

Biography of Thomas Jefferson for ELD Students A Note to the Teacher

This biography of Thomas Jefferson is written with high-school aged, intermediate English learners in mind. It can be further sheltered for beginning English learners at the teacher's discretion. It is also meant to be the introductory piece, presumably as homework or guided reading, for a number of lessons posted on the Monticello Classroom Website (all labeled "Title – For ELD Students").

The design of this biography is to allow teachers to cherry-pick the sections that work best for their individual lesson needs. That said, there are a few caveats to keep in mind in order to make it work as designed. This biography is organized chronologically with page breaks between each major section of Jefferson's life. Callout boxes on the left have some key vocabulary words defined for that section. These words may appear in subsequent sections without a definition. If you do not use the entire biography as laid out here, please be sure to preview the section you are interested in using a copy over vocabulary that may appear in another section.

The overall thesis is in bold, red typeface in the introduction. It is advised that, whichever sections you use with your class, you include the introduction and conclusions in order to preserve the essay format of the piece and reinforce the idea of historical thesis statements with your students.

The Life of Thomas Jefferson

Vocabulary in the Introduction:

colony: *noun*, a place that is controlled by a different country that is far away
to colonize - verb
colonial - adjective

slavery: *noun*, the system of owning human beings and making them work for no money. Slaves are bought and sold like they are property and have no civil rights. In colonial America, slavery was found mostly in the South and white Americans enslaved black Americans.
to enslave - verb

Slave: *noun*, a person who is forced to work for no money and is owned by someone else

contradiction: *noun*, if a person contains contradictions, he has many parts that are very different from or the opposite of each other

to contradict - verb

complex: *adj.*, consisting of many parts or details that are closely related and may make something or someone difficult to understand

Introduction

Thomas Jefferson was one of the most important people in early American history. He was born in Virginia in 1743, while Virginia was still a colony that belonged to England. He died in 1826, when Virginia was a part of the United States of America, a country that he helped to make. He was very important in helping the colonies in North America become free from England, and his ideas shaped the American government to be what it is today. He had many jobs in the young American government, and became its third President. He was also a very smart, very curious man with many, many talents and interests. However, he was also a man who lived at a time and in a place where slavery existed, and he was a person who owned slaves. Jefferson's life is sometimes difficult for us to imagine and think about because he seems to have many contradictions in his life, like owning slaves while believing in freedom. But, he is a very important man who helped make America what it is today. **Thomas Jefferson was a complex man who was both a product of his time and a visionary who wrote the words that began the United States and put it on the path to liberty and freedom.**

product of his time: *saying*, if someone is the product of a particular time, that time period has strongly influenced the way he behaves or his opinions

visionary: *adj.*, having clear ideas of what the world should be like in the future

Jefferson grew up

Thomas Jefferson was the oldest son of rich, Virginian planters, and because of this he grew up in a society that expected him to be a rich, manly, educated slave owner who was the leader of his family and plantation. His parents were Peter and Jane Jefferson. His father owned 200 acres of land in Virginia, and ran a plantation on that land, growing tobacco. Peter Jefferson died when Thomas was only 14. Thomas Jefferson went to college at William and Mary, which is in Williamsburg, Virginia. While he was there he studied science, languages, history, and law. Even though he trained to become a lawyer, he was interested in almost everything and read a very large number of books. He was also looking for a wife so he could start his family and life as a Virginia planter. His first crush was on a married woman, his best friend's wife Betsy Walker. When that obviously did not work out, Jefferson was heartbroken. However, when he met Martha Wayles Skelton, he fell deeply in love. A family story says he won her heart by playing his violin for her while she sang. They married in 1772 and their first daughter, Martha (whose nickname was "Patsy"), was born later.

