

# John quincy adams essay

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [PROCESS](#) \n \t
2. [INTRODUCTION](#) \n \t
3. [THESIS](#) \n \t
4. [ARGUMENT](#) \n \t
5. [CONCLUSION](#) \n \t
6. [COMPOSED IN THE SLEEPLESS HOURS OF LAST CHRISTMAS-NIGHT,](#) \n \t
7. [Works Cited](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

## **PROCESS**

In completing this paper I drew heavily upon the on line version of the Memoirs of John Quincy Adams as available in a digital format from Open Library . Although the plain text available there is easier to read, being that it was scanned in and not completely proofread I confirmed any direct quotations by referring back to a text version Memoirs of John Quincy as edited by Charles Francis Adams. I relied upon this text because John Quincy Adams's son, Charles Francis Adams sets forth such high standards for himself in the introduction as is cited in Addendum A.

## **INTRODUCTION**

There are constants in John Quincy Adams life. One is his search for truth, which has led to evolving religious theories. Another is his deep-seated love of country and willingness to sacrifice his personal interests in its defense.

This started early in his childhood and can be appreciated by the inclusion into his journals of a poem his mother taught him in the summer of 1775. . (for the full text of this excerpt and poem please see Addendum A). This too led to a deep change in his political views.

## **THESIS**

His own devotion to truth and justice did not prepare John Quincy Adams for the reality of how the national political process played out in practice. This resulted in him growing increasingly more cynical as he saw more and more politicians place private interest above public weal.

## **ARGUMENT**

As indicative of his deep commitment to his country, on January 1, in 1825 he wrote in his Journal, “ At the beginning of this year there is in my prospects and anticipations a solemnity and moment never before experienced, and to which unaided nature is inadequate. “ . At that time, Adams was serving in the Department of State, and the Electoral Congress had not yet settled who, among the three leading candidates, would become President of the United States.

On 9 January, 1825 Mr. Clay called upon him to discuss the matter. Clay at that time indicated that of the candidates, Jackson, Crawford and Adams, his preference was that Adams would be the next President. Journal entries from around that time illustrate Adams busy schedule as well as containing references to the upcoming decision and debate regarding who would be ratified as the next President of the United States. Adams mentions this in his journal on 30 January. 1825 when he describes how “ The intenseness of

interest in the issue of the Presidential election increases as the day approaches” “ The intriguing for votes is excessive, and the means adopted to obtain them desperate.” . During this period Adams evidences his own stance by statements like that made to Mr. Warfield in February of that year that, “ I had differed from the federal party on many important occasions, but I had always done justice to the talents and services of the individuals composing it, and to their merits as members of this Union. I had been discarded by the federal party upon differences of principle, and I had not separated from one party to make myself the slave of another. I referred, in proof of my adherence to principle against party, to various acts of my public life,” .

Although the full text of his 4 March 1825 Inaugural Address does not appear in his Journal it is evident that he did not anticipate Jackson’s deep emotions regarding his loss and Adams’s appointment to the Presidency. In that address he observes that “ the candid and the just will now admit that both have contributed splendid talents, spotless integrity, ardent patriotism, and disinterested sacrifices ” and is of the opinion that the “ baneful weed of party strife was uprooted. From that time no difference of principle, connected either with the theory of government or with our intercourse with foreign nations, has existed or been called forth in force sufficient to sustain a continued combination of parties or to give more than wholesome animation to public sentiment or legislative debate.” . (for a longer excerpt from the Inaugural Address, see Addendum A. attached hereto).

This idealistic view of party politics is far different from the opinions he held in later years. Subsequent experience showed him that indeed, there was

more than just a dissenting voice, and unfortunately, the baneful weed of party strife was most definitely not uprooted. Jackson was particularly resentful of Adams's appointment of Mr. Clay to the position of Secretary of State. During the selection process Jackson's friends had repeatedly importuned Mr. Clay for his support. When Adams made his appointment, Jackson presumed that Clay and Adams struck a deal and never forgave Adams for what he thought was an underhanded action. By the end of the year on 31 January, President finds himself responding to a resolution to the Senate, regarding appointment of ambassadors that is not fully factually accurate. This is one of a series of misrepresentations and misinterpretations instituted by opposing political forces. Jackson in particular seemed to make it a personal aim of his to discredit President Adams.

Each year John Quincy Adams closed his memoirs with some observation and reflection on the preceding year. At the end of 1825, this centered on how his political position as President of the United States had led him into a daily schedule that is more regular than any other he has known in the past. .

Part of his anti-slavery politics were involved in his opposition to the annexation of Texas to the United States. However, his opposition also includes concerns for fairness with Mexico. He saw the action as " perfidious robbery" of Mexico and so contrary of our rule of law the he wrote, " The Constitution is a menstruous rag, and the Union is sinking into a military monarchy," .

On 26 July he strays from his musing about his wedding anniversary to consider his political life as well. In those thoughts he finds " I have enjoyed a portion of the favor of my country at least equal to my desert, but have

suffered, and yet suffer, much from that slander which outvenoms all the worms of Nile." . His political life had not been as sanguine as his home life with his loving wife.

