

# Thomas jefferson biography

[Literature](#), [Autobiography](#)



Biography of Thomas Jefferson Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, is recognized for his many accomplishments during the 18th century. Not only was he a president, but Jefferson was the author of The Declaration of Independence, a founding father of the United States, and the founder of the University of Virginia. Jefferson was a brilliant political writer who used his writing skills to separate the United States of America from Great Britain and to protect the rights of man.

Jefferson addresses these rights in the declaration when he says, " All men are created equal and there are certain unalienable rights that governments should never violate. These rights include the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," (Jefferson, 1. ) These words are popular and have historical meaning. On April 13th, 1734 in Shadwell, Virginia, Thomas Jefferson was born to the parents Jane and Peter Jefferson. Shadwell is a town just outside of Charlottesville. His mother, Jane Randolph Jefferson, was from a family that claimed to be descended from English and Scottish royalty (" Thomas Jefferson").

His father, Peter Jefferson, was a skilled surveyor and cartographer, which meant that he studied and practiced making maps as well as accurately determined the three-dimensional position of points. Peter produced the first accurate map of the province of Virginia. Perhaps young Jefferson got inspiration from his father. Jefferson had five siblings. He had two older sisters, two younger sisters, and one younger brother. He lived in a very busy household. As a child, Jefferson spent his free time practicing the violin and reading books. At the age of twenty four, Jefferson married Martha Jefferson.

They were both from plantation families and it is believed that they were introduced to each other by mutual friends. Thomas fell for the young American girl's education and interest in music (" Thomas Jefferson"). Together they had six children, but only two lived to be adults. After many wonderful years married, illness fell upon Martha and she passed away on September 6th, 1782. Jefferson made a promise to her that he would never remarry. After her death, he spent three weeks mourning in his library. In a period of seclusion, Jefferson explained in his autobiography that he felt like a part of him had died after she passed (Jefferson, 42).

Later on in life, Jefferson had an affair with slave-girl Sally Hemings. There isn't much information on this story, but there was DNA proof that he fathered her child. (" Jefferson - Hemings"). Thomas Jefferson began his education at a very young age. At the age of five, his father placed him in an English school and he was attending Latin school by age nine. The Latin school was conducted by Reverend William Douglas (Beran, 78). In 1758, Jefferson attended the school of Reverend James Maury. He described Reverend Maury as " a correct, classical scholar" (Jefferson, 29). He later attended the College of William and Mary at the age of seventeen in Williamsburg. It was there that Jefferson began his law studies with George Wythe. Jefferson received an unofficial political and cultural education from him. For two years, Jefferson studied primarily with George Wythe and Dr. William Small. He said that Dr. Small taught him a vast majority what he knew about politics. Over the seven years of study spent at Williamsburg, Jefferson culminated in the practice of law, but without any degree. Thomas

Jefferson was also strongly influenced by the political philosophy of the Enlightenment and also from John Locke.

Thomas Jefferson was not a good public speaker, but that didn't stop him from expressing his opinions of politics. In his early writing years, Jefferson mostly wrote political letters (Skarmeas, 66). His earliest published work is The Declaration of Independence. He began drafting The Declaration of Independence after British troops had attempted to confiscate American ammunition stores and capture patriot leaders in these towns ("Reasons for the Declaration"). The continental congress met in September of 1774 to pick a committee responsible for drafting it. Jefferson was the delegate chosen to write the important document.

The Declaration of Independence was written as a letter to King George III hoping for reconciliation. The committee met several times to discuss ideas and think of what they wanted to be addressed in the document. Like most people who write something, he had to first make a rough draft ("The Declaration of Independence"). Jefferson, by himself, drafted a rough copy of the declaration. He worked on it for two and a half weeks. Only minor changes were made to his draft before it was finalized. The Declaration of Independence became Jefferson's most popular work.

This was such an important document because it formally declared that the thirteen colonies of North America were free and independent from British control ("Reasons for the Declaration"). It served as the basis for the American Revolution. It began the formation of the federal government and a new United States of America. The Declaration of Independence was released to the public on July 4th, 1776. As time went by, the ideas of <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-jefferson-biography/>

Jefferson's words " all men are created equal" grew in importance. Northern states used them to free slaves in their states. Abraham Lincoln used equal rights to justify the Civil War (Bernstein, 156).

