

The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams Study Guide

The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams by Lester J. Cappon

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1.....	8
Chapter 2.....	10
Chapter 3.....	11
Chapter 4.....	12
Chapter 5.....	14
Chapter 6.....	15
Chapter 7.....	17
Chapter 8.....	19
Chapter 9.....	20
Chapter 10.....	21
Chapter 11.....	22
Chapter 12.....	23
Chapter 13.....	24
Characters.....	25
Objects/Places.....	28
Themes.....	31
Style.....	33
Quotes.....	36
Topics for Discussion.....	38



Plot Summary

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were, respectively, the second and third presidents of the United States and crucial members of the Founding generation of the United States. The two men were friends for over fifty years and engaged in a correspondence over nearly that entire period, a correspondence that remains among the most famous in history. Only in *The Adams-Jefferson Letters* is the complete set of letters compiled for the first time.

The letters cover many mundane matters but also a wide range of issues, from government, philosophy and religion, to family grief and joy. Included within the correspondence is also Jefferson's correspondence with Abigail Adams, who cover, to a far lesser extent, many of the same matters.

Early in the letters, Adams and Jefferson mostly discuss political matters, but as the years wear on, particularly after their mutual retirements from politics, the two men turn to philosophical matters. For their entire lives, Adams and Jefferson were students of history and political science, having a key role in the design of the United States's government. Their role in the creation of the nation is something they remained proud of throughout their lives.

The editor of the *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, Lester J. Cappon, has organized the letters into thirteen chapters covering thirteen time periods of Adams and Jefferson's lives. While the letters themselves contain a number of matters not relevant for the summary, Cappon brings out the deep issues of the letters of the particular time period in helpful introductions at the beginning of each chapter. One is left with the impression that these two Founding Fathers are worthy of their high reputation, despite the foibles, vices and struggles both men dealt with.

Chapter one contains the letters from May 1777 to October 1781. During this period, Adams and Jefferson were both advocates of the revolution and discuss mostly the affairs of the young American nation. Chapter two contains the letters from June 1784 to September 1785. Adams and Jefferson were both diplomats in this period, Adams to England and Jefferson to France. Their letters primarily concern diplomatic matters. This is true of the letters of chapter three as well, which range from September 1785 to February 1786 and cover matters of commerce. Chapter four, with the letters from May 1786 to January 1787, are mostly importantly records Adams and Jefferson's difficulties, particularly with the Barbary Pirates.

Chapter five, running from January to October 1787, focuses in part on the events leading up to the ratification of the United States Constitution and reviews a number of matters concerning the structure of good government. And chapter six, from November 1787 to May 1789, in part focuses on securing loans and credit from the Dutch for the new American Republic.



Chapter seven covers the time period from April 1790 to March 1801. Both men served in President Washington's administration during this time and Jefferson as Vice-President under Adams until 1801, so they exchanged few letters but interacted a great deal. Chapter eight runs from May to October 1804, during the few letters exchanged during their estrangement over political matters. Chapter nine, from January 1812 to June 1813, shows their reconciliation and the resumption of their correspondence.

Chapter ten (June - December 1813) reviews a variety of philosophical matters, as does chapter eleven (January 1814 to May 1816). This time also sees the two men discuss the issues and events surrounding the war of 1812. Chapter twelve, August 1816 - December 1819, discusses Jefferson's project of creating the University of Virginia and educational reform generally. And chapter thirteen (January 1820 - April 1826) contains the last of the two men's letters, their final reflections on their lives and the like.



Introduction

Introduction Summary and Analysis

It is widely known that John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the second and third presidents of the United States, died on the same day, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, July 4th, 1826. The event marked the end of two lives which had had a dramatic impact on the formation of a nation and that made more difference to the creation of modern democracy than almost any others in history.

Adams and Jefferson were not merely statesmen, but political philosophers. They knew that great events had occurred under their watch and that they had put into practice the political philosophy of English and Continental political theory. The Adams-Jefferson letters indicate that both men were somewhat arrogantly aware of these facts.

The Adams-Jefferson letters record many important historical facts, not only about both men's personalities but to their methods of thoughts and political views. Jefferson is harder to penetrate given his more reserved emotional nature. He was an important figure but had little desire for diatribe and loved privacy for his family and home. It also suggests that he represented in action the spirit of Jeffersonian republicanism.

Jefferson and Adams were contrasts in nearly every respect, including appearance. Adams was short, Jefferson was tall, Adams round, Jefferson angular, and Adams was jovial and open, whereas Jefferson was reserved and private. He was also given to sudden bursts of anger.

Chapter one covers Jefferson and Adams's early political and diplomatic careers when they first became friends. They found that, despite their differences, they worked together well at the Continental Congress of 1775.

Abigail Adams, John Adams' wife, also plays an important role in the correspondence, both to the good and to the bad. She corresponds with Jefferson as well. Jefferson and Abigail considered themselves somewhat kindred spirits. Jefferson greatly respected Abigail's taste and enjoyed corresponding with her. She was also an intellectual, despite the challenges to women in her period. He also admired her femininity and intuition.

Jefferson's republicanism grew out of his resistance to President Washington's centralization of power through the workings of Alexander Hamilton, his Secretary of the Treasury and the Federalists. Adams was vice-president and somewhat agreed with Jefferson's opposition. Jefferson's Democratic - Republican Party was well organized by 1800 and Jefferson led the party in defending individual rights, such as in opposition to Adams's Alien and Sedition Acts, through the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1798. Consequently, the Federalists suffered massive defeat in the election of 1800. The party never recovered.



The most philosophical letters range between 1812 and 1826. But the letters before 1801 cover boring matters like whale-oil and tobacco contracts. Yet the letters still represent their early approaches to diplomacy and politics. They both also learned the diplomatic game, of which Jefferson was a master with the French people. The French greatly respected him. But Adams had little sympathy for the French and resisted Francophilia. He was diplomat to London in the 1780s, though this was a difficult task. Their diplomatic philosophies differed, with Jefferson as the practical idealist and Adams the skeptical realist.

For their service, Adams was made vice-president and Jefferson secretary of state. They did not help draft the Constitution but had views. Adams did not see a love of liberty in Europe and thought it indigenous to America. He also feared that other nations could not be restrained through virtue but only through force, and both men saw the threats of party politics.

