote letters to one another while they were dating. Over the years of courtship and marriage they wrote over a thousand letters to one another. These letters were saved and can be read today. Long after they were married she would address many letters to her husband as "Dearest Friend" or "My Dearest of Friends".

When Abigail decided to marry John, her parents were not happy. Her mother wanted her to marry someone with money and an important social position. Abigail was determined and finally convinced her parents to agree to the marriage. Her father married them at his church on October 26, 1764. At the ceremony Rev. Smith read a passage from the Book of Luke in the Bible, "John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine and some say he has a devil in him." The wedding guests all laughed at the chosen passage because they knew that Rev. Smith had not originally approved of the marriage. During the first ten years of their marriage Abigail gave birth to five children, two daughters and three sons. One of her daughters died as a child. Her oldest son, John Quincy Adams, became the sixth President of the United States.

In 1774 John Adams was selected to be a delegate to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Abigail stayed at home in Braintree to raise the children and care for the family farm. Adams returned home for a short time and was again sent to Philadelphia to represent Massachusetts at the Second Continental Congress in 1775. During his absence Abigail wrote letters to her husband about the health of the children. She would give him information on events in Massachusetts and advise him on important matters.

Abigail Adams was a strong supporter of independence even before the Declaration of Independence was written. One Sunday the pastor of her church preached a sermon calling for the colonies to settle differences with England. She wrote of the sermon to her husband saying that she could not agree. She said, "Let us separate; they are unworthy to be our brethren. Let us renounce them." When her husband wrote that the Second Continental Congress would consider independence, she wrote back saying that these men must "Remember the Ladies." She continued to write to Adams in Philadelphia on behalf of women. She wrote that women should not be expected to obey any new laws that would be written if women had no voice in writing these laws.

During the war she kept the farm going while she cared for the children. She opened her home to the homeless and gave part of the little food she had to the poor. She was constantly busy caring for the children, spinning cloth, making bandages for the wounded, and managing the farm. She even found time to teach herself French from books.

John Adams was chosen by Congress to go to Europe during the war to seek help. He thought of taking his wife and family with him but decided that it was too dangerous. He did take their oldest son, John Quincy. After returning home for a short period of time, he was sent back to Europe this time to meet with the British to try to work out a peace treaty to end the war. After a peace treaty was signed, John Adams sent for his wife to join him. Mrs. Adams and her daughter sailed for Europe in 1784. She had not seen her son John Quincy for six years.



The family returned to America in 1788 and the next year her husband was elected Vice President of the United States. The Adamses lived in New York, the nation's first capital and in Philadelphia when the capital was moved there. However, Mrs. Adams always considered Braintree their home.

John Adams was elected President of the United States in 1796. He took office in March 1797 in Philadelphia. During his four years as president, Mrs. Adams continued to advise him on issues. Some of the president's enemies even accused Abigail Adams of not knowing her place in society. They said that she should not be interested in politics and should spend her time doing things suitable for women! This did not stop her from continuing to advise the president.

During the last years of George Washington's presidency a new capital city was being built. The capital was not completely finished when the government moved to the new city named for George Washington. President Adams had lost the election of 1800 to Thomas Jefferson who would become President in March 1801. Adams was still president when the capital was moved to the new city. Mrs. Adams moved the family into the President's House that was later called the "White House." During the short time they lived in the White House, Mrs. Adams tried her best to make it livable. Nothing seemed to work in the big house and it was impossible to keep it warm. She complained about it to her daughter but did not want others to know how she felt. She was happy to return to Braintree, Massachusetts, when Thomas Jefferson moved into the White House.

She lived happily for the next 17 years in the family home and took great pride in her son John Quincy Adams' interest in politics. In 1814 she wrote to her granddaughter that the greatest unhappiness she had in her life were the long periods of separation from her husband during the Revolutionary War. She died on October 26, 1818 at the age of 75.



### Vocabulary

*prominent*      leading; important

- How was young Abigail Smith educated? Why did she not attend school?
- Do you think her life would have been different if she had been able to attend school and get a college education? Why or why not?
- What can you learn from the letters Abigail Adams wrote to her husband? Would you consider her a strong and independent woman? Explain.
- How did Abigail show her patriotism during the American Revolution?
- Why do you think that some people thought that Abigail Adams should not give advice to her husband?
- Would you consider Abigail Adams an important person in American history? Explain.

\* \* \* \*



## Primary Source Readings

*Abigail Adams received a letter from her husband from Philadelphia saying that he believed the Continental Congress would soon vote on independence. She wrote the following letter to John Adams on March 31, 1776.*

[I] . . . long to hear that you have declared an independency—and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If . . . care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or Representation. . . .

*On May 7, 1776, Abigail wrote again to her husband criticizing the men of the Continental Congress for ignoring the rights of women.*

. . . I can not say that I think you very generous to the Ladies, for whilst you are proclaiming peace and good will to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives. But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken—and notwithstanding all your wise laws and maxims we have it in our power not only to free ourselves but to subdue our masters, and without violence throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet.

*In a letter on June 30, 1778, to her husband who was in Paris, France, Abigail Adams wrote. . . .*

. . . in this country you need not be told how much female education is neglected, nor how fashionable it has been to ridicule female learning, though I acknowledge it [is] my happiness to be connected with

a person of a more generous mind and liberal sentiments.

*Just a few days after moving into the White House, Abigail Adams wrote a letter to her daughter. In the letter she said that after she, the President, and his staff left Baltimore, Maryland they got lost and had to go through woods for hours without finding a path. She then wrote about this "great castle" that was to be their home in Washington. She told her daughter not to tell anyone what she had to say about the White House.*

. . . The house is upon a grand and superb scale, requiring about thirty servants to attend and keep the apartments in proper order. . . .

The house is made habitable, but there is not a single apartment finished. . . . We have not the least fence-yard, or other convenience, without, and the great unfinished audience room I make a drying-room . . . to hang up the clothes in.

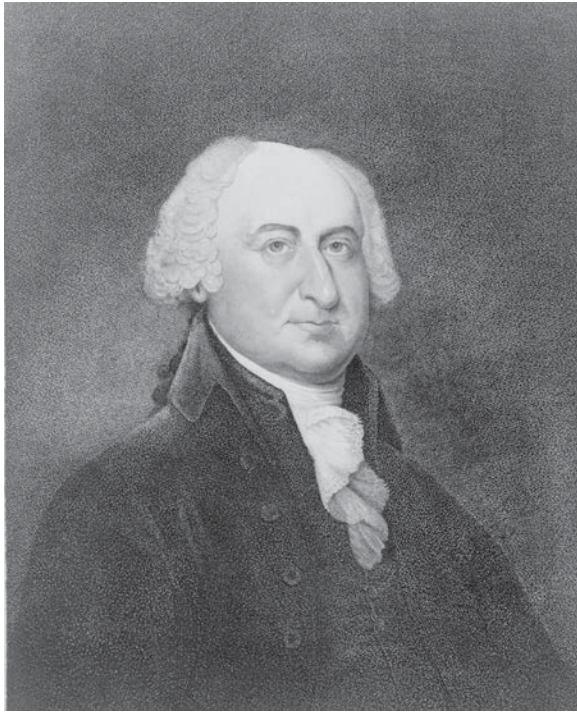
. . . Two articles are much distressed for: the one is bells [to call servants for help], but the more important one is wood. Yet you cannot see wood for the trees. No arrangement has been made, but by promises never performed, to supply the newcomers with fuel . . . shiver, shiver. No wood-cutters . . . to be had. . . . One cord and a half of wood, which is all we have for this house, where twelve fires are constantly required. . . .



