

# Thomas Jefferson

President John F. Kennedy held a dinner in the White House for a group of the brightest minds in the nation at that time. He made this statement: "This is perhaps the assembly of the most intelligence ever to gather at one time in the White House, with the exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."

**We offer a history of Jefferson according to others ...**

**At 5, began studying under his cousin's tutor.**

**At 9, studied Latin, Greek and French.**

**At 14, studied classical literature and additional languages.**

**At 16, entered the College of William and Mary. Also could write in Greek with one hand, while writing the same in Latin with the other.**

**At 19, studied Law for 5 years starting under George Wythe.**

**At 23, started his own law practice.**

**At 25, was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses.**

**At 31, wrote the widely circulated "Summary View of the Rights of British America," and retired from his law practice.**

**At 32, was a delegate to the Second Continental Congress.**

**At 33, wrote the Declaration of Independence.**

**At 33, took three years to revise Virginia's legal code and wrote a Public Education bill and a statute for Religious Freedom.**

**At 36, was elected the second Governor of Virginia, succeeding Patrick Henry.**

**At 40, served in Congress for two years.**

**At 41, was the American minister to France and negotiated commercial treaties with European nations along with Ben Franklin and John Adams.**

**At 46, served as the first Secretary of State under George Washington.**

**At 53, served as Vice President and was elected President of the American Philosophical Society.**

**At 55, drafted the Kentucky Resolutions and became the active head of the Republican Party.**

**At 57, was elected the third president of the United States.**

**At 60, obtained the Louisiana Purchase, doubling the nation's size.**

**At 61, was elected to a second term as President.**

**At 65, retired to Monticello.**

**At 80, helped President Monroe shape the Monroe Doctrine.**

**At 81, almost single-handedly, created the University of Virginia and served as its first president.**

**At 83, died on the 50th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence, along with John Adams.**

**Thomas Jefferson knew because he himself studied the previous failed attempts at government. He understood actual history, the nature of God, His laws and the nature of man.**

## **A voice from the past to lead us in the future:**

**President John F. Kennedy held a dinner in the White House for a group of the brightest minds in the nation at that time. He made this statement: "This is perhaps the assembly of the most intelligence ever to gather at one time in the White House, with the exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."**

## **Lest we forget ...**

**"When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe ." -- Thomas Jefferson**

**"The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not." -- Thomas Jefferson**

**"It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. A principle which if acted on, would save one-half the wars of the world." -- Thomas Jefferson**

**"I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people, under the pretense of taking care of them." -- Thomas Jefferson**

**"My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government." -- Thomas Jefferson**

**"No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms." -- Thomas Jefferson**

**"The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government." -- Thomas Jefferson**

**"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." -- Thomas Jefferson**

**"To compel a man to subsidize with his taxes, the propagation of ideas which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical." -- Thomas Jefferson**

# Thank you “Spark Notes” ...

**Thomas Jefferson was born April 13, 1743 in the rural Piedmont region of the Commonwealth of Virginia. He had a succession of tutors throughout his childhood, which he divided between the family estates of Shadwell and Tuckahoe. When Jefferson was fourteen his father died, leaving him to assume the role of patriarch upon reaching a suitable age.**

**After two years of study under Reverend James Maury, Jefferson traveled to Williamsburg, where he took up studies at the College of William and Mary. With an eye on politics, Jefferson was drawn to the legal profession, where he flourished under the guidance of George Wythe. In time, Jefferson established himself as a lawyer in Williamsburg, which led to his election to the House of Burgesses in 1769.**

**When the Shadwell estate burned in a fire the following year, Jefferson proceeded in earnest on the construction of his new homestead, Monticello. On New Years Day, 1772, Jefferson was married to Martha Wayles Skelton, a young widow and the daughter of a prominent Virginia landowner. Through this alliance, Jefferson himself would later become one of the most prominent landowners and slaveholders in all Virginia.**

Several successes in the House of Burgesses led to Jefferson's nomination to the Second Continental Congress at Philadelphia, where he was the second youngest delegate in attendance. By virtue of timing as much as skill, Jefferson was selected to draft the Declaration of Independence, the document that formally severed all ties with Britain. At the time, Jefferson's authorship was anonymous, but he later gained widespread honor and recognition for his role in the Revolution.