When Jefferson was president, the letters ended. He tried to renew correspondence in 1804 with Mrs. Adams but this failed. Adams observed Jefferson's presidency from his home in Quincy and saw little difference between his republicanism and Jefferson's political practice. But Adams had vitriolic criticisms of Jefferson's social practices as president.

The correspondence resumed in 1812, producing as voluminous a correspondence between American intellectuals that is unparalleled. They rarely discuss the subjects of previous periods. They were primarily concerned with philosophical matters, defending their positions with cases from history and literature. They also discussed the significance of the events of the Revolutionary period, of which Adams had the better memory. They were proud of their early support of independence.

Adams and Jefferson were effectively matched in mental power and training, partly through both being trained in the law. They also read voraciously and from a young age. Jefferson was often interested in nature and science, whereas Adams focused mostly on moral philosophy, such as social science and ideology. Jefferson focused on natural science with other friends, whereas he and Adams focused on government, theology, religion and philosophy.

Neither man thought of himself as literary person, but both constantly wrote letters and also wrote other documents when the occasion required it. They also discussed religion, though Adams thought of it much more often. Both had outspoken views and both thought persons of faith had a lack of free inquiry. Adams, though, thought Christianity could handle being examined and criticized.

Adams and Jefferson were also concerned about the threat of religious bigotry and the increase in evangelical sentiment in the early nineteenth century. For them, freedom of thought must be maintained at all cost and both thought of religious belief as a personal and private matter, though Adams was not secretive, seeing his religion as the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.



The two men also discussed the revolutionary age they lived through and of the men and periods they knew. They saw that the United States was changing rapidly after the War of 1812 and Adams thought that the material improvements in the United States were changing people. New economic issues arose and slavery became a more pressing matter, which Adams and Jefferson wanted to stop.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Chapter one covers the Adams-Jefferson correspondence between May 1777 and October 1781. The two men met in Philadelphia at the Continental Congress in 1775. Adams, thirty-nine and Jefferson, thirty-two, were delegates and lawyers and had served for a few years in the lower house of their respective local legislatures.

Adams served as a Massachusetts representative in the 1774 Congress and was seen as a radical. He had authored the Novanglus letters, published anonymously in January 1775. It voraciously defended the authority of the Bay Colony to resist British oppression.

Jefferson was also seen as a radical due to his writing the Summary View of the Rights of British America, a series of documents Jefferson distributed to friends before he went to the 1774 meeting of the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1774. His friends entitled the pieces "By a Native and Member of the House of Burgesses," without asking Jefferson, and when it was reprinted anonymously in Philadelphia, it was quickly realized that Jefferson wrote the piece.

From 1775 to 1776, Jefferson and Adams agreed on the issues of the day. They both had little patience for moderates, who they thought did not love liberty enough. Jefferson respected Adams's ability to argument and his oratorical ability, along with his "sound head." Adams was impressed by Jefferson's fabulous and widely renowned writing ability.

In May 1776, a movement within Congress for independence was increased due to changes in the colonies, and on June 7th, Richard Henry Lee proposed a resolution that the Congress should secede from Britain. Adams and Jefferson were both placed on a committee of five to write the Declaration of Independence. Adams knew that Jefferson should write it. On July 2nd, the resolution was adopted and Adams declared it to be the most memorable event in America's history up to that time. When the Declaration was released, it became one of the great documents of liberation in history.

Adams and Jefferson continued to associate until September 2nd, 1776, when Jefferson came back to Monticello. He spent only a few weeks or so at home at a time because he spent most of his time at the Virginia House of Delegates. He helped establish the Commonwealth of Virginia and promoted the cause of revolution. He was governor from 1779 to 1781. Adams had been a member of the American Delegation in 1776 that met with Lord Howe to reconcile with Great Britain and thereby and thereafter gained valuable diplomatic experience. In 1778 he was on his way to France as a diplomat.

In the letters, the two men had different perspectives on the war, but they still basically agreed on its justness and on the reasons for the war they established in the



Continental Congress. Over seven years the two men exchanged six letters. The opening letters cover the need for strong unity and focus to garner international support for secession. They wanted to maintain the "join or die" spirit to avoid local prejudices. Independence was only a distant goal in 1777 because both men were so discouraged, including with financing the war and regulating trade.

The two men thought that the future United States was important and necessary for liberty but Jefferson didn't want too much power left to Congress. He wanted the states to have voting power under the new constitution (what would become the Articles of Confederation) and proposed a scheme for balancing the interests of the states and the nations.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Chapter two contains the letters Adams and Jefferson exchanged between June 1784 and September 1785. Before declaring independence, the Continental Congress wanted to create treatise and open commerce with other nations. They aimed to embrace the "most-favored-nation" principle and aim to protect private property from being devastated and stolen during war time. Adams and Jefferson were responsible for many of these treatise and commercial negotiations and so the letters cover these matters.

Jefferson joined Adams and Benjamin Franklin in France in 1784. Adams was then against the senior of the two partners (Franklin was soon to retire). Adams was commissioner to France from 1777-79. In 1780, he went back to France to negotiate with Great Britain for peace. Along the way, he was made minister to the Dutch and helped negotiate a treaty of friendship and trade. This positive relationship with the Dutch would help alleviate United States debt six years later. In 1782, Adams went to Paris to help secure formal recognition of American independence from the British.

By 1784, Jefferson found Adams with seven years of experience in diplomacy. Jefferson could have had the same job but declined it. When his wife died in 1782, he decided to accept a future offer, but the job was suspended in 1783 when peace was near. Jefferson went back to Congress to work on a final treaty with Great Britain.

But even in peace, the United States needed a trade treatise, so in mid-1784, Congress made Jefferson a minister plenipotentiary to work with Franklin and Adams. He gathered commercial data on the way.

Adams was pleased with Jefferson's appointment. Some of Jefferson's family came with him as did Adams's, and they met on August 7th of 1784, after four and a half years apart. Jefferson became again acquainted with Adams and Mrs. Adams. Over the next nine months, their respect for one another increased. They were even sad to leave one another. They both spent much of 1784 and 1785 working together to negotiate trade treatise. In France, Jefferson was to replace Franklin and in Great Britain Adams became the first American diplomat. In mid-1785, the Adams' moved to London, though the British were not welcoming.

