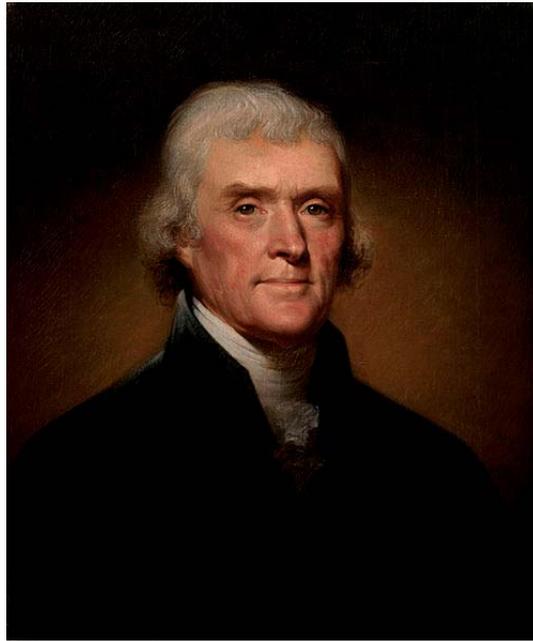


U.S. Presidents Thomas Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson was the third President of the United States. His tombstone reads, “Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom, & Father of the University of Virginia.” Notice anything odd about this **inscription**?¹ There is no mention of him being President. This is because Jefferson did not see his presidency as one of his greater accomplishments.

Politics was only one of Jefferson’s many interests. His peers pressured him to run for office. They respected Jefferson for his practical thinking and breadth of knowledge. He was a patron of the arts, an architect, a mathematician, an inventor, and a family man. Jefferson’s peers also admired his genius for writing and his ideals.

Jefferson strongly believed in people’s ability to manage their own affairs. He wanted to keep government small and out of the public’s life as much as

¹ **inscription** – words written or carved on something

possible. This ideal of self-government became known as Jeffersonian Democracy. Jefferson worked tirelessly for freedom of speech, press, religion, and other **civil**² liberties. He pushed hard for the addition of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution.

Jefferson's **ideals**³ were shaped by his boyhood. He was born on April 13, 1743 on his family's estate in Virginia. He was only 14 when his father died. At 16 he entered the College of William and Mary in nearby Williamsburg. He would later say that his studies and the cultured people he met during college greatly stimulated his mind. During these years, he also trained to be a lawyer. He listened to patriots like Patrick Henry protest Britain's unfair treatment of and taxes on the colonists and formed many of his ideas about people's "natural rights."

Many people remember Jefferson for writing the Declaration of Independence, but he made a lot other contributions to American society as well. Another great achievement came during his two terms as President. The U.S. purchased a vast region of land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains from France. This deal, known as the Louisiana Purchase, nearly doubled the size of the nation. In his later years, Jefferson designed the Virginia Capitol and his famous home, Monticello. He founded the prestigious University of Virginia. He also sold his library, 6,400 volumes in all, to Congress. In short, he began the Library of Congress. Jefferson died on July 4, 1826. His spirit and ideals impact and inspire us to this day.

² **civil** – to do with the government or people of a country

³ **ideals** – goals, ideas of what is perfect

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What significant detail is left off Jefferson's tombstone?
 - a. his authorship of the Declaration of Independence
 - b. his part in creating the University of Virginia
 - c. his mother's name
 - d. his presidency

2. The fourth paragraph of the passage is about
 - a. how Jefferson's father died when Jefferson was 14.
 - b. how Jefferson's ideals were shaped by his boyhood experiences.
 - c. how Jefferson attended the College of William and Mary.
 - d. how Jefferson listened to patriotic speeches.

3. Which of the following words best describes Jefferson's interests?
 - a. narrow
 - b. unusual
 - c. political
 - d. numerous

4. Based on the passage, the word **stimulated** means
 - a. inspired.
 - b. deadened.
 - c. distracted.
 - d. measured.

5. According to the passage, what is one reason Jefferson became President?
 - a. He thought it would help him build the University of Virginia.
 - b. His peers pressured him to try to become President.
 - c. He needed the money in order to keep living well.
 - d. He had a dream of buying Louisiana.

6. Why might Jefferson not have seen his Presidency as one of his greater accomplishments?

7. What were some of the things Jefferson did in addition to being a politician?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Thomas Jefferson worked hard for people’s freedom of speech ____ religion.

- a. without
- b. and
- c. but
- d. during

9. Read the following sentence.

When he was 16, Thomas Jefferson studied at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg.

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

Who? Thomas Jefferson

(did) What? _____

Where? _____

When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** ideals: goals; ideas of what is perfect.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____
