



Thomas Jefferson: A Man Divided | The Life and Legacy of Thomas Jefferson

David R. Miller

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Thomas Jefferson is justly remembered as one of the great presidents of American history. Yet his greatest accomplishments--the Louisiana Purchase, the First Barbary War, the Lewis and Clark expedition--almost all came in his first term in office. His second term saw a sharp reversal of fortunes, as catastrophe engulfed the nation and Jefferson slunk out of office, never to play a role in public affairs again.

While always giving a great man his due, this new biography explores the darker side of Jefferson's political legacy, examining how the flaws in both his personality and ideology led the nation to the brink of war and dissolution. It tells how Jefferson tossed aside legal norms in his pursuit of rival judges and his own vice president, and how his 1807 Embargo Act devastated the national economy, heightened section divisions, and made a subsequent war with Great Britain all but inevitable. Only when we understand the damage that Jefferson did to America, as well as his many achievements, can we begin to grapple with the complex legacy of our nation's most complex president.

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Anthony Paccioni says

History at its finest.

I highly recommend to anyone interested in how the USA developed policies still relevant today. Jefferson was an interesting cat!

Adam Leary says

Summary of Jefferson

This book is like a highlights of his life. I do appreciate the references and the way in which the author weaves the complexity of the man into the narrative. I come away with a refreshed sense of his role.

Ray Du says

This book, despite being very short, gives a good portrayal of Thomas Jefferson as a man of lofty ideals (and one of the best spokespersons for these ideals in human history) and also of craftiness that's typical of politicians. And then there's also slavery - the thing that haunted him badly when he was alive, and has been, and will always be marring his reputation as an advocate of the equality of people, regardless of race, that is endowed by their Creator and not to be deprived by government and church authority.

Thomas Jefferson indeed was a remarkable man with great flaws. Recent history has made it seem like he's being dug out from his grave and lynched badly by people who loathe slavery, especially given how he treated his slave maid and mistress Sally Hemings. It is, to me, disturbing to see how we so oftentimes see others in extreme terms--they are either angels insusceptible to human flaws or demons deserving to be destroyed by all means.

Let it always be remembered that TJ was a slave owner, for sure. But let also the ideals of human liberty and equality as was enunciated so powerfully by Thomas Jefferson be remembered and practiced.

I think our views of TJ, heavily influenced by the zeitgeist of times, will probably always evolve. But let's take a moment from our life and thank him for being a prolific writer overall and an obsessive letter-writer. General curiosity and serious intellectual interest in him alike can be pretty readily satisfied because of that. One last thought...(before many more in the future) it's hard not to admire somebody who could dedicate 12-15 hours a day to study and use six languages. Jefferson was that somebody.

Addie LeMaster says

Very educational. I loved how quick and easy it was to read through.

Brian says

Thoughtful book

Thoughtful insight. I liked the concept of focusing on his second term, which is pretty much a massive failure in terms of the man himself. While reading this book, I began to feel that he as well as all of our Founding Fathers, though brilliant, it may have been that brilliance that made them stubborn to see their own flaws. Good read.

Diane LeBlanc says

Jefferson

This book provided a good overview of Jefferson's life. I'm not sure it paints the most positive picture of this founding father. Also it isn't extremely detailed

Jon Bell says

Adequate history of Jefferson

This is a quick and easy read and not an exhaustive biography I did learn somethings about Jefferson that were not covered in general history books.

Chris Kubecka says

I enjoyed it