Both Adams and Jefferson were alarmed that the European powers tolerated the looting committed by the Barbary States. The Mediterranean countries could not do business with the United States because of these pirates, so they tried to negotiate aid. They were unable to secure help, however. The letters again concern these and related matters.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter three range from September 1785 to February 1786. Adams and Jefferson faced important diplomatic challenges with respect to trade relations. Many treaties needed to be established, and in the start of the exchange, the major concern was Prussia. But Adams and Jefferson knew the man challenges were Great Britain and France. Great Britain, they thought, would refuse to honor their agreements with the United States. They were right about this.

Adams and Jefferson had also secured most favored nation treatment with France. But because the countries were friendly, Britain made difficulties. Adams and Jefferson had to engage in a number of frustrating negotiations. Adams and Jefferson began to see themselves as economists, or "oeconomists."

They had to focus on whale oil and candles, gaining admittance to French markets. These markets were competitive but favored the United States before the war. But the whale fishery was dispirited during the War for Independence because its markets shrank. After the war, the market had to reorganize, but the British had placed powerful duties on oil. Adams and Jefferson hoped to secure for their country reduced French duties on whale oil and candles. But securing good relations with Britain was simply impossible and this made both Jefferson and Adams bitter.

The treaty with Prussia made great progress. Congress had authorized a treaty with Austria, and while Franklin made gestures, little had been accomplished. Jefferson made good on it. Adams had even more promising negotiations with the Portuguese in London. Jefferson sent, on the Adams's request, a detailed compilation of commodities that could be exchanged. Because Portugal resented Britain's navigation acts, they were open to American overtures.

Adams cautioned Jefferson that they must not be too open just because they favored trade. They were worried about getting too involved in European internal politics.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter four range from May 1786 to January 1787. Jefferson visited England in March 1786 on Adams's request, but he was coldly received at the court. He was unable to secure an Anglo-American commercial treaty; the British only delayed and showed indifference.

The treaty with Portugal looked strong before during the six-week period Jefferson was in England. But the treaty was not ratified. In any event, Queen Maria protected American vessels through the Algerine corsairs to protect against the Barbary Pirates.

Adams and Jefferson had to deal with the Barbary states on several occasions. They started dealing with them when advised by a French foreign minister. He also recommended that they operate through agents, and they followed this advice. There were two missions made to Algiers, and one was successful while the other failed. American morality was offended by the ruthless tactics of the Barbary powers. They met with the ambassador of Tripoli in February 1786, which inspired one of Adams's most amusing letters, mocking the man severely. The ambassador made absurd demands for trade permits.

When Jefferson went back to France at the end of April, he started writing to Adams again and these letters were again concerned with the pirates. In Morocco, matters looked good, and a good treaty was achieved with the help of the Spanish. But Algerian negotiations went poorly. They refused to speak of peace and tried to extort the Algerian ambassador from the United States to release twenty-one American prisoners. They had to accede. Algiers, Jefferson believed, was governed only by money and fear.

In response, Adams and Jefferson gave Congress two options to pursue. They could either make war on the Barbary powers despite having done the country no injury directly - Jefferson recommended retaliation as more honorable and cost-effective in the long run. Thus, Jefferson advocated building an American Navy. Adams supported it as well, but was more practical about it. Ultimately, he believed the United States should pay tribute money to save her trade with the Mediterranean countries.

Jefferson deferred to Adams's judgment but he still tried to open negotiations to pay some French forces to help release Mediterranean prisoners. The practical Virginian who was hostile to the priesthood turned to a French order of priests for help. But the Order of Mathurins was dissolved by the French Revolution before they could help. The Barbary powers had to be endured until the treaty of 1796 between Algeria and the United States.

The irony of the Algerian problems was that the Europeans would permit piracy because they believed that they profited from trade being destroyed between two other nations.

But the Barbary states were bullies who employed extortion and cruelty, which embarrassed the vaunted Enlightenment values of these countries. All the letters concern these matters and related issues.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter five range from January to October 1787. In 1787, great events were looming on the horizon. France's old regime was near collapse. Vergennes, defender of the Bourbon Monarchy and lender of aid to the United States, died in February. A strategic link with France had been cut as a result.

At the same time, the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention was active, though would be meeting in secret in the future. The results would not reach Jefferson and Adams until November. Shay's Rebellion had also come and gone. The letters of this period covered these great events along with a number of family incidents. For instance, that summer, Jefferson fell in love with Mrs. Maria Cosway, meeting her through a friend, but she was married to artist Richard Cosway.

Cosway is not mentioned in the letters between Jefferson and Abigail and he did not write to her when he was paying attention to Maria. Mrs. Adams missed his correspondence. In the spring, Jefferson had his daughter Polly sent to England to be aided and taught by Abigail Adams. While Abigail was happy to help Polly, she was deeply upset by the insurgency in her own stage, to which she negatively reacted.

This was the beginning of Shay's Rebellion, which Adams thought would add to the power of the government. In contrast to the strong central state of France, Adams defended a federalist order, trying to refute Turgot that the United States had simply copied the English model of servitude they were once under. Adams thought that Massachusetts had produced a truly revolutionary constitution, as had Pennsylvania and Virginia, among others. Adams wrote his *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States* to give his defense. It proved influential in the debates over the Constitution.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter six range from November 1787 to May 1789. The years of 1788 to 1789 were the end of an era for Adams and Jefferson as diplomats. Adams had asked Congress to relieve him of his position so that he could go home. Jefferson was unhappy because he felt that he needed Adams for advice. Jefferson thought Adams was quitting because he didn't like the behavior of the English, which turned out to be true.

Yet Adams was not released until the spring of 1788. In the meanwhile, he helped the United States pay its debts to Holland. The Americans had acquired debt during the war to France, but it was unpaid and interest payments had been suspended. But the French monarchy was much worse off. Since they were allies, Jefferson was embarrassed when French officers that fought for the Americans complained that they were not being given a pension. American prestige was injured, and Jefferson's sensibilities were as a result.