Vocabulary

<i>arbitrary power</i>	power without reason
<i>cord of wood</i>	a stack of wood equal to 4x4x8 feet
<i>emancipating</i>	freeing; setting free
<i>foment</i>	stir up
<i>habitable</i>	livable
<i>liberal sentiments</i>	open-minded beliefs
<i>maxim</i>	sayings; proverbs
<i>retaining</i>	keeping
<i>subdue</i>	hold back; control or defeat
<i>superb scale</i>	very large
<i>tyrant</i>	a dictator

## John Adams



John Adams was born in Braintree, Massachusetts, in 1735. His ancestors were among the Puritans who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony a hundred years earlier. His father was a farmer.

John's father taught his son to read before he went to school. John was ahead of others in his class and soon became bored with school. He seemed to be interested only in hunting and farming. His father was concerned; he wanted his son to go to college and become a minister. Mr. Adams encouraged his son to use his talents and soon John began to take his schooling seriously. He passed his exams. He

became a student at Harvard College when he was 16. The family had to sell some of their land in order to pay for John's tuition. For a few years after he graduated from Harvard John taught at a one-room schoolhouse. He did not enjoy teaching and decided to become a lawyer. His parents were upset by his decision.

After becoming a lawyer, Adams moved back to Braintree and opened an office in the family home. He was successful and later opened an office in Boston. In 1764 John married Abigail Smith. They had five children. One of the two girls died as a child.

John Adams was becoming more and more concerned about British policy towards the colonies. He wrote letters to newspapers against the Stamp Act. He did not believe that the British Parliament had any right to tax the colonies without their consent. The next year Parliament repealed the Stamp Act but soon afterwards passed another set of taxes known as the Townshend Acts.

When John Hancock, one of the wealthiest merchants in the colony, was arrested for smuggling, Adams agreed to be his lawyer. When he

won the case he became famous and was admired by colonists who opposed British policies.

A few years later, some of those same people who had praised Adams turned against him. After the Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770, John Adams agreed to defend British soldiers who were put on trial for murder. This was very unpopular. Patriots in the colony were against his decision. Although he was successful in defending the soldiers, he continued to write in support of colonial opposition to the British. Although Adams did not take part in the Tea Party in 1773, he approved of the dumping of tea into Boston Harbor.

Adams served for several years in the Massachusetts colonial legislature. In 1774 he and his cousin Sam Adams and three other men were selected to represent the colony at the First Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia. He was also selected to attend the Second Continental Congress that met the following year. By now, Adams was convinced that the colonies would have to break away from Britain. During the meetings he tried to convince others that the time had come to declare independence. He supported the establishment of a Continental Army and recommended that George Washington from Virginia be named Commander-in-chief of the army.

The Congress named John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, Robert Livingston of New York, and Roger Sherman of Connecticut to serve on a committee to draft a declaration of independence. The committee agreed that Jefferson should write the declaration for their review. Although Adams liked the declaration some years later he said that Jefferson had simply copied most of it from what other people had written.

While in Philadelphia, Adams wrote a number of letters to his wife Abigail. He addressed his letters to "My Dearest Friend". He shared with her his hope for declaring independence. She often wrote to him of her views on major problems of the day. When he told her that the Second Continental Congress was discussing independence, Abigail wrote a letter back saying that he must "remember the ladies." She was always reminding her husband that women were equal to men. He replied that it was foolish for men to ever think that they had any control over women.

During the war Adams served in Congress and was sent to Europe to try to get help for the American cause. He took his son, John Quincy Adams, with him. Finally Abigail joined them in Europe. Adams, along with Benjamin Franklin and John Jay were the men selected by Congress to work out a peace treaty ending the American Revolution. After peace had been made, Adams became the first United States ambassador to Britain.

Adams returned to the United States and was elected Vice President to serve with George Washington. He was elected second President of the United States in 1796. Thomas Jefferson also ran for the presidency that year but received the second highest votes. When the Constitution of the United States was first written it said that the person with the second highest number of votes would be the vice president. Adams was a member of the Federalist political party. Jefferson was the leader of a different political party. The two men, who had worked together to declare independence, were now on different sides.

John Adams was president for one term of four years. Jefferson defeated him in the election of 1800. Adams returned to Braintree, Massachusetts. Years later he began to write to Jefferson and the two men again became friends. John Adams died on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson died on that same day.

\* \* \* \*

- Why did John Adams agree to defend British soldiers accused of murder? Do you think this was an act of courage? Why or why not?
- Why did he support dumping the tea in the Boston harbor?
- What role did Adams play in drafting the Declaration of Independence?
- What service did John Adams provide for his country?

\* \* \* \*



## Primary Source readings

*John Adams in 1765 wrote an essay on liberty. He called on the people of New England to recognize that their ancestors came to America in search of liberty.*

. . . Let it be known that the British liberties are not the grants of princes or parliaments, but original rights. . . . That many of our rights are inherent and essential, agreed on as maxims and established . . . even before a parliament existed. . . . Let us see that truth, liberty, justice, and benevolence, are its everlasting basis. . . .

*In 1772, during the period of conflict with the British in Boston, John Adams wrote the following passage in his Journal.*

There is danger from all men. The only maxim of a free government ought to be to trust no man living with power to endanger the public liberty.

*John Adams wrote the following passage in his diary in 1773 on the third anniversary of the Boston Massacre.*

. . . The part I took in defense of Captain Preston and the soldiers . . . was . . . one of the most gallant, generous, manly and disinterested actions of my whole life, and one of the best pieces of service I ever rendered my country. Judgment of death against those soldiers would have been as foul a stain upon this country as the executions of the Quakers or witches. . . .

*Abigail had written a letter to her husband on March 31, 1776, saying that women should not be expected to obey laws that they had no voice in writing. On April 14, John Adams wrote a reply to that letter.*

As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our struggle has loosened the bands of Government everywhere. That children and apprentices were disobedient—that schools and colleges were grown turbulent. . . .

But your letter was the first intimation that another tribe more numerous and powerful than all the rest were grown discontented. . . . Depend upon it, we know better than to repeal our masculine systems. Although they are in full force, you know they are little more than theory. . . . you know we are the subjects. We have only the name of masters, and rather than give up this, which would completely subject us to the despotism of the petticoat. . . .

Source: Massachusetts Historical Society  
<<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/letter>>

*John Adams had worked with Franklin in Paris during the American Revolution. They had even shared an apartment during that period. Adams, however, thought that Franklin was a boastful man and later wrote that when the history of the American Revolution was written, Franklin would get all the credit.*

The history of our Revolution will be one continued lie from one end to the other. The essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin's electric rod smote the earth and out sprang George Washington. . . . I never knew but one man who pretended to be wholly free from [vanity], . . . and him I know to be in his heart the vainest man, and the falsest character I have ever met with in life. . . .

Source: Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: the Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (Viking Press, 2005), xviii-xix.

*After Adams retired from politics he offered advice to men who would like to be President.*

No man who ever held the office of president would congratulate a friend on obtaining it.