Vocabulary in Jefferson grew up:

planter: *noun*, a person who owned lots of farm land on which many people lived and worked; he was usually rich and well respected in his society

plantation: *noun*, a large area of land in a hot country, where crops such as tea, cotton, and sugar, etc. are grown

philosopher: *noun*, someone who studies and develops ideas about the nature and meaning of existence and reality, good and evil, etc.

philosophy - noun

liberty: *noun*, the freedom and the right to do whatever you want without asking permission or being afraid of authority

pursuit of happiness: *noun phrase*, the act of trying to find the things that makes you happy in your overall life

overthrow: *verb*, to remove a leader of government from a position of power by force

grievance: *noun*, something you complain about because you believe you have been treated unfairly

rebellion: *noun*, an organized attempt to change the government, or other authority, using violence

to rebel - verb

rebel - noun (person)

traitor: *noun*, someone who is not loyal to their country

to commit treason - verb

Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence

Thomas Jefferson is most remembered for his writing of the Declaration of Independence, a document that said the 13 American colonies were free from England. As a Virginia planter Jefferson was at the center of politics, and his long political career started during very chaotic times. He was first elected in 1769 to the House of Burgesses, which was Virginia's colonial government. Then, in 1775, he was elected to the Continental Congress as a representative from Virginia. The Continental Congress was a group of men from all over the colonies who would become America's first government during the Revolutionary War. They met at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Jefferson got there in the middle of the huge debate over whether or not to declare independence from England and become their own country. Jefferson was not good at public speaking, but he was a very good writer, which is something he had proven when he was in the House of Burgesses and wrote an essay called *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*. The Congress was divided, but eventually agreed to create a Declaration of Independence after fighting occurred in Massachusetts between the colonists and British soldiers. Jefferson was chosen to be in the group of 5 men that would write it, and then chosen to be the chief writer.

Jefferson's Declaration of Independence is a very important document that set up not only the American Revolution but also the beliefs that America has tried to live by ever since. His job was to make an argument explaining why America should be free from England. To do this he used the Enlightenment beliefs of philosophers like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and John Locke. First, he explained the human rights that everyone has to their life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. He also explained the correct relationship between people and their government, saying that a government is created to protect human rights and if it does not the people can overthrow it and make a new government that will do a better job. Once he did this Jefferson wrote a long list of grievances that the colonists had against England and its leader, King George III. All of these complaints showed how the government had taken away the colonists' rights and why they now had the right to overthrow it and make their own country. The third and last part of the Declaration of Independence says that because of all of these problems the colonies were officially declaring their independence from England.

Jefferson's original draft was changed by Congress. He had written that slavery was one of the terrible things that King George had brought to America. The southern colonies, where most of the slaves were owned, did not like that part because they did not want to think of slavery as evil and wrong. They made Jefferson get rid of that part

of the Declaration before they would sign it. It is interesting that Jefferson included this part in the Declaration even though he was a slave owner. It shows that, even very early on, Jefferson had a problem with slavery even while he was a part of the slavery system itself.

The Declaration was approved by the Congress on July 4, 1776, signed by all the members, and sent to King George. The King was very mad, said that the colonies were in rebellion, and the war for America's independence was on! The King believed anybody who had signed that Declaration, including Jefferson, was a traitor who could be caught and killed.

Jefferson as Governor of Virginia

Life was difficult for Jefferson during the Revolutionary War years. He was elected governor of Virginia in 1779. During that time the British and Americans were fighting fiercely in the southern part of America. British soldiers were coming closer and closer to the capital of Virginia, Williamsburg, and Jefferson's home, Monticello. In 1781, British troops came all the way to Monticello and the Jeffersons barely escaped. It was very embarrassing for Jefferson to run away from the capital and Monticello while he was governor, and many people criticized him for that. Jefferson was a man who did not like being criticized and did not take it well. He decided not to try and be reelected as governor and promised never to be in politics again.

There was lots of sadness and tragedy in Jefferson's family too. After Patsy was born, Thomas and Martha Jefferson had 5 more children, but 3 of them died between 1775 and 1781. To make things even worse his wife Martha died in 1782 after having their last daughter, Lucy Elizabeth. While she was dying, Martha made Thomas promise that he would never marry another woman. She did not want her 3 living daughters to ever have a stepmother. Jefferson promised her he would not. After Martha's death, Jefferson was so sad he may have become depressed. His whole world was destroyed, it seemed.