The Dutch saw that the United States was a growing country and could make due with its debts. Thus, Adams secured a Dutch loan of \$400,000 at five percent to transfer its debt from France to Holland. Thought the transfer was rejected, the loan was approved. Their financial situation was complicated by the fact that the foreign debt of the United States had been bought by speculators encouraged by the new US Constitution.

Since Adams was leaving, Jefferson would have to take over. Luckily, in early 1788 they met, and Adams showed him the ropes. They were to negotiate a new loan until the new United States government could move forward, and they had to deal with speculators in Amsterdam. Jefferson was able to devise a plan through duties of imports. The Congress of the Confederation rejected his proposal but Hamilton's proposal to the new Congress would be accepted.

The whale-oil fishery became an issue against in 1788. Since the war, the British were trying to capture the oil business. In response, France reduced duties on American oil; the British then provided subsidies to help British oil undersell in French markets. But the French fishermen complained, and in September, France banned oil trading with all nations. Jefferson had to handle the disaster that winter. He secured a restoration of trade with the United States, gaining an economic advantage for his country and an advantage over the British. Adams and Jefferson's diplomatic accomplishments are all the more impressive in light of the fact that their republic was young and very militarily weak.

It was something of an injustice that Adams and Jefferson were busy with diplomacy during the Federal Convention. Jefferson hated the secret sessions, though he later hailed the new constitution. Adams appreciated it as well. Adams initially feared that the

aristocratic Senate would have too much power; he told Jefferson that the US should have a bill of rights, and Jefferson strongly agreed.

Jefferson told Abigail that he was sorry she was leaving London; they would stop corresponding for sixteen years. The Adamses returned to Boston in mid-1788. Jefferson asked for a leave of absence to take his daughters home that fall, though his departure was blocked for a year, allowing him to observe the beginning of the French Revolution. When Jefferson returned to the United States in the fall of 1789, his return was permanent. He was now the secretary of state alongside John Adams as vice-president.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter seven range from April 1790 to March 1801. The letters of the 1790s display only a very small portion of the interaction between Adams and Jefferson in those years. In the early years, they were in close personal contact, so few letters needed writing and later there were few letters due to their political differences.

When Jefferson first heard of Adams's election to the vice-presidency, he was pleased. Returning home six months later, he was made secretary of state. While Jefferson was secretary of state for four years, he wrote only two letters about foreign policy to Adams. The first covers the long-standing disputes with Great Britain over the US's northeast boundary and the other the Consular Convention of 1788 with France.

Separations between Adams and Jefferson appeared at this time. When Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was published, Jefferson much liked it because it was a reply to Edmund Burke's *Reflections of the French Revolution*, which was critical of the French Revolution. In the second installment, Paine argued that the English constitution was reactionary. However, Adams's son, John Quincy Adams, anonymously critiqued Paine's book and the critique was thought to have been written by Adams. The older Adams could hardly stand Jefferson's position.

Adams own work in political theory started with the assumption that politicians were self-interested and tried to build a philosophy of government to balance men's selfish actions against one another. But his writing was hard going and easy to misinterpret. Some believed that he was a fan of aristocracy and republicanism over democracy, a position that Jefferson accused him of.

Jefferson stepped down as secretary of state on the last day of 1793 and lived in retirement in Monticello for three years. The two, despite political differences, continued to correspond, talking about the French Revolution, European refugees and American refusal to accept foreign culture. Both agreed that the US should avoid getting involved in Europe. Some in the US wanted to inveigh in the war against Britain, but Adams resisted because he thought it would be dangerous to liberty. Jefferson hoped for experiments in government.

However, political differences arose in their letters. The Republican party was led by Jefferson and shaped by Madison and challenged the Federalists, of which Adams was a high-ranking member. Jefferson wanted to avoid personal estrangement despite being rival candidates for president in 1796.

After the election was over, but before the results were known, Jefferson wrote a letter to Adams, deploring politics and the press's attempts to pit them against one another.

He also congratulated Adams. However, Adams never received the letter, as it was intercepted by Madison.

From 1796 to 1801, no letter was exchanged. Things got worse in France, and this divided the pro-French Republicans from the anti-French Federalists. In 1798, Adams had the Alien and Sedition Acts passed. Jefferson, in protest, and with Madison, authored the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, nullifying the law.

Adams lost his political career when he sent a mission of peace to France denying the Federalists' demand for war. He also resented Jefferson's victory and appointed a vast number of Federalists to office the nights before Jefferson became president. The friendship was suspended.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter eight range from May to October 1804. Jefferson's daughter died in April 1804, while he was president. He was full of grief. Abigail wrote him a letter on May 20th after three and a half years of silence. Jefferson was happy to begin corresponding with Mrs. Adams again. In another letter written to his son-in-law, Jefferson said that the only thing Adams had done to anger Jefferson over their friendship was the midnight appointments of the Federalists. Mrs. Adams heard the same point in her letters from him.

Through their letters, Jefferson and Adams were able to air their grievances. The Adamses were upset because Jefferson had lent credence to the smear-artist James Callendar, who attacked the Federalists. Mrs. Adams complained about Jefferson releasing Callendar from jail and the removal of John Quincy Adams as commissioner of bankruptcy.

But their ultimate differences had produced rival parties leading to the "revolution of 1800." Abigail was anxious over the populist rhetoric of Jefferson's party. When Jefferson was vice-president under Adams when the two were members of different parties, their friendships underwent severe strain. Jefferson continued to believe that Adams's philosophy of government was too elitist and skeptical of individual liberty.

After further exchange, Mrs. Adams closed the correspondence. Some differences were resolved, though not others. Tensions remained.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter nine range from January 1812 to June 1813. After Jefferson's presidency and the events of 1801, Adams and Jefferson's relationship was understandably in tatters. Jefferson was furious about Adams's midnight appointments and Adams was furious about Jefferson's association with the writers of scurrilous attacks on his family. Reconciliation between the two, though, was a few years away. A mutual friend, Dr. Rush, was a signer of the Declaration and a well-known doctor. He saw Adams and Jefferson as personifications of the American Republic as they aged and saw their estrangement as a tragedy. For a few years, Rush sent letters to both men in attempts to reconcile them.

By 1811 his efforts were successful. He was able to warm the two men's hearts toward one another and convinced Adams to write Jefferson. He initially sent Jefferson a letter with two Pieces of Homespun and this opened up their correspondence again. Their post-presidential correspondence would be far more substantial and deep than before.