He soon became the governor of Virginia. Jefferson also became the vice President of the United States. To occupy his times during his four years as vice president, Jefferson authored A Manual of Parliamentary. This was one of the most useful guides to legislative proceedings ever written, and served as the president of the American Philosophical Society. After Jefferson's time as vice president, he became the third President of the United States. As president, Jefferson accomplished many things, including the Louisiana Purchase (Beran, 73). This greatly expanded the size of the country.

After his presidency, Jefferson settled down. His tone of writing remained the same as before though. He was still straight forward political writer who expressed his opinions through letters and documents. Jefferson did, however, write an autobiography describing his accomplishments and life journeys. He began writing this in 1821. The last thing that was written by Thomas Jefferson was a letter addressed to Roger C (" Thomas Jefferson"). In this letter, Jefferson thanks him for inviting him to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of The Declaration of Independence.

He said that he was happy and hopes that the celebration serves as a reminder of the rights he had originally written about. At the end of the letter, Jefferson apologized for having to reject his invitation because of his health conditions. Thomas Jefferson lived a very eventful and successful life. In 1818, his health began rapidly declining. He was diagnosed with kidney failure and many other age related diseases (" Thomas Jefferson, a <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-jefferson-biography/>

Brief Biography"). His death was mainly caused by a combination of a few things. One thing that contributed to his death was exhaustion from diarrhea. Another contributor was toxemia from a kidney infection.

Uremia from kidney damage and orthostatic old-age pneumonia also added to Jefferson's declining health. He was bed-ridden and eventually died on July 4th, 1826 in Charlottesville, Virginia. The date of his death is ironic because it was the same day as the anniversary of The Declaration of Independence. Jefferson might have lived longer under modern medical care (Bernstein, 187). Jefferson leaves behind a legacy that will always be talked about. He will forever be revered as one of the great American Founding Fathers. He was a spokesman of liberty, but had also been viewed as a racist slave owner.

He was a president who expanded government authority beyond the wildest visions of his predecessors. Jefferson is a symbol for the nation he helped create. After he died, he was buried in the family cemetery at Monticello. The cemetery is located in Virginia and Jefferson's grave is surrounded by metal fences. Beran, Michael Knox. *Jefferson's Semons: Portrait of a Restless Mind*. New York City: Free Press, 2003. Print. Bernstein, R. B. *Thomas Jefferson*. Oxford: University Press, 2003. Print. Skarmeas, Nancy. *Thomas Jefferson*. Nashville: Ideals Publications Incorporated, 1998. Print. Jefferson, Thomas.

*Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson*. New York City: Dover Publications, 2007. Print. "Thomas Jefferson." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. New York City: Macmillan Library Reference, 2008. Print. "Thomas Jefferson." *The Biography Channel Online*. n. p. n. d. Web. 17 May. 2009. "Thomas Jefferson, a Brief Biography." *Monticello Online*. n. p. n. d. Web. 7 <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-jefferson-biography/>

September. 1993. " Reasons for the Declaration. " History King. n. p. n. d. Web. 14 March. 1999. " The Declaration of Independence. " America's Library. n. p. n. d. Web. 24 April. 2000. " Jefferson - Hemings. " Monticello Online. n. p. n. d. Web. 4 August. 1993.

RelatedPhotoThis is a picture of the sign at the Monticello Graveyard located in Virginia. The photo relates to Thomas Jefferson because the Monticello Graveyard is also known as the Jefferson Cemetery. The cemetery sits behind and slightly down the mountain, hidden from the plantation's daily life. Something of a disappointment was the fact that the locked wrought iron fence prohibited visitors from paying homage to the great man and his family. Somehow it felt as if we were being banned from his world. Thomas Jefferson was buried in this cemetery along with many other members of the Jefferson family. Literary Interpretation

One of the most recognized and most popular documents in American history is The Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson and adopted by the Second Continental Congress, was the start of a new beginning for the United States of America. The declaration is a letter to the King of Great Britain, George III. The declaration states the reasons for the British colonies wanting independence. It explains why the colonies have overthrown their ruler. Thomas Jefferson addresses specific details for their reasoning as well as expressing his opinions of the governmental structure.

Jefferson uses his strong political writing skills and his knowledge on politics to the colonies' problems with other nations of the world. Thomas Jefferson's purpose for writing The Declaration of Independence was to express his <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-jefferson-biography/>

ideas for a better society and to help the colonies become free at the same time. “ But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security,” (Jefferson 1).