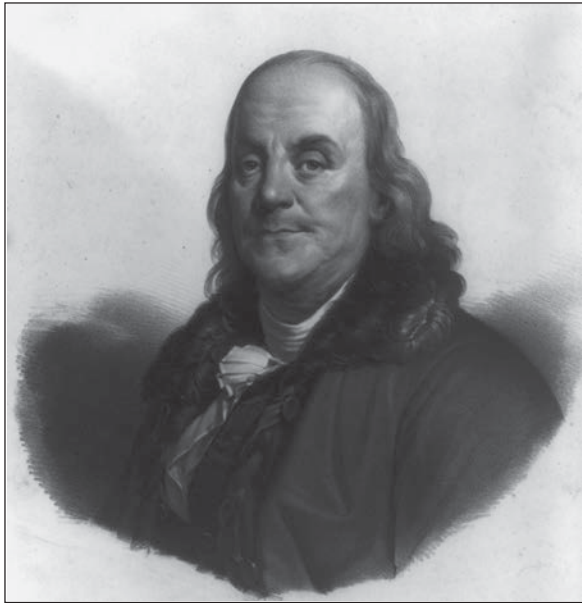
Source: The Quotations Page, Quotations by John Adams  
<[http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/John\\_Adams](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/John_Adams)>



### Vocabulary

<i>apprentice</i>	a trainee, one who is learning a trade
<i>benevolence</i>	good will
<i>despotism</i>	dictatorship; control over
<i>inherent</i>	natural
<i>intimation</i>	hint
<i>maxim</i>	truth
<i>rendered</i>	provided
<i>smote</i>	struck
<i>theory</i>	belief
<i>turbulent</i>	disorderly
<i>vanity</i>	self-importance; pride; full of himself

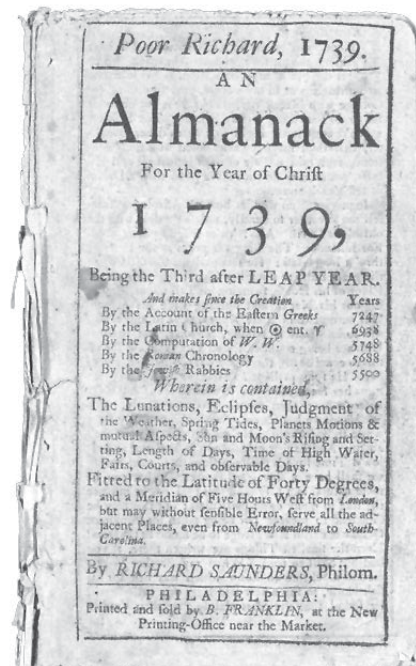
## Benjamin Franklin



Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston in 1706, the tenth son of a soap and candle maker. Although he attended school for a while, he was self-taught. As a boy he was an apprentice to his father and later went to work for his half-brother who had a print shop in Boston. After a disagreement with his brother, he moved to Philadelphia where he worked as a printer for a short time before going to London.

After spending two years in England, Franklin returned to Philadelphia and in 1730 bought a newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. He was a successful newspaper publisher but he became best known for writing *Poor Richard's Almanac*. He published this almanac each year for 25 years. The yearly almanac became a popular book in all the colonies. Soon it was published in Europe and translated into French and other languages.

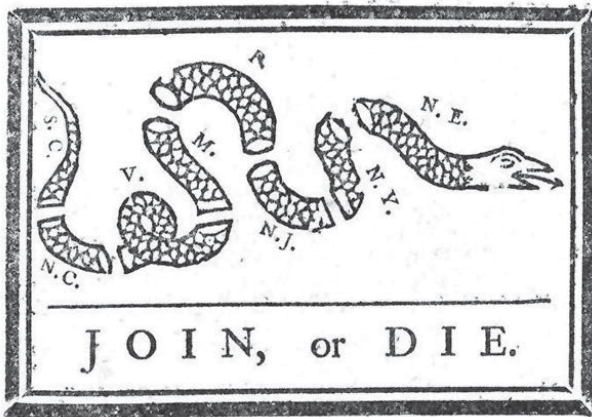
Franklin was interested in everything. He invented the "Franklin Stove" in 1742. When he read about experiments with electricity that had taken place in France, he set up a laboratory in his house in Philadelphia. Here he carried out experiments with electricity. In 1752 he conducted the famous outdoor experiment flying a kite with an attached wire to "catch" lightning during a thunderstorm. Franklin wrote a pamphlet on his experiments with electricity that was widely read in England and France. Franklin became known throughout the world as a great scientist and inventor. Although he had very little schooling as a boy he was given honorary degrees





*Franklin Experiment with Kite*

Reproduction of painting by Charles E. Mills (1912)  
Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-48888



Franklin's cartoon, *Join, or Die* was published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1754 to encourage the colonies to support the Albany Plan of Union.

from universities in America and was made a member of the French Academy of Sciences. He was also awarded a gold medal from the Royal Society of London for his scientific work.

Franklin was a member of the Pennsylvania legislature from 1751–1764. He helped to organize the colonial postal service and became Deputy Postmaster General for the colonies. At the time the British colonies in North America feared that a war would

break out with France, Franklin tried to get all the colonies to unite. He was selected to represent Pennsylvania at the Albany Congress in 1754. Here he proposed a plan of union. Franklin's "Albany Plan" was never adopted by the colonies because they felt they would have to give up some of their powers by uniting as one.

After the French and Indian War, Franklin was paid to go to England to represent the interests of the colonies of Pennsylvania, Georgia, New



Jersey, and Massachusetts. While he was there, the Parliament passed the hated Stamp Act. Franklin was believed to have failed in his mission when the act was passed. Soon, however, the colonies changed their view of Franklin when he helped convince the Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act.

Franklin remained in England until 1775. While he was in England he met an out-of-work corset maker named Thomas Paine. Franklin took a special liking to the young man. When he learned that Paine was interested in moving to America, Franklin helped pay his passage. He also gave Paine a letter to give to a printer in Philadelphia recommending that he give him a job. Paine came to America in 1774. Franklin left England the next year and returned to Philadelphia. He was welcomed home as a hero and was chosen to serve in the Second Continental Congress.

In June 1776 Franklin convinced Richard Henry Lee of Virginia to petition Congress to call for a vote on the question of independence. Lee proposed, "These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states." There was some discussion and it was decided that a committee should be appointed to write a declaration that would be voted on at a later date. Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams were three of the five men appointed to the committee. The committee appointed Jefferson to draft a declaration. When Jefferson finished he sent it to Franklin on June 21 with a note, "Would Doctor Franklin be so good as to peruse [examine] it and suggest such alterations [changes] ..." Franklin made a few changes, the most famous crossing out Jefferson's "We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable". He wrote instead, "We hold these truths to be self-evident." Congress voted for independence on July 2 but over the next two days made a few changes to Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. On July 4 the Declaration of Independence was approved.

The newly independent states were to write new constitutions. Franklin was unanimously chosen to be the president of the Pennsylvania convention called to write the state's first constitution. Many of his ideas about government were included in the Pennsylvania constitution.