The correspondence resumed as the War of 1812 approached. They were in agreement about the political issues of the day, but Jefferson attained more appropriate detachment. Adams had become sensitive about his political career, particularly due to accusations of corruption. This led to a test of their friendship in 1813, when Adams discovered criticisms Jefferson had made of his administration years before. Otherwise, they avoided political issues for the most part in their letters.

The two men wanted to interact with one another over all the new ideas. They loved ideas that confounded mankind, particularly with respect to science, history and religion. By 1813, these matters had brought them together.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter ten range from June 1813 to December 1813. In 1813, Jefferson told Adams that he had given up newspapers for the classics, science writings, and so on. Adams was more interested in theological and religious matters. Their wide-ranging minds were products of the Enlightenment. In 1813, however, important political events would draw the men's interest to political events. The War of 1812 was raging.

Adams still wrote on a number of political subjects. One of his constant concerns was how to control aristocracy. He recognized that aristocracies arose in all times and all places and thought they could not be eliminated and replaced by an aristocracy and Genius and Virtue. These concerns produced some of Jefferson's most important letters on aristocracy; he was optimistic about the ability of the electorate to choose the good and wise. He had high hopes for a future system of public education and of the progress of science. But Adams was skeptical of man as a rational creature. Even an aristocracy of virtue could be corrupted if elected.

The men saw political parallels in religious institutions and discussed religion at length. They both agreed with the basics of Jesus's moral teachings, though not with his theology. Jefferson more systematically organized his thought, believing himself to be a Christian, since he thought Jesus only extolled human virtues, not superhuman ones, and cared more for his moral teachings than any others. Jefferson wrote a Syllabus of an Estimate of the Merit of the Doctrines of Jesus, Compared with Those of Others. The Syllabus recommended focusing only on Jesus's words and not other sources of doctrine in traditional Christianity. He wanted historical criticism to be applied to Christianity. Jefferson believed that men should only believe that which was intelligible and much of traditional Christian theology was not.

In their correspondence, the men also sharply condemned the priesthood, the doctrine of the Trinity, and so on, but kept these opinions private. They were happy that freedom of thought had at least led to religious freedom. But their Enlightenment attitudes were under attack at the time, for by the 1810s, the reaction to "rational religion" was at full bore. Revivals sprung up everywhere.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter eleven range from January 1814 to May 1816. Adams and Jefferson's philosophical outlooks were characteristic of the eighteenth century. They saw the destruction caused by the Napoleonic Wars and the ancient regime force coalescing as the new century opened. Despite its problems, however, Adams and Jefferson believed that the century treated human nature well and improved the condition of all. And they both saw that American Revolution as part of this form of progress. Because of the two men, at least in part, the idea of representative government was spreading in Europe.

Adams and Jefferson also agreed that the world was good on the whole and that it generated more pleasure than pain. Adams believed that God was leading humanity to progress, though Jefferson thought that if most humans met God they would curse him for their sufferings. Adams rejected the view that the universe lacked meaning and justice, unlike Jefferson.

Both men blamed Napoleon for the upheavals that eventually led to the War of 1812 and the tensions between the commercial interests of North and South. But they also admired his defense of universal rights, unlike the European kings of old. But they knew he was a threat and were happy after his two abdications.

Adams and Jefferson also focused on their own histories and their knowledge of world history generally. They wanted the American people to understand the Revolution to appreciate representative government. It was also important to separate the War for Independence from the Revolution, which was in the minds of the people. Both men emphasized the philosophical aspects of history and both men sought to preserve documents concerning the revolution, particularly Jefferson. They knew their age was significant and knew it would be helpful to posterity. The letters by and large concern these matters.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter twelve range from August 1816 to December 1819. During this period, Jefferson and Mrs. Adams's correspondence resumed in 1816, when she added a postscript to one of her husband's letters. But Mrs. Adams died of typhoid fever in late 1818, leaving Adams very lonely.

Adams and Jefferson were aware of the post-war world after 1815, following the news of depression and the social problems in England. Adams hoped to establish mutually beneficial relations with Britain, though Jefferson was still skeptical. They were also worried about the Missouri Compromise of 1820, seeing a future conflict concerning slavery.

The new South American republics also merited attention. They believed that the revolutions in Latin America made their independence secure, though they thought that the Catholic Church's dominance in those areas threatened ignorance and superstition rather than free government.

Jefferson was also a major fan of educational reform to promote the cause of reason and freedom. His interest began early in his life, when he drew up a bill for public education in the Virginia House. He was able to establish the University of Virginia in 1819, though he was nearly eighty-two before the first academic session began in 1825-26. Adams and Jefferson's thoughts about aristocracy also led to concerns about education. Both men thought education was essential to good government.

Jefferson's bill established elementary education for all, district schools for the best students to prepare for college and the university to educate the natural aristocracy. He wanted the ward to be the unit of education to produce well-informed citizens in "little republic[s]." He thought education would promote social equality as well. But no public schools system would be set up in Virginia until the 1870s.

Jefferson and Adams both wanted education for citizens and virtue and were wary of "petty" education that prepared men to become mystics. They wanted university reform to abolish divinity professorships. He wanted the sciences of "real use to human affairs" to be established, which included languages, math, natural science, medicine, philosophy, government and political economy. Professional schools would train men in the fine arts, architecture, military and naval skill, agriculture, and the like. Theology and history would also be taught. He also wanted professors to have a light teaching load. Slow progress with other reforms dispirited Jefferson, however.

Many of the letters cover these details and also Jefferson's plans for the university and the details establishing it. Earlier letters cover Abigail's death and many of the letters include philosophical matters and cover books read and the like.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

The letters of chapter thirteen range from January 1820 until a few months before their deaths in April 1826. Both men grew content in old age, passing their time of resentment. They retired happily and stayed mentally active as philosophers. Further, most men were lucky in good health.

Though, by 1818, Adams was not able to write due to his palsy. Jefferson also became sick first in 1818. They were consoled through sharing infirmities. They also looked back fondly to their careers and the revolutionary days. Near the end of their lives, they came to represent the historical past.

Jefferson focused mostly on establishing the University of Virginia in the last years of his life, and while Adams did not have a cause of this sort, he still stayed interested in politics, unlike Jefferson.