Vocabulary for Jefferson as Governor of Virginia:

Revolutionary War: *noun*, the war in which people in Britain's colonies in North America became independent and established the United States of America. The war began in 1775 and ended in 1783.

governor: *noun*, a person who is in political control of a state (same root word as government, govern, etc.)

criticized: *verb (past)*, people expressed their disapproval of someone or something, or talked about their faults

to criticize - verb
criticism - noun

tragedy: *noun*, a very sad event that shocks people because it involves death
tragic - adj.

depressed: *adj.*, becoming so sad that it becomes difficult to lead a normal life
depression - noun

Vocabulary for Jefferson's life in France:

diplomat: *noun*, someone who officially represents their government in a foreign country

diplomacy - noun

published: *verb past*, arranged for a book, magazine, etc. to be written, printed and sold

to publish - verb

architecture: *noun*, the style and design of a building

architect - noun (person)

Constitution: *noun*, a set of basic laws and principles that a democratic country is governed by, which cannot be easily changed by the political party in power

Bill of Rights: *noun*, a list of rights and freedoms that people in a country have; in America it is the first 10 amendments to the Constitution

balance of power: *noun phrase*, a situation in which political strength is shared evenly by more than one person or groups

Jefferson's life in France

After the embarrassing time as governor Jefferson said he would never be in politics again, but when his wife died his friends, including James Madison, tried to get him back into politics to help him get out of his depression. Thinking it might be good to get away, Jefferson took a job as America's diplomat to France, which back then was called being a "minister" to France. His job was to be a representative of America in France, to make agreements with the French government, and to solve any problems between the countries. As an ambassador of America, he published his answers to a list of questions that the Marquis de Barbe-Marbois had sent him about Virginia, creating his only published book *Notes on the State of Virginia*. In it he educated Europeans about American geography, animals, plants, and people. Jefferson loved France. He enjoyed the people, the language, the art, the food, the wine, and the architecture. He also enjoyed the company of a married woman named Maria Cosway. She was an artist and Jefferson thought she was very well educated and enjoyable to talk to. He had a crush on her and even hurt his wrist trying to impress her by jumping over a small fence. Even though he was in love with her and she liked him too, Maria probably did not cheat on her husband with Jefferson.

While he was in France, America went through a big change in their government. They got rid of the old government they made during the Revolution, under the Articles of Confederation, and made a new one under the Constitution. Jefferson's good friend, James Madison, wrote much of the Constitution, and in letters to Paris, kept Jefferson aware of what was going on. It is hard to say what Jefferson thought of the Constitution in those early days. He did not like a government that was too strong because it might take away the peoples' rights. The Constitution seemed strong and did not include a Bill of Rights. But he did like the balance of power in the Constitution, the republican form of government, and he trusted that his friend Madison had similar views. If Jefferson had been in America during the debate over the Constitution and not in France, we may have seen more of his influence on the document that created our government.

Also during his time in France, Jefferson saw the beginnings of the French Revolution. The lower class of France, which was most of the people, lived in poverty and did not feel that their government, which was led by King Louis XVI (16th), did not protect their rights and listen to them. They saw the American Revolution as an example of people getting rid of a bad government and creating a better one that represented the people. Eventually, that Revolution would lead to the King, Queen, and many nobles having their heads cut off in a violence

that was not a part of the American Revolution. Jefferson left before things got very chaotic because he had a new job under America's new Constitution.

republican: *adj.*, relating to or supporting a system of government that is not led by a king or queen and is elected by the people

republican - noun
person

republican ≠ Republican
(a capitalized Republican is a member of the Republican political party)

Jefferson as the first Secretary of State

As America's first Secretary of State, Jefferson had a view of American society and government that conflicted with Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's, and this conflict helped create our first political parties. George Washington, the first President, chose Jefferson as his Secretary of State, which meant that he was in charge of all relationships between America and other countries. However, it also made him a part of Washington's Cabinet, and therefore one of the President's advisors. Jefferson had a very clear idea of what America should be. He thought that the government should be very small and try to stay out of peoples' business as much as possible. He thought that liberty was very important and hoped that people would always fight to make sure their government does not take it away. He loved France and wanted America to be better friends with that country. He wanted Americans to be educated and read books on philosophy and science. He also wanted America to be an agrarian country and saw the best type of citizen as an educated farmer, like himself. Many of these ideas conflicted with Alexander Hamilton's view of an industrial and commercial America with a large, active government that was good friends with England.