Franklin at age 71 was called on by the Congress to go to Paris to try to



convince the French to help in the war with Britain. When he arrived in France the ladies began wearing wigs called "*coiffure à la Franklin*" that resembled Franklin's fur hat. The French loved and respected him. When he got to Paris on December 21, 1776 people lined the streets to get to see him. Franklin was the one person most responsible for getting the French to help during the American Revolution. In 1782 Franklin was one of five men to discuss peace terms with Britain.

Franklin returned to the United States in 1785 after Jefferson had agreed to serve as U.S. ambassador to France. In 1787 Franklin was chosen as one of the delegates representing Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention meeting in Philadelphia. At the Convention Franklin called on delegates to put aside their differences and compromise. He agreed to give up on some things he wanted in the Constitution in the spirit of compromise. When the Constitution was finally finished, Franklin called on all the delegates to vote for the document. He died in 1790 shortly after the Constitution was approved by the states and became the law of the land.

People in the United States and all over Europe mourned the death of this great American scientist, inventor, and public servant.



### Vocabulary

<i>almanac</i>	a manual; instruction booklet
<i>alterations</i>	changes
<i>apprentice</i>	a trainee, one who is learning a trade
<i>coiffure</i>	French for hair style
<i>compromise</i>	cooperation; to agree to find a middle ground

- What courage did Franklin show during the Stamp Act crisis?

- How did Franklin use the rattlesnake in his *Join, or Die* cartoon in 1754?
- Why do you think Franklin was chosen to represent the newly independent United States in France? How successful was he in this service?
- What was Franklin's role in the Constitutional Convention?
- Why did he believe that delegates should support the Constitution even if they did not agree with everything in the document?
- Why is Franklin still celebrated as one of America's greatest men?

\* \* \* \*

## Primary Source Readings

*Franklin returned from England in May 1775, a few weeks after the battles of Lexington and Concord. Few Americans at that time, even after fighting had begun in New England, sought independence from Britain. Franklin wrote the following letter to William Strahan, an English printer.*

July 5, 1775

Mr. Strahan,

You are a Member of Parliament, and one of that majority which has doomed my country to destruction. You have begun to burn our towns, and murder our people. Look upon your hands! They are stained with the blood of your relations! You and I were long friends; you are now my Enemy, and I am, Yours,

B. Franklin

Source: Walter Isaacson, ed., *A Benjamin Franklin Reader* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 259.

*In December 1775 Franklin saw that a drummer for a colonial Marine unit had painted a rattlesnake on his drum and under the snake printed the words "Don't tread on me." Franklin wrote the following article in the Pennsylvania Journal and signed it "An American Guesser".*

I observed on one of the drums belonging to the marines. . . . there was printed a Rattle-Snake, with the modest motto under it, "Don't tread on me."

...Recollecting that countries are sometimes represented by animals peculiar to them, it occurred to me that the Rattle-Snake is found in no other quarter of the world besides America, and may therefore have been chosen, on that account, to represent her....

I recollected that her eye excelled in brightness, that of any other animal, and that she has no eye-lids—She may therefore be esteemed an emblem of vigilance. She never begins an attack, nor, when once engaged, never surrenders: She is therefore an emblem of . . . true courage. . . . She never wounds till she has generously given notice, even to her enemy, and cautioned him against the danger of treading on her.

Was I wrong, Sir, in thinking this a strong picture of the temper and conduct of America? The poison of her teeth is the necessary means of digesting her food, and at the same time is certain destruction to our enemies. . . .

I confess I was wholly at a loss what to make of the rattles, till I went back and counted them and found them just thirteen, exactly the number of the Colonies united in America; and I recollected too that this was the only part of the Snake which increased in numbers. ...'Tis curious and amazing to observe how distinct and independent of each other the rattles of this animal are, and yet how firmly they are united together, so as never to be separated but by breaking them to pieces. —One of those rattles singly, is

incapable of producing sound, but the ringing of thirteen together, is sufficient to alarm the boldest man living. . . .

Source: Walter Isaacson, ed., *A Benjamin Franklin Reader* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 264-66.



*When the convention finally finished its work and the Constitution, Franklin spoke in support of the document.*

I confess that I do not entirely approve this Constitution at present; but sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it: For, having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. It is therefore that, the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment and pay more respect to the judgment of

others. . . . Thus I consent, sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure that it is not the best."

Source: Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 458.



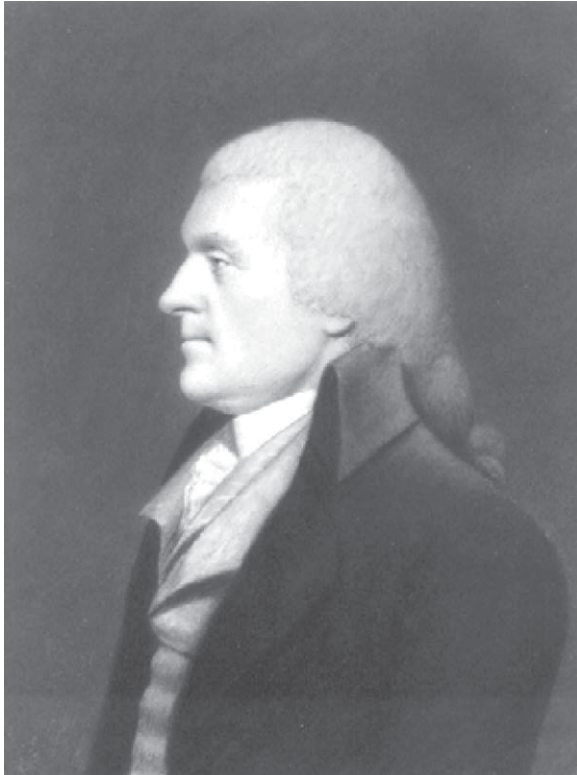
### Vocabulary

<i>emblem</i>	symbol or sign
<i>esteemed</i>	honored
<i>peruse</i>	examine; to look over
<i>vigilance</i>	watchfulness; to be alert

\* \* \* \*

- What does the letter to William Strahan tell you about Franklin's patriotism?
- How is Franklin using the rattlesnake to symbolize America? Does this article seem to support a call for a Declaration of Independence? Why or why not?

## Thomas Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson by James Sharples, Sr.  
*Collections of Independence Historical Park*

Thomas Jefferson was born in Virginia in 1743. His father, Peter Jefferson, was a wealthy landowner. His mother, Jane Randolph, was a member of one of Virginia's wealthy families. His father hired private tutors to teach his son. As a young man he studied law at the College of William and Mary at Williamsburg, the capital of the colony of Virginia.

Jefferson designed his home on top of a mountain and began building it in 1768. He named his home Monticello, Italian for "mountain top." In 1772 he married Martha Wayles Skelton, a rich widow, and doubled his land holdings. Martha died just ten years after their marriage. They had six children but only three girls survived. Jefferson never remarried.

Monticello, home of Thomas Jefferson  
*Historic American Buildings Survey (Library of Congress)*  
*HABS VA,2-CHAR.V,1-12*





Jefferson was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses when he was only 25 years old. While serving as a member of the House of Burgesses he became concerned over English policy. He was sent to Philadelphia in 1775 as one of Virginia's representatives to the Second Continental Congress. He wrote the "Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms" soon after coming to Philadelphia. The Congress, however, thought that it was too harsh and had a member of the Pennsylvania delegation revise it.