The two men's friendship had passed its most several tests early in the eighteenth century. They acknowledged that they were glad to have put it aside. Both men also felt obligated to write regularly despite difficulty. The two men realized they have exchanged 1,267 letters by 1820 and chronicled their exchanged.

Adams lived fairly well on a salary in old age, but Jefferson was a victim of inflation and depression, having accumulated great debts through overspending. Monticello was in risk of being lost, though eventually it was saved.

Adams and Jefferson exchanged letters until three months before they died. The last letter concerns arranging a visit with the Adamses by Jefferson's grandson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph.

While the two men differed politically, were estranged and endured many events, they stayed in contact their whole lives and shared many ideas. They were grateful for their friendship and proud of their accomplishments. Both men died on the fiftieth anniversary of independence, July 4th, 1826. The letters of course do not cover all of these events but represent the feelings recorded in the summary.



Characters

John Adams

John Adams (1735-1826) was the second president of the United States (1797-1801) and was the first vice president (1789-1797). He was also one of the most significant American Founders. Adams first became well known at the beginning of the American Revolution as a radical proponent of secession and as a delegate to the Continental Congress from Massachusetts. He was also responsible for helping draft and approve the Declaration of Independence, which is how he came to know Thomas Jefferson. As a European diplomat, he negotiated peace with Great Britain and helped secure loans from the Netherlands.

In the letters, Adams is the elder of the two men and as such is something of an "older brother" figure to Jefferson in their early years. Adams was responsible for promoting Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence and thus for "discovering" him. He was also a senior diplomat when Jefferson became a diplomat to France. Jefferson often asked him for help. But once Washington became president, the two men returned to the United States to become members of his government. When Adams was elected, Jefferson ran against him and was elected vice-president. This precipitated a nasty political feud that led to their estrangement when Jefferson was elected president in 1801. Their estrangement lasted for twelve years until mutual friends reconciled them.

Adams was always philosophical, like Jefferson, though his interests tended more towards religion, theology and history. He is a great admirer of Jefferson and is the more jovial, emotional and forward of the two. He and his wife Abigail spent most of their fifty-year correspondence with Jefferson in admiration of his talents and sharing his interests and life.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the third president of the United States, following Adams (1801-1809). He was also the second vice-president of the United States, under Adams. Jefferson was the most important author of the Declaration of Independence and ranks among the most ideologically and political influential Founding Fathers and advocates of republicanism.

Jefferson was a major proponent of Enlightenment philosophy. He celebrated democratic institutions and was hostile to natural aristocracy and monarchy. He had an optimistic view of human nature and human reason and a negative view of religion and superstition. Jefferson defended a philosophy of natural rights, human goodness and deism that Adams was only partly in agreement on. Jefferson also defended a more limited government than Adams and when Adams passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, Jefferson and James Madison went to Kentucky and Virginia to have the laws nullified.



Jefferson, like Adams, shared a strong interest in philosophy and history. He was also fascinated by all the scientists, architecture and invention. He helped to found the University of Virginia and was interested in educational reform his entire life.

Of the two men, Jefferson was the more demure and private; his letters express far less emotion and he maintained a correspondence with Abigail Adams on his own. His family life was more tumultuous than Adams's, as was his finances, which were always problematic.

Abigail Adams

The wife of John Adams (1744-1818), Abigail was a thoughtful and intellectual person in her own right. She and Jefferson happily corresponded for years, right up until her death. The correspondences are included in the book.

God

Among the most important topics in the letters is the nature of God. Both men were deists who believed in a benevolent God who had designed the world but did not engage in supernatural interruptions of the operation of the laws of nature. Adams was less committed on this matter than Jefferson, however. The two men believed that God had given men reason, natural rights and a moral sense, but that men who claimed to speak for God were typically insane or evil.

The Continental Congress

The convention of delegates from the Thirteen British Colonies in the United States that governed the nation during the Revolutionary War. It met between 1774 and 1789 three times.

George Washington

General of American forces during the Revolutionary War and the first president of the United States. Washington had both Adams and Jefferson serve in high positions in his government.

The Constitutional Convention

The Philadelphia Convention held to draft a Constitution to be ratified by the states to replace the Articles of Confederation. Adams and Jefferson were in Europe when it was held and while they disapproved of its secrecy, they approved (largely) of the draft.



The Federalists

An American political party existing between 1792 and 1816, and the first American political party. George Washington and John Adams were members, while Jefferson opposed it. The Federalists tended to be nationalists who supported manufacturing interests and central banking.

The Democratic-Republicans

Thomas Jefferson founded this first opposition party to the Federalists. It dominated United States politics from 1800 to 1824. Jefferson's party supported good relations with France, free trade, strict readings of the Constitution and opposed the central bank.

John Quincy Adams

The sixth president of the United States and son of John Adams, who comes up in later correspondence.

Family Members

Jefferson and Adams often discuss their family members. For instance, Polly Jefferson, Jefferson's daughter, visited the Adams's in London while Jefferson was in France. Some of the early letters discuss the arrangements of her visit.

The British

The British often come up in the letters. Adams was diplomat to the British and helped to establish peace with them; he was also more pro-British than Jefferson. The British come up again during the War of 1812.

The French

The French come up often in the letters as well. Jefferson was diplomat to the French and was more pro-France than Adams.

The Barbary Pirates

Muslim pirates and privateers working around North Africa who harassed American trade ships when Adams and Jefferson were diplomats. Jefferson had to negotiate with them for the release of hostages; both men despised them. While president, Jefferson would engage in the First Barbary War with them (1801-1805).



Objects/Places

The American Colonies/the United States

The home of Jefferson and Adams, Adams from Massachusetts and Jefferson from Virginia. Both men were responsible for the creation of the United States from the colonies.

Great Britain

Adams was diplomat to Great Britain and secured peace with them to end the Revolutionary War. The British are a hugely important topic in the letters, in part because of the two wars the United States fought with them.

France

Jefferson was diplomat to France and engaged in a number of important negotiations there. His association with the French and French intellectuals led to a lifelong support for France.

London

When Adams was diplomat, he was stationed in London.

Paris

When Jefferson was diplomat, he was stationed in Paris.