The biggest conflict between these two men was over the idea of a financial plan that Hamilton wanted to start. As Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton wanted to create a system that would do 5 things:

1. Take away the states' debts from the Revolutionary War and make them a part of a bigger national debt that the whole country would pay through their taxes. (This was called "assuming state debt.")
2. Pay every bond that the government made during the Revolutionary War in the way it was promised, and not for less money. (This was called "funding debts at par.") This does not seem controversial but it was because many of the soldiers and ordinary people who fought in the war and bought bonds sold them to rich people after the war because they didn't have enough money. They sold those bonds to speculators for less than they were worth. So if the government paid the bonds back at their full value it would make the rich people richer and make the soldiers even more upset that they had sold them for less.
3. Make a national bank that would collect taxes, print money, and lend money to people. It would be called the Bank of the United States.
4. Make a tax on whiskey called an "excise tax". This looks like it is just a tax on alcohol, but back then farmers would turn their extra corn they grew into whiskey as a way to keep it from going bad since

Vocabulary for Jefferson as the First Secretary of State:

Secretary of State: *noun*, the person who is chosen by the President of the US to be a member of the Cabinet and in charge of America's relations with other countries

Secretary of the Treasury: *noun*, the person who is chosen by the President of the US to be a member of the Cabinet and in charge of America's money

political parties: *noun*, an organization of people with the same political beliefs and aims, which you can vote for in elections

President: *noun*, the official leader of the government in some countries, including the United States

Cabinet: *noun*, an important group of politicians who make decisions or advise the leader of a government

advisors: *noun*, someone whose job it is to give advice to someone because they know a lot about a subject

advice: *noun*, an opinion you give someone about what they should do

agrarian: *adj.*, relating to farming or farmers

agricultures - noun

industrial: *adj.*, relating to the production of goods, especially in factories

industry - noun

commercial: *adj.*, relating to business and the buying and selling of goods

commerce - noun

financial: *adj.*, relating to money of the management of money

finance - noun

debts: *noun*, money that you owe to someone else

taxes: *noun*, an amount of money that you must pay to the government according to your income, property, goods, etc. that is used to pay for public services

taxation - synonym

bonds: *noun*, an official document promising that a government or company will pay back money that it has borrowed with interest

controversial: *adj.*, causing a lot of disagreement, because many people have strong opinions about the subject being discussed

they did not have refrigerators. This tax would hurt the farmers more than anyone in the country.

5. Make a tax on everything Americans bought that came from other countries. (This kind of tax on imports is called a tariff.) This would not only make money for the government, but also make the price of other countries' things higher than American things, so people would buy American products.

Jefferson hated Hamilton's financial plan. He thought that many parts were unfair, that they would help the rich by taxing the poor, and that parts of it were unconstitutional. For example, he said that the Constitution did not give the government the power to make a national bank. Therefore, he said that Congress did not have the power to make one. (This is called having a "strict interpretation" of the Constitution.) Hamilton said the opposite. He said that if the Constitution did not say it was wrong, then it could be done. (This is called having a "loose interpretation" of the Constitution.) Since both men were in Washington's Cabinet, they both tried to make the President agree with them. Washington listened to both men, but he finally agreed with Hamilton. The Bank and the taxes were made, and the debts were paid like Hamilton had wanted. (By the way, the American capital at Washington DC was made as a sort of compromise about the assuming state debts; Virginia had already paid its debt but Massachusetts had not. The Virginians did not want to be taxed to pay for other states, so they would not vote for the plan. They agreed to vote for it after a promise that the new capital would be put in the South near them, and that is now Washington DC.)