When the British continued their policy towards the colonies, Jefferson thought it was necessary for Congress to seek independence. He was appointed along with Benjamin Franklin and John Adams to a committee of five to draft a Declaration of Independence. When the committee met he was chosen to write the Declaration. Congress voted for independence on July 2 and over the next two days made a few changes in Jefferson's draft. Congress approved the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Jefferson has been called the "pen of the American Revolution."

Jefferson went back to Virginia in 1776 and served in the Virginia legislature. In 1779 he was elected governor of the state. He wrote the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom calling for the end of religious discrimination. The Virginia legislature failed to pass the statute. Jefferson continued to work in favor of the law that was finally passed in 1786, after the Revolutionary War.

While Jefferson was governor the British invaded Virginia and he narrowly escaped capture. Some accused him of being a coward for fleeing from the British when they occupied Monticello. These charges hurt Jefferson and he decided never to return to politics. His friends convinced him to return to politics and he was elected to Congress in 1783. The next year he was sent to Paris to work out a trade agreement with France. When Benjamin Franklin left France in 1784, Jefferson was named United States Ambassador to France. He was in France when the Constitution was written. His friend James Madison, who was one of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention, kept Jefferson informed on the Constitution.

Jefferson returned to the United States in 1789 and was asked by George Washington, the newly elected president, to become Secretary of State. He served as the country's first Secretary of State.

While in the president's cabinet he and Alexander Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury, often disagreed. Jefferson left the cabinet in 1793 to protest Washington's support of Hamilton's programs. Jefferson and his friends formed a political organization named the Democratic-Republican Party. Hamilton and his supporters formed a party called the Federalist.

Jefferson ran for president in the election of 1796 as the leader of the Democratic-Republican Party. The Constitution said that the person with the highest vote would be president and the person who came in second would be vice president. This system of electing the president was not changed until 1804 with the ratification of the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution. John Adams, who had served as Washington's vice president, ran as a member of the Federalist Party and was elected president. Jefferson came in second and became the vice president. Jefferson and Adams had been friends during the Revolution but now the two men disagreed over how the government should be run.

During the next presidential election in 1800, Jefferson defeated Adams and became president. Aaron Burr became vice president. Jefferson was re-elected president in 1804 and served a second four-year term. During his presidency he arranged for the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France and sent Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the region.

As president Jefferson refused to pay tribute to the Barbary Pirates. Both Presidents Washington and Adams had paid the pirates so that American ships could trade in the Mediterranean Sea. Jefferson sent U.S. Marines and warships to Tripoli in North Africa. After a brief struggle the United States won the war and signed a treaty with Tripoli.

Near the end of Jefferson's second term as president, England and France were at war. In order not to be pulled into this war, Jefferson got Congress to pass a law forbidding trade with both these countries. This hurt American trade. People of the New England states who were involved in trade were against the president. In the election of 1808 James Madison who had helped Jefferson form the Democratic-Republican Party was elected fourth President of the United States.

Jefferson returned to his Monticello plantation where he lived until his death in 1826. After he left office he founded the University of Virginia.

He also designed buildings for the new university. He renewed his friendship with John Adams and the two men wrote letters to one another during their retirement from politics. Both men died on the same day, July 4, 1826, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson wanted to be remembered for three things. On his tombstone he wanted the inscription, "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson; Author of the Declaration of American Independence; Of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom; And Father of the University of Virginia."



### Vocabulary

<i>cabinet</i>	advisors to the president
<i>ratification</i>	approval; an amendment must be approved or ratified by three-fourths of the states before it becomes a part of the Constitution of the United States
<i>tribute</i>	payment or tax; the Barbary Pirates required that a special tax be paid before a country could trade in the Mediterranean Sea
<i>Tripoli</i>	one of several states on the Mediterranean Sea known as the Barbary States; the present country of Libya in North Africa

\* \* \* \*

- Why did Jefferson believe that the colonies needed to unite to oppose British policy before the Revolution?
- Why is Jefferson called "the pen of the American Revolution?"
- Why do you think that Jefferson wanted to be remembered as author of the Declaration of Independence, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and founder of the University of Virginia rather than President of the United States or his other achievements?

## Primary Source Readings

*Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Jay, William Munford, and John Tyler on the importance of a free press.*

Our liberty cannot be guarded but by the freedom of the press, nor that be limited without danger of losing it.

—Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, 1786

To preserve the freedom of the human mind . . . and freedom of the press, every spirit should be ready to devote itself to martyrdom; for as long as we may think as we will and speak as we think, the condition of man will proceed in improvement.

—Thomas Jefferson to William Green Munford, 1799

No experiment can be more interesting than that we are now trying, and which we trust will end in establishing the fact, that man may be governed by reason and truth. Our first object should therefore be, to leave open to him all the avenues to truth. The most effectual hitherto found, is the freedom of the press. It is, therefore, the first shut up by those who fear the investigation of their actions.

—Thomas Jefferson to John Tyler, 1804

*Thomas Jefferson wrote a document called the Kentucky Resolutions in opposition to a law passed by Congress in 1798 that he believed violated the First Amendment to the Constitution.*

One of the amendments to the Constitution. . . . expressly declares that 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press,' thereby guarding in the same sentence and under the same words, the freedom of religion, of speech, and of the press; insomuch that whatever violates either throws down the sanctuary which covers the others."

—Kentucky Resolutions, 1798

*Jefferson's Statue of Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom became the basis for the First Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing the "free exercise of religion."*

Believing . . . that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their Legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.

—Thomas Jefferson to the Baptists of Danbury, Connecticut, 1802

Source: The University of Virginia, *Electronic Text Center*; Eyler Robert Coates, Sr., ed. *Thomas Jefferson on Politics and Government*, "Quotations from the Writings of Thomas Jefferson," 1995–2001. Available: <<http://etext.virginia.edu/jefferson/quotations>> [July, 2006]



Vocabulary

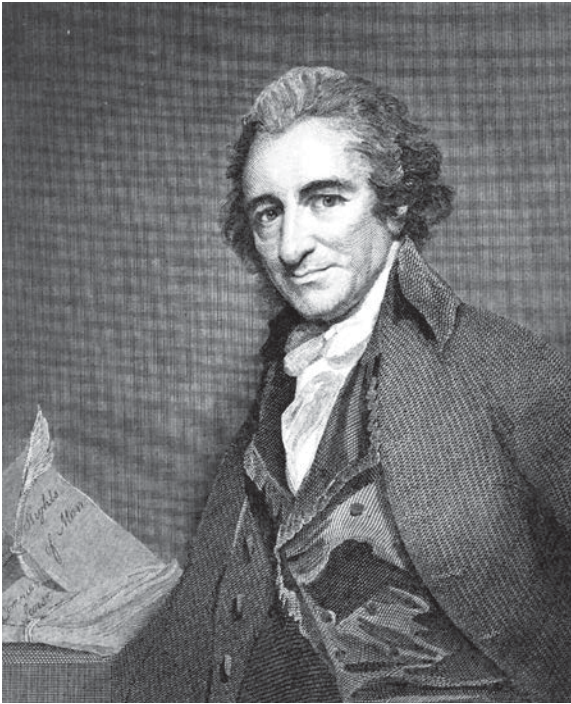
<i>contemplate</i>	believe
<i>legitimate</i>	legal or lawful; by right
<i>sanctuary</i>	place of safety; protection
<i>sovereign reverence</i>	total or complete respect
<i>statute</i>	law or ruling

\* \* \* \*

- What did Jefferson mean by “a wall of separation” between Church and State?