This sentence of The Declaration of Independence shows Jefferson expressing how he feels about being treated wrong. Thomas Jefferson and other members of the Second Continental Congress wanted to use the declaration to expose the abuses to the other nations of the world. They wanted to justify the action of congress by blaming the rapture on King George III. The abuses that Jefferson is discussing are the abuses that King George III has applied to the colonies of Northern America. The abuses were a result of the king's desire of creating a tyrannical government in America.

The foundation of representative government is the power of the people to make laws for the public good (“ Reasons for the Declaration”). King George III interfered with that process by rejecting legislation proposed by the colonies, dissolving colonial bodies or representation, replacing colonial governments with his appointed ministers, and interfering with the naturalization of citizens in new regions. King George III extended his tyrannical control by interfering with the objective judicial processes and the civil rights of the colonies (“ The Declaration of Independence”).

Jefferson then uses this to create a list of unalienable rights that should be applied to everyone. “ We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of



Happiness," (Jefferson 1). Jefferson addresses that if any form of government becomes destructive of the ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, laying its foundation in the belief of these rights.

Jefferson uses these to lay down a basic structure of the government he want and how the people of this society should be treated. Of the abuses that were mentioned, Jefferson devoted approximately one-fourth of the abuses in his original draft of the Declaration of Independence to the topic of slavery. Jefferson held the King accountable for maintaining and protecting slavery as an institution in the colonies. Not surprisingly, the moderate congress, already fearful of being too radical, removed all references to slavery from the document.

It remains a source of historical debate why a slave-owning man like Jefferson would have devoted so much intellectual energy to criticizing slavery and to attempting to remove it from the colonies. Jefferson thought that slavery was contrary to the laws of nature, which decreed that everyone had a right to personal liberty. These views were radical in a world where unfree labor was the norm. Jefferson spends so much time writing about slavery because he does not approve of it and he does not want to incorporate it in the society and government that he is aiming towards.

It is clear that Thomas Jefferson wrote The Declaration of Independence to help the thirteen original colonies to become free from British control. The Declaration of Independence has much deeper meaning than just that, though. Jefferson uses the document to express exactly how he feels about the political structure of a country. From this point on, people should look at The Declaration of Independence as the guidelines and rules to how a

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country should be run and how the citizens of that country should be treated. Jefferson, Thomas. " Declaration of Independence," The American Experience.

New York City: Prentice Hall, 2002. Print. " Reasons for the Declaration. " History King. n. p. n. d. Web. 14 March. 1999. " The Declaration of Independence. " America's Library. n. p. n. d. Web. 24 April. 2000. List of Authors Works 1. A Summary View of the Rights of British America 2. Draft of Constitution for Virginia 3. Original Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence 4. Draft of Kentucky Resolutions of 1798 5. Wall of Separation Letter 6. Manual of Parliamentary Practice 7. Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson Persuasive Essay Thomas Jefferson is an important figure in American history.

He was one of the American Founding Fathers, the third president of the United States, and an original American politician. Thomas Jefferson is an important American author and should be taught in an English curriculum. Learning about Thomas Jefferson in an English class can teach students about his influence on early American government structures as well as the history of the thirteen original British colonies. It can also teach students about his progress and developments as an American Founding Father. Thomas Jefferson matters in American literature because he is one of America's original politicians.

Thomas Jefferson is an American forefather. Not only did he write the Declaration of Independence, he was Virginia's representative to the first Continental Congress, the governor of Virginia and the third president of the United States. As a president, Jefferson accomplished many things. He <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-jefferson-biography/>

allowed the Alien and Sedition acts to end without renewal and also had the tax on liquor repealed (" Thomas Jefferson"). In 1803, Jefferson purchased the Louisiana territory from France for \$15 million. This is considered the most important act of his administration.

All of these things are important because it teaches the history of our country and Thomas Jefferson contributed to the history. Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence can teach students about how America's thirteen original British colonies became independent from King George III. If the Declaration of Independence was assigned to students, it would teach them the reasons for America wanting to become free from British rule. They would learn how King George III treated the thirteen colonies and what they wanted for their governmental structure.

It also teaches the unalienable rights the Jefferson included in the declaration (" Reasons for the Declaration"). As a champion of civil liberties, Jefferson valued reason above faith. This is much different from other philosophers during his time because they were the complete opposite. Learning about Jefferson's political beliefs teaches students how he used politics to make his decisions. He was a strong supporter of the ideals of the Enlightenment. Those ideals are reason, liberty and equality (Bernstein, 98). He believed that these ideals should be used to govern nations.