Quincy, Massachusetts

The Adams's home. The town was named for Abigail Adams's maternal grandfather and served as the middle name of Adams's son.

Monticello

Jefferson's famous home in Virginia that he designed.

The Presidency

Both Jefferson and Adams served as American presidents.



The Constitution

While neither man was present at the Constitutional Convention, they both approved of the document.

The Revolutionary War

The War for Independence that both Jefferson and Adams advocated when they were young and that both men insisted should not be confused with the Revolution, which in their opinion was primarily a social movement.

The Declaration of Independence

Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence and Adams helped to get it out of committee.

The War of 1812

The second American war with Great Britain and a major topic in Adams and Jefferson's later letters.

The Articles of Confederation

The governing constitution of the United States prior to the Constitution, in which both Jefferson and Adams were happy to replace.

Republicanism

The philosophy of representative but limited government, defended by both Adams and Jefferson. However, Jefferson was perhaps the fiercest and most prominent defender of Republicanism in the world at that time.

Deism

The belief in a "watch-maker" God, a good being who created the universe to run according to natural laws but who did not interrupt the regular flow of nature with supernatural events.

Science and Reason

Both Adams and Jefferson were major proponents of the potential of science and reason to improve humanity.

Themes

The Legend of the Founding Generation

Americans involved in politics always claim the mantle of the Founding generation for themselves. Even today the writings and ideas of the Founding Fathers hold great authority with the American public, even if those ideas are widely misunderstood and would be rejected if advanced without the sanction of the likes of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Thus, the Founding Fathers and their generation have something of a legendary status in American social and political life.

The historical soundness of the Adams-Jefferson letters, however, both supports and undermines the legend of the Founding generation. It undermines the legend by showing Jefferson and Adams, warts and all, in their correspondences. Of course, they certainly hid many of their vices and sins from one another, but they knew each other and their mutual circumstances well. They not only worked together but were political allies and political opponents throughout their fifty year association. It becomes clear from Jefferson's debts, associations with slanderers, and the like that he was less than perfect, and Adams's resentment over his political failings also do not cast him in the best light.

Nonetheless, Adams and Jefferson come out looking much like the great historical figures that they were thought to be. The letters are genteel and tell of their actions during great events in American history. They were both successful diplomats and politicians and great political theorists who brought their political ideas to fruition, unlike so many in the history of politics. They also display their incredible intellectual talent and wide-ranging knowledge throughout their correspondence, including their penchant for revolutionary ideas, reason and science.

Enlightenment

Eighteenth century European history is often characterized as the great period of the Enlightenment. This period of history saw the rise of many ideas that continue to shape the modern era. Many believed that reason was the source of human progress, human knowledge and all moral and political authority. Reason gave rise to science, mathematics and invention; it also made knowledge possible in a way that theology could never hope to accomplish (in the eyes of Enlightenment intellectuals there was a stark contrast between reason and faith).

The Enlightenment advocacy of reason also led to a view that the consent of the governed was the source of political legitimacy. Many Enlightenment figures were staunch democrats, defending democratic institutions, the rule of law and individual rights against theocratic and absolute monarchical authority. Enlightenment intellectuals also often rejected traditional Christianity and instead defended a version of deism, the



view that God set up the world according to natural laws and made it basically benevolent but otherwise had little to do with human affairs.

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson are the products of the European Enlightenment. They held all the major views of Enlightenment philosophies, including the faith in science and reason, skepticism about theologically-based knowledge and tradition religion and were strong proponents of natural rights, democratic institutions and the rule of law. These ideas come through in their letters throughout their lives particularly in their later, more contemplative periods.

Friendship

More than anything, the Adams-Jefferson Letters is the story of a famous but true and enduring friendship and of everything that comes from that friendship. Adams and Jefferson met under historically important circumstances and rose to the challenges their time presented to them. Together and with others, they pulled off a revolution and spread an intellectual change throughout an entire nature and later most of the world.

The two men helped each other through many challenges as diplomats for their young nation, not only securing peace treaties but making financial arrangements. They served together in the Washington Administration and both became presidents of the United States themselves. Throughout all of this time, they corresponded regularly, save during the period from Jefferson's election until around 1812, when political differences put a strain on their relationship.

In fact, Adams and Jefferson's friendship is only more paradigmatic for the profound challenge it suffered due to their political conflicts. The two men highly admired one another but became enraged with each other's conduct. Yet at the urging of mutual friends, they reconciled and not only recovered their old friendship but deepened it as the years wore on. The two men discussed many matters of great import but also shared the details of their day-to-day lives and remained the dearest of friends until they died on the same day.



Style

Perspective

Four perspectives fill the pages of the Adams-Jefferson letters, the editor's, Adams, Jefferson and Abigail Adams. Each perspective differs in important ways. The most unique perspective is that of the editor, Lester J. Cappon. Cappon includes before each selection of letters an introduction to the time period that the relevant letters cover. He is intent on setting all the letters in context and explaining the complex personal, political and philosophical context in which the letters were written. He proceeds with the care of a professional historian and also treats the primary sources well, compiling them all in one source while also explaining, classifying and analyzing them.

John Adams's perspective is the more lively and jovial of the two. Adams often jokes in his letters and in general displays a chipper temperament. Of the two, Adams was much more interested in religious matters. He was more pro-British than Jefferson and more skeptical of the inherent perfectibility of man. While he was a deist like Jefferson, he was more sympathetic to traditional Protestant Christianity. Adams was also less of a revolutionary than Jefferson and did not embrace the French Revolution with the same enthusiasm.

Thomas Jefferson's perspective is the more dour, reserved though deep of the two. Jefferson is perhaps the greater intellect of the two men, often producing philosophical defenses of his views in a way that Adams did not pursue. He was also a polymath, with interests and talents in horticulture, architecture, art, history, philosophy, politics and educational reform. His passions for these activities shine through particularly in later letters.

Abigail Adams's perspective is the least prominent but it is still important (she appears on the front cover, after all). She carries on a (sometimes suspiciously) warm correspondence with Jefferson often when John Adams was uninterested. She is a powerful intellect in her own right, though she does not spend much time on these matters. She often expresses a care and concern for Jefferson and her husband.