## Thomas Paine



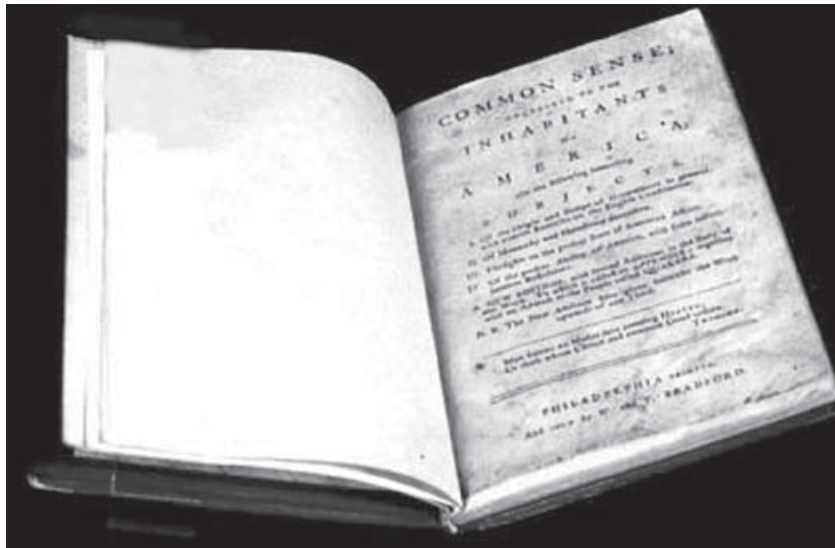
Thomas Paine was born in England in 1737. His father, a Quaker, was a corset-maker and small farmer. His mother was the daughter of an attorney and attended the Anglican Church. As a boy, Tom attended school until he was 13. When he left school he became an apprentice to his father and worked making corsets out of whalebone. After a few years he went to work for one of the best-known corset makers in London.

Tom married the daughter of a member of the Custom and Excise service. His father-in-law convinced Tom to give up his job as corset maker and take an exam to

be an excise tax collector. Less than a year after his wedding his wife died and he returned to his hometown where he became a tax collector. He soon lost his job and again went to work as a corset maker. After a short time he returned to London and began working as an English teacher. He was hardly able to live on his salary as a teacher and went back to work as a tax collector. This lasted for only a short time as he was fired from his job after he joined a movement to get higher pay for tax collectors.

Discouraged with his life, Tom decided to leave for America. While in London he became acquainted with Dr. Benjamin Franklin. Franklin took a liking to the young man and convinced him to go to Philadelphia. He gave Tom a letter to give to one of Franklin's printer friends recommending him for a job when he arrived.

Tom arrived in Philadelphia in November 1774. The First Continental Congress had just ended its meeting in Philadelphia a month before he arrived. The Congress declared that the measures the British had taken after the Boston Tea Party were unconstitutional and called upon the colonies to form their own militias and prepare to defend themselves. The Congress also said it would meet again if Britain did not change its



Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Philadelphia, 1776). Available: National Park Service Museum Collections. <[http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/revwar/image\\_gal/gucoimg/guco1815book.html](http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/revwar/image_gal/gucoimg/guco1815book.html)> [July, 2006]

policy. Although born and raised in England, Tom was opposed to British acts that punished the New England colonists for destroying tea.

Just a few months after he began work as a printer in Philadelphia, the British and American Patriots fought at Lexington and Concord. Tom fully supported the Patriot cause and became convinced that it was time for the American colonies to declare independence from the British. He did not think it was right to be forced to pay taxes to a government across the ocean. He also thought that the colonies should not be forced to obey laws that were made by the British Parliament.

Tom Paine had only been in America for just over two years when he wrote and published a pamphlet called "Common Sense." Before publishing the pamphlet he showed it to several men in Philadelphia who had been trying to convince the colonial assembly to call for independence. Ben Franklin, who had just returned from England, was one of the few men who read the pamphlet before it was printed. Franklin liked what he read and suggested only a few minor changes. The pamphlet was published anonymously in January 1776. It was a success and so many copies were sold that the publisher had to print more copies. Many people who read the pamphlet said that the author must be Benjamin Franklin. Others disagreed and said it was either Sam or John Adams who was the author. It was not until later that people learned that an Englishman who had just come to Philadelphia wrote this popular pamphlet.

Paine wrote that it was foolish to think that a small continent across the ocean should rule Americans. He began the pamphlet by saying that the King and Parliament had for years oppressed the "good people of this country." He wrote, "The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind." Paine believed that America would become a model for other countries. Some years later Paine said that he wrote "Common Sense" to "rescue man from tyranny and ... false principles of government, and to enable him to be free."

Within a few months of the publication of "Common Sense" the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia and on July 4, 1776 declared, "That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent States..."

Tom Paine did more than write about the need for independence, he joined the Revolutionary army. During the war he wrote *The American Crisis*. These were a series of letters written during the war. The first *Crisis* paper written in December 1776 was a call to patriotism. Generals ordered that the paper be read to all troops in military camps.

After the Revolutionary War ended, Tom Paine lived in New York and New Jersey for a time. In 1787 he traveled to England and later to France. He was in France at the time of the French Revolution. Paine wrote a pamphlet "The Rights of Man" supporting the French Revolution. The British government considered the pamphlet to be treason and, even though Paine was in France, found him guilty and declared that he was an outlaw. He would be arrested and jailed if he ever returned to England.

Paine became a member of the French National Assembly during the French Revolution. When the political party he joined was outlawed, Paine was arrested and jailed. In 1794, the U.S. representative in France, James Monroe, arranged for Paine's release from jail. He returned to the United States and lived the last years of his life in poverty. Ten years after his death, an Englishman returned Paine's remains to England as his way of protesting the actions of the British government. The man who has been called the most responsible for America's independence was finally laid to rest in England. The return of his remains was looked upon as a final act challenging British policy.



### Vocabulary

*apprentice*      a trainee, one who is learning a trade

\* \* \* \*

- What can you tell about the character of Thomas Paine from his early life in England?
- Why did Paine consider the British tyrants?
- Why did Paine write *Common Sense*?
- Why is *Common Sense* considered to be one of the great documents in American history?
- How did Paine show his patriotism during the American Revolution?
- Why would someone opposed to the British government want to return Thomas Paine's body to England for burial?

## Primary Source Readings

*Thomas Paine published his pamphlet Common Sense in January 1776. All the printed copies were sold in a short period of time and more copies had to be printed. The following is an excerpt from sections of the pamphlet.*

. . . Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offences of Britain, and, still hoping for the best, are apt to call out, "Come, come, we shall be friends again, for all this." ...Tell me, whether you can hereafter love, honor, and faithfully serve the power that hath carried fire and sword into your land? If you can do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by your delay bring ruin upon posterity. . . . (p. 26)

. . . No man was a warmer wisher for reconciliation than myself, before the fatal nineteenth of April 1775 [Battles of Lexington and Concord], but the moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen tempered Pharaoh of England for ever; and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul. . . . (p. 29)

. . . We have it in our power to make the world over again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is at hand, and a race of men perhaps as numerous as all Europe contains, are to receive their portion of freedom. . . . (p. 52)

. . . We ought not now to be debating whether we shall be independent or not, but, anxious to accomplish it. . . . Every day convinces us of its necessity. . . . (p. 53)

Source: Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995).