This conflict over the financial system led to America's first political parties. Back then people did not like the idea of parties because they seemed to divide the country too much. But the parties were created anyway based on which version of America you agreed with: Hamilton's or Jefferson's. The people who like Hamilton's views were called Federalists and the people that liked Jefferson's views were called Democratic-Republicans (sometimes also just called "Republicans").

speculators: *noun*, people who buy goods, property, etc. hoping that they will make a large profit when they sell them

to speculate - verb
speculation - noun

whiskey: *noun*, a strong alcoholic drink made from grains

imports: *noun*, things that are brought into one country from another in order to be sold

to import - verb
importation - noun

tariff: *noun*, a tax on something that is imported from another country

unconstitutional: *adj.*, not allowed by the Constitution; illegal under the Constitution

constitutional -
antonym

strict interpretation: *noun phrase*, believing that the only things allowed by the Constitution are those things that it directly says are allowed

loose interpretation: *noun phrase*, believing that the constitution allows anything that is not specifically said is prohibited

Democratic-Republicans	Federalists
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did not like the Bank• Did not like the tariff• Did not like the excise tax• Strict interpretation of the Constitution• Liked a small American government• Mostly lived in the South and West• Liked an agrarian America• Liked education for all• Did not trust England• Liked France• Important people included Thomas Jefferson and James Madison	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liked the Bank• Liked the tariff• Liked the excise tax• Loose interpretation of the Constitution• Liked a stronger American government• Mostly lived in the North• Liked an industrial America• Did not trust France• Liked England• Important people included Alexander Hamilton and John Adams

compromise: *noun*, an agreement that is achieved after everyone involved accepts less than what they wanted at first, or the act of making this agreement

to compromise - verb

Federalists: *noun*, people who belonged to the Federalist party; they usually believed in a strong national government with a lot of power and control

Federalist - adj.

Democratic-Republicans: *noun*, people who belonged to the Democratic-Republican party; they usually believed in a smaller national government with less power and control

Democratic-Republican - adj.

Jefferson as the Vice President

John Adams became President after Washington in 1797, and Thomas Jefferson was his Vice President. Jefferson continued to fight for his view of America while he was Vice President, especially since he was a Democratic-Republican and the President was a Federalist. His job as Vice President was very small. He had to be the leader of the Senate and become President if Adams died. He was not an advisor to Adams like he was to Washington.

Adams' time as President was very difficult. America was having problems with France. They were mad that Americans would not help them in their war against England even after they had helped America during the Revolution. This, and other problems, led to a kind of a war between France and America. Nobody declared war and it was only fought between boats on the ocean. Americans at home argued about the war with France, and what they believed showed which political party they belonged to. Democratic-Republicans did not like the war with France but Federalists did.

The Federalists in the government did not want Americans saying or writing mean things about them during this time of conflict, so they made a law called the Sedition Act. The law made it illegal to say or write anything bad about anybody in the government. They also wrote the law so it would be over and gone in 1801, just in case they lost the next election and wanted to say things about the winners. Jefferson hated this law because he thought it was breaking the First Amendment and the freedom of speech and press. He could not say anything, though, or he would be found guilty of breaking the law. But he could not stay quiet. Jefferson wrote an essay called The Kentucky Resolution, which said that the Sedition Act was unconstitutional and that the states should nullify it. He believed that the states could decide if a national law was unconstitutional since the states made the nation in the first place. (This is called "compact theory" and "the theory of nullification.") His friend, James Madison, wrote an essay just like it called the Virginia Resolution. Jefferson and Madison did not put their names on the essays, so they did not get in trouble for writing them, but everyone knew who wrote them.

Adams tried not to go to war with France and when he had an opportunity to make peace, he took it. The Federalists were mad at him and it led to him not being reelected in 1800.

Vocabulary for Jefferson as the Vice President:

Vice President: *noun*, the person who is next in rank to the President of a country and who is responsible for the President's duties if he or she is unable to do them

First Amendment: *noun*, the first change made to the Constitution; it says that all Americans have the right to say whatever they want, write whatever they want, meet with whomever they want, complain to the government, and believe in their own religion without the government stopping them

nullify: *verb.*, to officially state that an agreement, contract, law, etc. has no legal effect

nullification - noun

Jefferson as President

Jefferson was elected President in 1800, though it was a crazy election that took a very long time to figure out. The problem was that Jefferson had tied with Aaron Burr, another Democratic-Republican. The House of Representatives had to choose between them and they finally chose Jefferson. As President, Jefferson wanted to make the government smaller and more like what he thought the people wanted. He wanted to make things less formal and more free for everyone. He also wanted to bring the people of the country together after a difficult election. In his inaugural address he said, "We are all Federalists. We are all Republicans."