Returning to Virginia to help draw up the new State Constitution, Jefferson had a fundamental role in many significant reforms, including the abolishment of primogeniture and entail and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church. Eventually, Jefferson's Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom was also adopted. On the strength of these and other successes, Jefferson was selected by his peers to become governor of Virginia in 1779.

In two years as governor, Jefferson suffered greatly amidst the push and pull of the Revolutionary War. He retired to Monticello in 1781 to care for his ailing wife, who died the following year, leaving two healthy daughters behind. Jefferson grieved profusely, ensconcing himself in his estate for weeks.

Eventually, Jefferson recovered and re-entered the world of politics. A brief legislative stint was followed by a five-year tenure as minister to France. Based in Paris, Jefferson engaged in a series of difficult negotiations, hoping to win diplomatic privileges for the United States among several major powers. He was largely

unsuccessful. To his benefit, he soaked up the culture of Europe and had a liaison with an English artist named Maria Cosway. Further, he played an incendiary, if minor, role in initiating the French Revolution.

Intending only to return for a sabbatical, Jefferson found himself detained in the United States when President George Washington chose him as the first Secretary of State. Jefferson served in this capacity for the duration of Washington's first term, but found himself increasingly at odds with the Secretary of Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Out of their ideological differences, the first two political parties emerged, with the Federalists supporting a strong national government behind Hamilton and the Democratic- Republicans supporting strong states rights behind Jefferson.

Following another two year retirement at Monticello, Jefferson was thrust back into the political spotlight when he ran for President against the Federalist candidate John Adams. Suffering a narrow defeat, Jefferson assumed the role of Vice President, which he treated lightly and somewhat cavalierly. In opposition to the administration he served in, Jefferson secretly authored a treatise against the expanding powers of the federal government, later known as the Kentucky Resolutions.

In the election of 1800, Jefferson again faced Adams but this time emerged victorious, after a protracted electoral controversy between him and his eventual Vice President, Aaron Burr. Jefferson's Presidency was characterized by a gradual shift toward strong federalist initiatives, which increased the power of the executive branch and of

**the national government writ large. Most prominent among these policy decisions were the Louisiana Purchase, which doubled the size of the United States just as it transformed it into an unwitting empire, and later the Embargo Act, which unsuccessfully attempted to put a chokehold on all foreign trade and instead put a severe crimp in the American economy.**

**During Jefferson's two administrations as President, he weathered several storms, including a scandal involving him and his purported (and likely actual) slave mistress, Sally Hemings, several secession attempts by factions both northern and southern, repeated conflicts with a hostile judiciary wing led by Chief Justice John Marshall, and most seriously, a spate of European wars that put American interests at home and abroad in severe jeopardy. Despite these dangers, Jefferson was able to avoid a foreign war, although he did so at the expense of his reputation and his country's good fortunes.**

**Retiring at the end of his second term in 1809, Jefferson left office in semi-disgrace, having lost the confidence of many because of his grave error in judgment regarding the embargo. He spent a productive seventeen years of retirement at Monticello, corresponding with old friends and advising his successors while devoting still plentiful energy to interests such as architecture, agriculture and mechanics. His final legacy involved the founding of the University of Virginia, which he helped establish in every respect imaginable.**

**Years of ostentatious living and meager profits left Jefferson severely in debt toward the end of his life. He never recovered his losses, and was forced to submit to the embarrassment of a lottery in his support, later followed by an auction of his personal belongings. One of the rarest combinations of disgrace and distinction the United States has ever known, Thomas Jefferson died at the age of eighty-three on July 4, 1826, exactly fifty years after his Declaration of Independence was immortalized by the approval of Congress.**