*After the Revolutionary War began, Thomas Paine wrote a series of pamphlets he called The American Crisis. The following is taken from the first of this series.*

These are the times that try men's souls: the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. . . .

Source: Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 91.

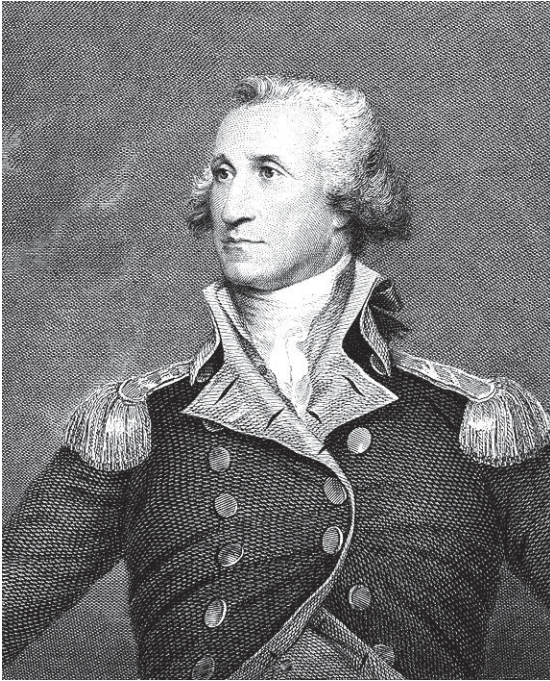


### Vocabulary

<i>composedly</i>	calmly; quietly
<i>consolation</i>	comfort or relief
<i>disdain</i>	disrespect; dislike
<i>esteem</i>	value; respect; regard
<i>passive tempers</i>	willing to forgive
<i>Pharaoh of England</i>	King George III
<i>posterity</i>	our children; future generations of people
<i>reconciliation</i>	settlement of differences
<i>sullen tempered</i>	bad tempered
<i>tyranny</i>	a system that denies people of their liberty; oppression; a form of dictatorship
<i>wretch</i>	a miserable person



## George Washington



Detail from "The Resignation of George Washington"  
*Courtesy Huntington Library*

George Washington was born in Virginia in 1732. His father, Augustine Washington, had two older sons from his first marriage. George was the oldest of five children born to Augustine and Mary Ball, his second wife. Augustine Washington died when George was 11 years old. The family land was divided. Lawrence was given Mount Vernon, the family plantation on the Potomac River. George got a small plot of land in Northern Virginia that had once been the family home.

Lawrence and Augustine, George's two half-brothers, had been sent to England to complete their schooling. George expected to also go to college in England. After the death of George's father there was not enough money for George to attend college either in Europe or America. As a teenager the young Washington wanted to improve himself. He carefully copied 110 "Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior" that he found in a book. He used these 110 rules as a guide all through his life. Although he was unable to attend college in England, like his older half-brothers, Washington was ambitious and determined to make something of himself.

George as a young man admired his brother Lawrence who had served in the British navy. George wanted to enlist in the navy but his mother refused. Lawrence married the cousin of Lord Fairfax, one of Virginia's wealthiest men who owned large estates in northern Virginia. Lord Fairfax took a special liking to George who had taught himself to be a surveyor. Lord Fairfax hired him to survey his land. After Lawrence died, Lord Fairfax introduced George Washington to the Governor of Virginia. The governor appointed the young 21 year-old to one of the military positions that Lawrence held before his death. Washington inherited his brother's plantation, Mount Vernon. He was now a large landowner and held an important position in the Virginia militia.

During the colonial period of American history Virginia claimed much more land than it now has as a state. The Governor of Virginia was upset when he heard that the French were building forts along the Ohio River in what is now western Pennsylvania. Virginia believed that the French were invading their territory. The governor sent the young George Washington to the Ohio Valley with a message to the French. They were to leave the land at once.

Washington, with some Indian scouts, delivered the message to the French commander. The French commander refused to leave the Ohio Valley. Before Washington returned to Virginia he fought and defeated a small force of Frenchmen and their Indian allies. Washington kept a journal of his travels. When he returned to Virginia the governor had the journal printed and sent copies to England. Washington, now 22 years old, was well known in Virginia and in England.

The next year the British sent General Braddock with a small army to drive the French out of the Ohio Valley. Washington agreed to go along on the expedition. He offered advice to the British general but it was not always taken. General Braddock fought against the French and was defeated. He was wounded in the battle and died soon after. During the battle Washington had two horses shot out from under him and four bullets ripped through his uniform. It was Washington who led the defeated army to safety after General Braddock's death. This was the beginning of a major war with the French called in America the French and Indian War.

Even though the French had defeated the English in this battle, Washington was considered a great hero in Virginia. The British had little respect for colonial troops and refused to give Washington a high rank in the army. Washington decided to retire to Mount Vernon. He married a very rich widow, Martha Dandridge Custis in 1759 and that same year was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses.

Washington was concerned over Britain's tax policies after the French and Indian War. He also believed that the King had no right to issue the Proclamation of 1763 that said the English colonies in North America could not move into lands beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Washington was chosen to represent Virginia in both the First and Second Continental Congresses. During a meeting of the Second Continental Congress it was decided to form an army to protect the colonies from

British attacks. John Adams of Massachusetts recommended that Washington be made Commander-in-chief of that army.

General Washington immediately went to Boston where most of the fighting was taking place. He found that the army he commanded was not well prepared. The soldiers were not well trained and many would just leave to go home after a battle. Washington also had difficulty with the Congress that never sent him enough money to pay the soldiers. In the first years of the war, the new American army did not do well in battle. Despite all this Washington was able to build a strong fighting force. He was an excellent military commander. After seven years of war the Americans won and signed a peace treaty in 1783. Washington resigned from the army and retired to Mount Vernon. Many Americans wanted Washington to continue in the service of his country and some even wanted to make him king.

Washington kept in touch with leaders of the new country. The country had adopted a plan of government during the war known as the Articles of Confederation. Each state in the union had power and the central government of the United States had very little power. In 1778 Washington finally agreed to leave Mount Vernon and travel to a convention called to meet in Philadelphia to recommend changes to the Articles of Confederation. Washington was elected to be the president of this Constitutional Convention. After months of debate, a new Constitution was written. A new government was formed and George Washington was unanimously elected First President and John Adams chosen as Vice President. Washington had doubts about accepting the office of president. However, he agreed and called on leaders of the country to help him when he became president.

President Washington asked Thomas Jefferson to be one of his chief advisors and appointed him Secretary of State. Alexander Hamilton was chosen to be another advisor and served as Secretary of the Treasury. After a short time Jefferson and Hamilton began to disagree with one another. Jefferson resigned from the Cabinet. Hamilton soon after gave up his position.

After his term of four years Washington decided to retire and return to Mount Vernon. Thomas Jefferson, who had often disagreed with the decisions of President Washington, urged him to run for a second term. Jefferson believed that the country would fall apart if Washington did



"Life of George Washington: The Farmer"  
 Paris: Lemerancier imprint of Stearns painting (1853)  
 LOC: LC-USZC4-723

not stay in office. He told Washington, "North and South will hang together, if they have you to hang on." Hamilton agreed. Other important leaders of the country also told Washington that he must agree to run for election in 1792. He gave in and was again elected President.