When he became President, Jefferson kept most of Hamilton's financial plan. He kept the Bank, the debt, and the tariff. The only thing he got rid of was the excise tax that the farmers hated so much. This made a strong example for the future: a president's work is respected and you do not get rid of everything that came before just because you won the election.

One of Jefferson's biggest actions as President was the Louisiana Purchase. New Orleans was a very important city because whoever controlled it got to control the boats on the Mississippi River. That river was very important to western farmers because it was how they got their products to the markets in the East. Spain had controlled it and allowed America to use the Mississippi River. But then they gave it, and all the land in the middle of America, back to France in a secret treaty called the Treaty of San Ildefonso. America didn't know about it, but knew that something weird was going on. When they realized that France owned New Orleans, Jefferson sent James Monroe and Robert Livingston to France to try and buy the city. They were very surprised when Napoleon, the leader of France, offered to sell all of Louisiana for \$15 million. He wanted an answer right away, but they could not ask Jefferson, who was back in America, what to do. They took the deal. When he found out Jefferson was happy, but worried. It was a great deal, but was it constitutional? You would have to use a loose interpretation of the Constitution to make it all right. Jefferson thought that they could make a Constitutional amendment saying the President could buy land, but everyone was so happy with the purchase, that nobody was really worried about whether it was constitutional or not.

Jefferson wanted to know what was out in the new land. He sent a group of people led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the land, write down what they found, meet the Native Americans, and report back. The trip took three years, and it was amazing that

Vocabulary for Jefferson as President:

inaugural address: *noun*, a formal speech given by the President right after he officially becomes President

treaty: *noun*, a formal agreement between two or more countries

constitutional: *adj.*, officially allowed by the Constitution; legal under the Constitution

unconstitutional - antonym

amendment: *noun*, a written change or improvement to a law or official document
to amend - verb

Supreme Court: *noun*, the court of law with the most authority in the United States

economy: *noun*, a system by which a country's money and goods are produced and used
economic - *adj.*

everyone came back. Jefferson loved the information and things they brought back with them. He put a lot of the things, like a Native American buffalo robe, in his house at Monticello.

A very important Supreme Court case was decided during the time Jefferson was President called *Marbury v. Madison*. In it the Supreme Court said that they could decide if a national law was constitutional or not. If it was unconstitutional, then they could get rid of it. Jefferson did not like this ruling because it went against his idea from the Kentucky Resolution that the states could decide if a law was unconstitutional. It would make the government bigger and stronger, which was something Jefferson also did not like. However, he realized that he had to live with the Supreme Court's ruling and did not do anything to stop it.

It was during his time as President that the newspapers first wrote that Jefferson had a sexual relationship with one of his slaves, a woman named Sally Hemings. The paper said that he had children with Sally and that these children were his slaves at Monticello. Jefferson did not talk about this at all. He did not say if it was true or false. He also did not try and stop them the way Adams did with the Sedition Act. Instead he helped newspapers that were Republican, which would say good things about him and not talk about Sally. (Today historians think that he probably did have children with Sally Hemings because of DNA evidence that connects the male Jefferson children with the male Hemings children.)

After Jefferson was reelected in 1804, America began to have some more troubles with France and England. The two countries were at war and America wanted to stay out of it. Wars were expensive and dangerous and the country was too young to go to war. We did want to trade with them, though, so we could keep making money. The English were taking American ships on the ocean and kidnapping the sailors. One example of this was when the British took American sailors off the *USS Chesapeake*. They said that they could do this because the ships could be helping the French. The French were also bothering American ships for the same reasons. Jefferson was very worried that these events could cause a war, so he got Congress to create the Embargo Act. The Embargo Act said that American ships were not allowed to leave America at all. This way they could not get hurt and cause America to have to go to war. It also meant that there was no trading going on with other countries. It was very bad for the economy, especially in the North where many people traded products as their job. Many people hated the Embargo and broke the law in order to keep trading and making money. This problem got worse and led to a war with England in 1812, but Jefferson was not president by then. He did not run for President a third time, and James Madison became president in 1809. Jefferson left politics and went to his home at Monticello in Virginia.

