



Agony and Eloquence: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and a World of Revolution

Daniel L. Mallock

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The drama of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson is the foundational story of America—courage, loyalty, hope, fanaticism, greatness, failure, forgiveness, love.

An Essential American Friendship is the story of the greatest friendship in American history and the revolutionary times in which it was made, ruined, and finally renewed.

In the wake of Washington's retirement, longtime friends Thomas Jefferson and John Adams came to represent the opposing political forces struggling to shape America's future. Adams's victory in the presidential election of 1796 brought Jefferson into his administration—but as an unlikely and deeply conflicted vice president. The bloody Republican revolution in France finally brought their political differences to a bitter pitch. In Mallock's take on this fascinating period, French foreign policy and revolutionary developments—from the fall of the Bastille to the fall of the Jacobins and the rise of Napoleon—form a disturbing and illuminating counterpoint to events, controversies, individuals, and relationships in Philadelphia and Washington.

Many important and fascinating people appear in the book, including Thomas Paine, Camille Desmoulins, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Tobias Lear, Talleyrand, Robespierre, Danton, Saint-Just, Abigail Adams, Lafayette, James Madison, John Quincy Adams, Dr. Joseph Priestley, Samuel Adams, Philip Mazzei, John Marshall, Alexander Hamilton, and Edward Coles. They are brought to life by Mallock's insightful analysis and clear and lively writing.

An Essential American Friendship is a thoroughly researched and tautly written modern history. When the most important thing is at stake, *almost anything* can be justified.

Agony and Eloquence: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and a World of Revolution Details

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From Reader Review Agony and Eloquence: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and a World of Revolution for online ebook

Cameron says

This book contains plenty of interesting information but is in need of an editor. In many instances of the books I found the author repeating the same idea over and over. A good editing job is needed to clean up much of the verbosity.

Lynn Smith says

This book covers the history of the friendship (and separation and reuniting) of two of America's founding fathers -- John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. The book details how Jefferson and Adams worked together in championing the cause for independence and founding the United States of America. It tells the history of the second and third presidents of the USA. Adams was the second president of course (following George Washington) and Thomas Jefferson was his vice president who eventually became the 3rd president. While both men were united in helping America gain her independence from Great Britain, politics and the presidency would drive the two men apart. Once both had retired and had time to reflect on what caused them to separate, they were brought back together by a mutual friend and shared a continuing correspondence via letters through the end of their lives. While Thomas Jefferson is a revered historical figure, Adams is not as much so and has likely not received his just desserts. This book definitely paints Adams in a very favorable light. It does paint Jefferson in a less favorable light than the third president has otherwise been painted by historians, but the ascension of John Adams in my school of thought has really done nothing to diminish Jefferson's greatness. Both men died on July 4, 1826, exactly 50 years after American independence was declared. Even though John Adams' last known words were "Thomas Jefferson survives", Jefferson actually preceded Adams in death by a few hours. It is a good thing for succeeding generation that these two giants of liberty were able to reconcile and their correspondence has been saved for posterity. The reason the book gets 4 stars instead of 5 is it would have benefited from some better editing which could have tightened up the manuscript and eliminated some of the duplication present in the book.

Steven Peterson says

The focus of this book is the friendship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the decline of that friendship, and its recurrence due to the efforts of Dr. Benjamin Rush after Jefferson's presidency ended. The book reads well and is to the point. Other books, of course, have dealt, in one way or another, with the friendship explored here.

But that is the focus of this work--not one part of a longer work on Jefferson or Adams. They came to know one another as the colonies' relationship with British Empire began to worsen dramatically. They worked together in the Continental Congress and served on the committee to draft a rationale for breaking ties with the Empire and declaring independence.

Their friendship deepened as they served abroad in a diplomatic assignment. Too, Abigail Adams, John's wife, became friends with Jefferson--who reciprocated. However, as the book details, politics undid the

friendship. Jefferson became skeptical of Washington's presidency (and especially Cabinet members such as Alexander Hamilton). When Adams was elected to follow Washington--with Jefferson serving as Vice President--their friendship was undermined. When Jefferson assumed the presidency, there was no rapprochement between the two. After Jefferson left the presidency, a mutual friend--Dr. Benjamin Rush--strove to ignite a renewal of their friendship. He succeeded quite well. From that point to the ends of their lives (on the same day--July 4), their friendship was renewed and their correspondence dealt with a wide array of issues.

A fine book on an important American friendship. . . .

Jonathan says

Did anyone edit this book? The author repeats himself chapter and after chapter. Also, I was unpleasantly surprised to see that the author thought to spend but a few pages on the letters sent between Adams and Jefferson over the last 14 years of their life. Most of this book was a commentary on the French Revolution and its impact on a young USA.

Tonya Covarrubias says

Interesting trip through the lives of Adams and Jefferson through the lense of the French Revolution. I learned so much about how truly partisan and dirty politics was in the days of the Founding Fathers.

Nicholas N. Kraushaar says

An exceptional history book

Mr. Mallock has written an entertaining and informative history of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in addition to covering the historical events in France and England that affected their relationship. I'm not a history buff but this book is a page turner.

Jim Swike says

Excellent book on how these Men dealt with each other, professionally and personally. This is also a great example of the power of letter writing in this era. A great reference book as well. Enjoy!

Joseph Adelizzi, Jr. says

"Shenanigans!" my daughter Kristin used to say, "I call 'Shenanigans!'" She reserved invoking the damning yet restorative "Shenanigans!" for those times when her brother Jeffrey stretched the bounds of believability and propriety beyond what she decided were acceptable limits; "Shenanigans!" invoked, normalcy restored.

Now I must admit, as I made my way through Daniel L. Mallock's excellent account of the relationship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, I found myself calling "Shenanigans!" quite often - and against a man I admire: Thomas Jefferson. Hearing how, as Vice President to John Adams, Jefferson worked so hard to undermine many of Adams' strategies and policies was nearly image-shattering. And reading of Jefferson complaints and ire over Adams' last-minute judicial appointments, chosen literally in the waning minutes of Adams' administration, reminded me of another of my daughter's infamous protests: "Mom! Jeffrey hit me back!"

Don't get me wrong. "Agony and Eloquence" did not serve to crush a lifetime idol of mine. Yes, Jefferson has come down a peg or two in my eyes, but his free-fall was slowed in the end by his parachute of eloquence, and I was never in jeopardy of throwing out all the good he had done despite my umbrage over his scheming and denials, not to mention his failure to take action against slavery. He seems to have possessed a lifelong tenacity to nurture, defend, and coax into reality his republican ideals, practically at the expense of everything else - as evinced by his scheming behind Adams' back, turning a blind eye to all the violence of the French Revolution, and not addressing the ongoing evils of slavery. However, where would we be as a country without his republican ideals, his tenacity, and his eloquence? I am reminded of another figure from the past regarded as having been high on eloquence but coming up short on action - Cicero.

Any decline in admiration for Jefferson was more than compensated for by a rise in esteem for Adams. Yes he had his faults, as does everyone, particularly in his borderline undignified defense of his decisions and actions so many years down the road, but his ability to recognize and work toward the greater good, to "be just and do good" certainly wins him a place in my pantheon.

Finally, this interesting book has given me two new historical figures to look up to and look in to: Benjamin Rush and Edward Coles, the former having lived a stone's throw away from my front door.

Do I have a nagging doubt or two I didn't have before reading "Agony and Eloquence?" Yes, but in the end it's all good because I called "Shenanigans!" and, as Kristin will tell you, calling "Shenanigans!" fixes everything.

Linda says

This book is has interesting parts but is tedious & repetitive. I got through about half of it.