Tone

The tone of the Adams-Jefferson Letters, like the perspective, has four distinct types in accord with the four distinct voices that speak in the book. First, again, the perspective of the editor, Lester Cappon, is that of a professional historian and compiler of primary texts. As such, one might expect for his tone to be one of a professional historian - somewhat dry, careful, full of detail and seeming accuracy. Cappon's tone is true to the stereotype. His work is helpful, clear and there is no obvious bias or incompetence detectable in his manner of writing.



Adams's tone reflects his personality. A happier and more energetic man than Jefferson, Adams's tone is often happy, more emotionally open and eager. He expresses admiration for Jefferson as a young writer and is eager to help him early in Jefferson's diplomatic career. When their friendship comes to an end, Adams is clearly full of anger and carries resentment about his political career until the last decade or so of his life. He is also eager to discuss many matters with Jefferson.

Jefferson's tone also reflects his personality. Jefferson is more careful, thoughtful, quiet and emotionally measured. While Jefferson by all accounts had something of a wild personal life, this does not come through directly in his letters. Instead he remains somewhat formal and is more private about his life than Adams is. However, he displays his polymath abilities throughout the late letters, showing his wide-ranging interests and mastery of many subjects, along with displaying great passions, particularly for educational reform.

Abigail Adams's tone is polite, kind, caring and concerned. In her exchanges with Jefferson, she often expresses concern for his family and his well-being. She also has an intellectual side that comes through in her writings.

Structure

Cappon, the editor, structured the Adams-Jefferson letters into thirteen chapters that correspond to thirteen consecutive periods of time in their lives, throughout most of which they regularly corresponded. To the text he adds an extended introduction and index, along with a number of learned footnotes. He also includes several pages of introduction and summary of each chapter at the beginning. The letters are organized in order and are clearly formatted.

Chapter one ranges between May 1777 and October 1781. At this time, Adams and Jefferson were in their revolutionary period and their correspondence covers the events and challenges of the revolutionary war and subsequent challenges. Chapter two covers the period from Jun 1784 to September 1785; in these years Adams and Jefferson served as American diplomats to England and France respectively. These letters mostly reflect diplomatic concerns, as does the letters in chapter three (September 1785 to February 1786), which review economic challenges. Chapter four, covering May 1786 to January 1787 focuses on difficulties with the Barbary Pirates.

Chapter five (January to October 1787) covers matters concerning the US constitution and its ratification along with the political theory behind it. Chapter six (November 1787 to May 1789) covers getting loans from the Dutch for the American government. Chapter seven (April 1790 to March 1801) contains few letters due to the fact that both men served in the Washington Administration and were president (Adams) and vice-president (Jefferson) from 1797 to 1801. During this time, political tensions arose between them, which lead to even fewer letters being exchanged until 1812. Chapter eight covers May to October 1804 and is exclusively comprised of letters between Abigail Adams and Jefferson.



Chapter nine (January 1812 to June 1813) displays the reconciliation between the two men. Chapter ten (June to December 1813) and chapter eleven (January 1814 to May 1816) covers philosophical discussions and the events relevant to the War of 1812. Chapter twelve (August 1816 to December 1819) focuses on the creation of the University of Virginia by Jefferson and his efforts on behalf of educational reform. Finally, chapter thirteen (January 1820 to April 1826) is composed of the last letters Adams and Jefferson exchanged which reflect on their lives and infirmities, along with the legacy of the American Revolution and their life's work.



Quotes

"I am not ashamed to own that a prospect of an immortality in the memories of all the worthy, to the end of time, would be a high gratification of my wishes." Introduction, p. I

"The great Work of Confederation, drags heavily on, but I don't despair of it." Chap. 1, p. 5

"His dislike of parties, and all men, by balancing his prejudices, may give the same fair play to his reason as would a general benevolence of temper." Chap. 2, p. 13

"I think all the world would gain by setting commerce at perfect liberty." Chap. 2, p. 47

"We must not, my Friend, be the Bubbles of our own Liberal sentiments." Chap. 3, p. 75

"... and you know as We are poor We ought to be Oeconomists." Chap. 3, p. 88

"I have no hope of it's making peace; but it may add to our information, abate the ardor of these pyrates against us, and shut the mouths of those who might impute our success at Marocco and failure at Algiers to a judicious appointment to one place and an injudicious one at the other." Chap. 4, p. 151

"The first principle of a good government is certainly a distribution of it's powers into executive, judiciary, and legislative, and a subdivision of the latter into two or three branches." Chap. 5, p. 199

"I feel myself obliged to write this in Confidence to you and to put you on your Guard against the immeasurable avarice of Amsterdam as well as the ungovernable Rage of Speculation." Chap. 6, p. 224

"[T]his ... will be an age of experiments in government ... founded on principles of honesty, not of mere force." Chap. 7, p. 242

"Faithfull are the wounds of a Friend. Often have I wished to have seen a different course pursued by you. I bear no malice I cherish no enmity." Chap. 8, p. 274

"I always loved Jefferson and still love him." Chap. 9, p. 284

"They insisted on the ultimate truth 'that Almighty God hath created the mind free.'" Chap. 10, p. 345

"Nevertheless, according to the few lights that remain to Us, We may say that the Eighteenth Century, notwithstanding all its Errors and Vices has been, of all that are past, the most honorable to human Nature. Knowledge and Virtues were increased and diffused, Arts, Sciences useful to Men, ameliorating their conditions, were improved, more than in any former equal Period." Chap. 11, p. 456



"One of Jefferson's favorite 'dreams of the future' was educational reform." Chap. 12, p. 477

"We shall meet again, so wishes and so believes your friend, but if we are disappointed we shall never know it." Chap. 13, p. 558



Topics for Discussion

Why did Adams and Jefferson start corresponding in the first place?

Explain the differences in political philosophy between the two men and their views on human nature. How did these differences affect their political philosophies?

What were the two men's political differences (in matters of party)? How did this lead to their estrangement?

What were Adams and Jefferson's views about religion? How were they similar? How were they different? How were they characteristic of their time?

What does Jefferson's correspondence with Abigail Adams add to the correspondence as a whole?

What do the letters show about the difference in temperament in Adams and Jefferson?

Discuss at least two of the important historical events that Adams and Jefferson reflect on. Include in your discussion the opinions of both on the subject.