President Washington refused to run for a third term in 1796. His Vice President, John Adams, was elected

Second President of the United States and Thomas Jefferson, Vice President. Washington finally returned to Mount Vernon. President Adams called upon him to serve again in the army when it looked as if the United States would become involved in a war with France. Washington did not want to serve but felt he owed it to the nation. There was no war and General Washington again retired.

In 1799, as the country prepared for another presidential election, a group of important men visited Washington at Mount Vernon and tried to get him to agree to run again for the presidency. This time Washington absolutely refused. In December of 1799 Washington became seriously ill but continued to ride around Mount Vernon to check on his plantation. He died on December 14 with his wife Martha by his side. The entire nation mourned the death of this great leader.

At his funeral Henry Lee who served under General Washington in the Continental Army said that George Washington was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Abigail Adams, wife of the President of the United States, said, "Simple truth is his best and great eulogy. She alone can render his fame immortal."





Vocabulary

<i>Cabinet</i>	a group of advisors to the President
<i>civility</i>	politeness; courtesy
<i>eulogy</i>	praise given to a person who had died
<i>expedition</i>	an official journey; an undertaking
<i>immortal</i>	everlasting; undying
<i>militia</i>	an armed force; a band of soldiers
<i>surveyor</i>	one who measures land and sets boundary lines

\* \* \* \*

- What lessons can you learn from George Washington's early life?
- Why do you think that Washington wanted to follow the 110 Rules of Civility?
- How did the young Washington serve the Governor of Virginia? Why do you think he went on a dangerous mission into the Ohio Valley?
- How did Washington demonstrate his leadership abilities in the Virginia militia, as Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, as leader of the Constitutional Convention, and as President of the United States?
- Why do you think John Adams of Massachusetts recommended Washington to be Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army?
- What were Henry Lee and Abigail Adams saying about Washington and how he should be remembered?

## Primary Source Readings

*George Washington practiced his penmanship by copying the Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior that he had read in a book. These rules were to be a guide throughout his life. A few of the rules are listed below.*

1<sup>st</sup> Every action done in company, ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present.

6<sup>th</sup> Sleep not when others speak, sit not when others stand, speak not when you should hold your peace, walk not on when others stop.

40<sup>th</sup> Strive not with your superiors in argument, but always submit your judgment to others with modesty.

56<sup>th</sup> Associate yourself with men of good quality if you esteem your own reputation; for 'tis better to be alone than in bad company.

82<sup>nd</sup> Undertake not what you cannot perform but be careful to keep your promise.

110<sup>th</sup> Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience.

*On June 15, 1775, the Second Continental Congress appointed George Washington Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. Washington spoke to the Congress, saying. . .*

Though I am truly sensible of the high honor done me in this appointment, yet I feel great distress from a consciousness that my abilities & military experience may not be equal to the extensive & important trust: However, as the Congress desire it I will enter upon the momentous duty, & exert every power I possess in their service & for support of the glorious cause. . . .



*On June 18, 1775, George Washington wrote to his wife, Martha, telling her that he had just been appointed commander of the army. In the letter he refers to her as "my dear Patcy", a nickname he often used in his letters.*

My Dearest,

I am now set down to write to you on a subject which fills me with . . . concern—and this concern is greatly aggravated and increased when I reflect on the uneasiness I know it will give you—It has been determined in Congress that the whole Army raised for the defense of the American cause shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take upon me the command of it. You may believe me my dear Patcy, when I assure you, in the most solemn manner, that so far from seeking this appointment I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness to part with you and the family, but from a consciousness of its being a trust too great for my capacity and that I should enjoy more real happiness . . . in one month with you, at home. . . .

*When George Washington was told that he had been elected President of the United States he wrote a letter to Henry Knox, a friend who had served with him during the Revolutionary War.*

. . . In confidence I can assure you...that my movements to the chair of Government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution; so unwilling am I . . . to quit a peaceful abode for an ocean of difficulties. . . .



Vocabulary

<i>abode</i>	home; residence
<i>aggravated</i>	upsetting
<i>celestial</i>	heavenly
<i>consciousness</i>	awareness
<i>culprit</i>	criminal; prisoner
<i>distress</i>	grief; concern
<i>esteem</i>	regard; respect
<i>momentous</i>	important; historic
<i>sensible</i>	aware; understand
<i>solemn</i>	serious
<i>strive</i>	make every effort

## Selected Bibliography

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This is a compelling biography of an intelligent and strong-willing woman who helped guide her husband during the critical days of the American Revolution. The biography highlights some of the many letters she wrote to John Adams pressing him to "Remember the Ladies."

Dubois, Muriel. *John Adams*. Capstone Press, 2003.

This is one of Capstone's series of "Photo-Illustrated Biographies". This picture book includes a number of interesting facts about John Adams. The book explores Adams early life, his important role during the American Revolution, and his presidency.

Fritz, Jean. *What's the Big Idea Ben Franklin?* Penguin, 1996.

This is a brief history of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century printer, inventor, and statesman who played a major role in the early history of the United States. Jean Fritz is a popular writer of history for young readers. Her books are filled with interesting stories. Other books published by Penguin include *George Washington's Mother* (1999), *Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?* (1982), and the popular *Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* (1987 and reprinted by Sagebrush Education Resources in 1999). She has written numerous other books on famous American including Paul Revere and James Madison.

Giblin, James Cross. *The Amazing Life of Benjamin Franklin*. Scholastic, 2006.

This is a concise, readable biography of one of America's greatest men.

Giblin, James Cross. *Thomas Jefferson: A Picture Book Biography*. Scholastic, 2006.

A picture book format examining the life and work of Thomas Jefferson. This is a readable biography with a detailed index for both text and artwork. It is recommended for grades 3-6 by the *School Library Journal* and *Booklist*.

Harness, Cheryl. *George Washington*. National Geographic, 2000.

Harness's brief biography places Washington in the context of his time and explores his military service in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution and the presidency. The text is clearly written and includes inserts describing other world events occurring at the same time.

Holt, Lenny. *George Washington*. D. K. Publishing, 2004.

Although short, this is an informative biography of George Washington. Each page is illustrated with prints, pictures, or maps. The book includes little known information about Washington.

McLeese, Don. *Thomas Paine*. Rourke Publishing, 2004.

*Thomas Paine* is one in the publisher's "Heroes of the American Revolution Series." The biography helps students understand the important role Paine played in the making of America. *Benjamin Franklin* and *Thomas Jefferson* by Don McLeese (Rourke, 2004) are two other biographies in this series.

**Websites**

*Foundations Magazine*, "George Washington's Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation"

<http://wwwFOUNDATIONSmag.com/civility.html>

This is a complete listing of the 110 rules Washington copied as a teen-ager. These "rules" were originally written in French in 1595. They were translated into English and printed in schoolbooks to be copied to improve a student's handwriting. Some of the rules seem funny to us today.

Massachusetts Historical Society,

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/letter/>

This website features 1,160 letters exchanged between John and Abigail Adams. The website includes both a transcription of the letters as well as a digital image of each of the actual letters written between 1762 and 1801

White House for Kids

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids/presidents/>

This official "White House" website has very brief biographical information on the presidents of the United States.