Jefferson's life after being President

Jefferson retired in 1809 and went to his home at Monticello in Virginia, where he spent his time on his interests, with his family, and writing letters. Jefferson had spent many years building his house on his plantation at Monticello. He changed it a lot, but by this time it was mostly done. He loved his house and thought it was the kind of place he could go to escape the world. He also made it big enough for all his family. He had only one child who survived this long, Martha, and she had married Thomas Randolph. They had many kids, and this whole family lived with Thomas at Monticello. He spent a lot of time with his grandchildren. He would read with them, play with them, and buy them the things they wanted. He was also very interested in their education and made sure they read and learned lots of things.

Jefferson's last big project was to create a university. He wanted a place where everyone could learn and be excited about studying. He designed and built the University of Virginia near his home in Charlottesville. He designed the school around a library instead of a church, which was how many schools were back then. He also wanted the professors to live on the campus with the students. Jefferson was disappointed, though, in the students' behavior. Once the students started bothering the professors with their loud parties so much that the teachers were afraid and wanted to quit. Jefferson, along with James Madison and James Monroe, his friends who also helped create the university, had to have a meeting with the students and create rules of behavior for them. It made Jefferson sad that the students did not think of the school and studying like he had wanted them to. The University continued and is still working today.

Jefferson lived a long life. He died on July 4, 1826, at his home in Monticello. His friend John Adams, who also signed the Declaration, died the same day in Massachusetts. It was exactly 50 years since the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Vocabulary for Jefferson's life after being President:

retired: *adj.*, having stopped working, usually because of your age

to retire - verb

retirement - noun

professors: *noun*, people who teach in a college or university

Jefferson and slavery

Thomas Jefferson was a slave owner, and this fact more than any other makes it difficult to understand Jefferson. Some people explain Jefferson's ownership of slaves by talking about the society he lived in. He was born in a family that already owned slaves and a lot of land. In colonial Virginia a person like Jefferson would be expected to live on a big plantation and produce farm products with enslaved labor. He was also expected to rule over his house and family, have all the answers to their problems, and treat his friends and guests with hospitality and respect. The idea of being a good, respectable man in Virginia had a lot to do with having control over your life and that included controlling slaves. It would be very hard for Jefferson to try and break out of that idea or give up a life of riches and respect by saying slavery was wrong.

One of the worst parts about Jefferson's owning slaves was that he had a sexual relationship with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings, had children with her, and enslaved those children. Thomas and Sally had six children, though only four of them lived to become adults. These children, Beverly, Harriet, Madison, and Eston, were all slaves that Jefferson owned. They lived at Monticello and worked in the house and the workshops and not in the fields. They knew they were Jefferson's children, but he never said he was their father or treated them like his children. However, when Jefferson died the only slaves who were freed were from the Hemings family.

There are lots of things Jefferson said, though, that make historians believe he did not like slavery. In the original version of the Declaration of Independence he wrote that slavery was a terrible thing that the King had brought to the colonies. The Congress made him take it out because the southern colonies didn't like it. Jefferson did not like slavery and was happy to see it abolished in places like France. He often wrote that slavery was wrong, against the idea of liberty, and that it would have to be abolished in America someday. He also thought that when this happened African-Americans and white Americans would not be able to live together, and so he thought former slaves should be sent back to Africa or else a horrible war would happen between black and white.

So if he thought slavery was wrong and should be abolished, why did he personally continue having slaves? This is the question that historians have had for years. And it looks like Jefferson had this question too. His best answer comes in his own words. He said that slavery was like having "the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-

Vocabulary for Jefferson and slavery:

slavery: *noun*, the system of owning other human beings and making them work for no money; in America the slavery system was based on the color of your skin, where white Americans made slaves of black Americans

slave - noun (person)

to enslave - verb

enslaved - adj.

expected: *verb*, to think that something will happen or be true, because it seems likely or has been planned

expectation - noun

enslaved labor: *noun phrase*, the work done by people who are treated like slaves

hospitality: *noun*, friendly behavior towards visitors

hospitable - adj.