He is not himself insensible to the changes he personally experienced in his lifetime. In September of that year he reflects back on his youth and his collegiate commencement as " one of the exquisitely happy days, yet saddened with the pang of parting forever from loved associates, and from cherished to enter upon another career of anticipations full of timid hope. "

## **CONCLUSION**

John Quincy Adams closed his reflections in the year 1845 no less determined than 20 years earlier, but in a far different mindset. His faith in God was still strong, as was his love for his country, however in the score of years that passed his confidence in his fellow man had become exceedingly tarnished. In 1825 he closed his year reflecting on the regular life the Presidency enforced.. In 1845, lying awake on Christmas Night his reflections of the previous year inspired him to compose a prayer. . His earlier life of diplomacy did not prepare him for the savage politics of his own nation's political centre. The older, wiser but more cynical man who ends the year with a prayer is a full half circle shift from the idealistic man who expressed such confident hopes in his Inaugural Address.

## **COMPOSED IN THE SLEEPLESS HOURS OF LAST CHRISTMAS-NIGHT,**

O Lord my God ! of boundless might possessed,

In mercy soothe the tremblings of my breast !

For all the trials I am doomed to bear,

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My soul submissive to Thy will prepare.  
Through the long night of balmy sleep bereft,  
Howe er distressed, let patience still be left  
Patience, with calm composure to endure  
Woes which no human aid or skill can cure.  
My wife, my offspring, all whose fates depend  
On me, oh, may they find in Thee a friend.  
Whate er of blessing is to me denied,  
For them, O gracious God, Thyself provide !  
And when Thy wisdom shall arrest my breath,  
Fit me to meet fore er Thy face in death.  
WASHINGTON, 31st December, 1845.

## **Works Cited**

I reached the conclusion that it would be best to set aside the rest of the papers, and fix upon this diary It was very clear that abridgment was indispensable. Assuming this to be certain, it became necessary to fix upon a rule of selection which should be fair and honest. To attain that object I came to the following conclusions:

- 1st. To eliminate the details of common life and events of no interest to the public.
- 2d. To reduce the moral and religious speculations, in which the work abounds, so far as to escape repetition of sentiments once declared.
- 3d. Not to suppress strictures upon contemporaries, but to give them only when they are upon public men acting in the same sphere with the writer. In point of fact, there are very few others.

4th. To suppress nothing of his own habits of self-examination, even when they might be thought most to tell against himself.

5th. To abstain altogether from modification of the sentiments or the very words, and substitution of what might seem better ones, in every case but that of obvious error in writing.

Guided by these rules, I trust I have supplied pretty much all in these volumes which the most curious reader would be desirous to know.

in that same spring and summer of 1775, she (his mother) taught me to repeat daily, after the Lord's Prayer, before rising from bed, the Ode of Collins on the patriot warriors who fell in the war to subdue the Jacobite rebellion of 1745.

How sleep the brave who sink to rest

When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,

Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,

She there shall dress a sweeter sod

Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,

And Freedom shall awhile repair,

" Of the impression made upon my heart by the sentiments inculcated in these beautiful effusions of patriotism and poetry, you may form an estimate, by the fact that now, seventy-one years after they were thus taught me, I repeat them from memory, without reference to the book. 1 Have they ever shaken my abhorrence of War? Far otherwise. They have riveted it to my soul with hooks of steel. But it is to war waged by tyrants and oppressors, against the rights of human nature and the liberties and



rightful interests of my country, that my abhorrence is confined. War in defense of these, far from deserving my execration, is, in my deliberate belief, a religious and sacred duty.”

Of the two great political parties which have divided the opinions and feelings of our country, the candid and the just will now admit that both have contributed splendid talents, spotless integrity, ardent patriotism, and disinterested sacrifices to the formation and administration of this Government, and that both have required a liberal indulgence for a portion of human infirmity and error. The revolutionary wars of Europe, commencing precisely at the moment when the Government of the United States first went into operation under this Constitution, excited a collision of sentiments and of sympathies which kindled all the passions and imbittered the conflict of parties till the nation was involved in war and the Union was shaken to its center. This time of trial embraced a period of five and twenty years, during which the policy of the Union in its relations with Europe constituted the principal basis of our political divisions and the most arduous part of the action of our Federal Government. With the catastrophe in which the wars of the French Revolution terminated, and our own subsequent peace with Great Britain, this baneful weed of party strife was uprooted. From that time no difference of principle, connected either with the theory of government or with our intercourse with foreign nations, has existed or been called forth in force sufficient to sustain a continued combination of parties or to give more than wholesome animation to public sentiment or legislative debate. Our political creed is, without a dissenting voice that can be heard, that the will of the people is the source and the happiness of the people the end of all

legitimate government upon earth; that the best security for the beneficence and the best guaranty against the abuse of power consists in the freedom, the purity, and the frequency of popular elections;.