He put his beliefs into his writings and into the Declaration of Independence. Many people think that Jefferson should not be taught in an English curriculum because he favored slavery and was a slave owner himself. But while Jefferson was vocally opposed to slavery, and even passed the Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves during his second term as president, he

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was a slave owner and believed that black people were inferior to white people. For some, this is cause enough to dismiss Jefferson as someone for whom history has inflated their reputation, but he was a man of his time and was subject to the cultural beliefs of that time.

In truth, Jefferson was instrumental in the America of today, the America that values equality and liberty and freedom. Jefferson's actions and philosophy shaped the ideals of America. In fact, for America to revisit the teachings of Jefferson might be wise. In conclusion, Thomas Jefferson should be taught in English classes. Jefferson is important to American history and shaped our country. " Thomas Jefferson. " International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. New York City: Macmillan Library Reference, 2008. Print. Bernstein, R. B. Thomas Jefferson. Oxford: University Press, 2003. Print. " Reasons for the Declaration. History King. n. p. n. d. Web. 14 March. 1999. Annotated Bibliography Beran, Michael Knox. Jefferson's Semons: Portrait of a Restless Mind. New York City: Free Press, 2003. Print. From this source, I got information about Thomas Jefferson's education and about his life after becoming a president. I used this information in my biography essay and cited in twice. I found this book to be very helpful and it provided a vast amount of information. Bernstein, R. B. Thomas Jefferson. Oxford: University Press, 2003. Print. From this book, I got information about Thomas Jefferson's work on The Declaration of Independence and on his death.

I used this information in both my biography essay and in my persuasive essay. It provided a lot of information that I was able to use and I feel like it was a very reliable source. Skarmeas, Nancy. Thomas Jefferson. Nashville: Ideals Publications Incorporated, 1998. Print. From this book, I got

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information on Jefferson's early political letters and writing. This book provided examples of his political letters and details explaining them. I used this information on the Early Writing Career portion of the biography essay. This source was very helpful. Jefferson, Thomas.

Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson. New York City: Dover Publications, 2007. Print. From this autobiography, I got information on every aspect of Jefferson's life. I used this information in all three essays. This source provided the most accurate and reliable information since it was written by Thomas Jefferson himself. "Thomas Jefferson." International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. New York City: Macmillan Library Reference, 2008. Print. From this online encyclopedia, I obtained information on Jefferson's early life. I used this information in my biography essay.

There wasn't that much information from this source, but what I found was very reliable. "Thomas Jefferson." The Biography Channel Online. n. p. n. d. Web. 17 May. 2009. From this source, I found a lot of information on Thomas Jefferson's early life and his writing of The Declaration of Independence. I used this information in all three essays. This source offered a lot of information that I didn't find anywhere else. "Thomas Jefferson, a Brief Biography." Monticello Online. n. p. n. d. Web. 7 September. 1993. From this source, I got information of Thomas Jefferson's death.

I used this information in my biography essay. This source offered very little information. "Reasons for the Declaration." History King. n. p. n. d. Web. 14 March. 1999. This source offered information about why The Declaration of Independence was written. I found use of this source in all three of my essays. This source offered a lot of detailed a lot of detailed information. It <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-jefferson-biography/>

was a very reliable source. " The Declaration of Independence. " America's Library. n. p. n. d. Web. 24 April. 2000. This source offered information about the Declaration of Independence.

I used the information from this source on the literary interpretation and biography essays. This source offered very straight forward facts and information that I found to be quite helpful. " Jefferson - Hemings. " Monticello Online. n. p. n. d. Web. 4 August. 1993. This source gave me information about Thomas Jefferson's affair with slave-girl Sally Hemings. I used this information on my biography essay when I talked about the affair. This source had the most information about the affair. I found this source to be very useful. Jefferson, Thomas. " Declaration of Independence," The American Experience. New York City:

Prentice Hall, 2002. Print. This source is what I did my literary interpretation on. I found it to be very easy to interpret and it also provided some information that I could've used in my persuasive essay. " Thomas Jefferson Family Cemetery. " Carol House Online. n. p. n. d. 17 February. 2007. This source is where I got the cemetery picture from. All I got from this source was the picture. It was a good source. " Thomas Jefferson on Politics and Government. " Faculty Online. n. p. n. d. 7 May. 1996. This source is where I got the cover picture from. All I got from this source was the picture. It was a good source.