respectable: *adj.*, having standards of behavior, appearance, etc. that are socially acceptable and approved of

abolished: *verb past*, to officially end a law, system, etc., especially one that has existed for a long time

contradiction: *noun*, a difference between two statements, beliefs, or ideas about something that means they cannot both be true

to contradict - verb

contradictory - adj.

preservation in the other." What he was saying is that slavery is like holding onto a dangerous wolf in a dangerous way. You cannot hold onto him (keep slavery) or you will be bitten. You also cannot let him go (abolish slavery) or you will be bitten. His house, his family, and his farm needed slaves, he thought, or else they could not survive. It was a problem and a contradiction that, even though he was very smart, he was never able to solve.

Vocabulary for Jefferson's talents:

intelligent: *adj.*, having a high level of ability to learn, understand, and think about things

intelligence - noun

talents: *noun*, a special, natural ability or skill

talented - *adj.*

composers: *noun*, people who write music

pianoforte: *noun*, an early version of a piano

architect: *noun*, a person who designs buildings

alcove bed: *noun*, a bed that is placed in a place in the wall of a room that is built further back than the rest of the wall

octagonal: *adj.*, having 8 sides in the shape of an octagon

innovator: *noun*, someone who introduces changes and new ideas

innovate - verb

dumbwaiter: *noun*, a small elevator used to move food, plates, etc. from one floor to another

exhibitions: *noun*, a public show where you can put something so people can see it

Jefferson's talents

Jefferson was a very intelligent man with many different talents and interests. He was a musician and played the violin. He had music from composers like Corelli, Vivaldi, Handel, Pugnani, and Boccherini. His favorite composer was Arcangelo Corelli. He had his daughters learn how to play the pianoforte and music was always an important thing at Monticello. He also gathered many pieces of art and had them put on the walls of Monticello.

Jefferson was an architect and designed his own house, the University of Virginia, and some of his friend's houses. He only studied architecture from books and what he saw when he visited Europe. He never took a class or studied architecture with a professor. He loved designing, building, tearing down, and rebuilding his house at Monticello. He also liked adding his personal touch to the building, like using alcove beds and octagonal rooms.

Jefferson was an innovator who was always trying to make something better. He changed and improved many little things at Monticello that made life easier. For example, he created a bookstand that could hold 5 different books at the same time. In order to keep copies of everything he wrote, he made a polygraph, which is a machine that would make a copy of everything he wrote as he wrote it. He had dumbwaiters put in the dining room so that wine could be quickly and quietly brought in and out of the room. Even the doors at Monticello showed Jefferson's intelligence as an inventor. If you opened one door chains underneath the floor would make the other one open by itself.

He was a scientist and philosopher and was interested in all kinds of new things and ideas. He read books by Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau and more. He was always thinking about government and the way to make it best for the people of the country. He was interested in new theories and technologies, often going to exhibitions to learn and see new things. He was a farmer and experimented with new kinds of plants and farming methods. He kept a very detailed record book that showed the temperature and weather every day.

He was a learner and thinker and loved reading. He could speak and read seven different languages, including French, Spanish, Italian, and Greek. He once said, "I cannot live without books," and he owned between 9,000 and 10,000 books during his life. He sold many of his books to America to create the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

Conclusions

Thomas Jefferson was a very important and very complicated man. He was smart and talented. He gave America the foundation of liberty and freedom that we have today and had the vision of what that country could be beyond his lifetime. But he was also a slave owner who could not imagine his own life without slaves or rise above the system that he was born into. His words of the Declaration, though, echo across hundreds of years and have inspired many people, like Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Martin Luther King, Jr., to continue making America a more perfect country that gives life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all people.

Vocabulary for Conclusions:

foundations: *noun*, a basic idea, principle, situation, etc. that something develops from

echo: *verb*, to repeat or copy an idea, a style, or what someone has said or done

echo - noun

inspired: *verb past*, to encourage someone by making them feel confident and eager to achieve something great

inspiration - noun

inspirational - adj.

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Vocabulary definitions are from *Longmans Advanced American Dictionary*. Essex: Pearson Education, 2000.