

LESSON 5 - THOMAS JEFFERSON

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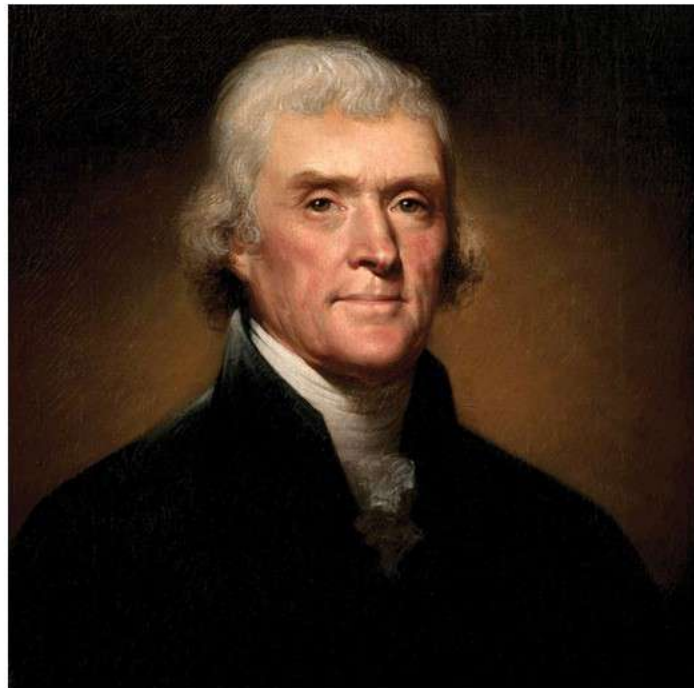
You are learning to read and write. One day you will be able to pick up almost any book, open it, and start to read the words. How wonderful! Of course, someone wrote those words. People who write books are called authors *Author is another word for writer.*



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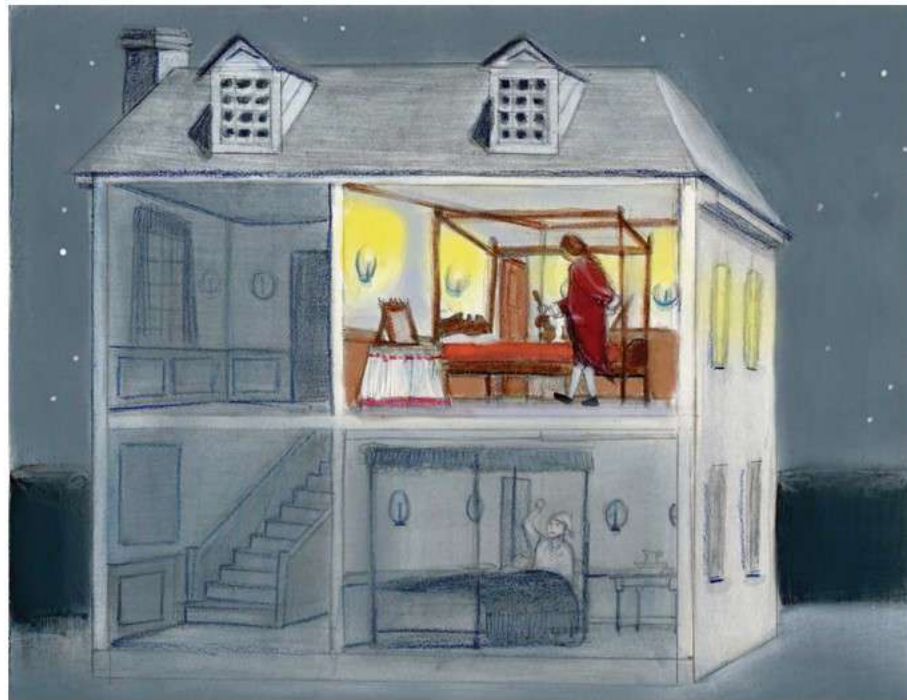
Our third president, Thomas Jefferson, was a great reader. Because he wanted to learn about many different things, he owned more books than anyone else in the country. He once said, "I cannot live without books." *How many of you feel that you cannot live without books?*

Thomas Jefferson was also one of the best writers ever to live in the United States. He wrote words that are still famous all around the world, even though he wrote them a long time ago. Let me tell you about the most famous words he ever wrote.



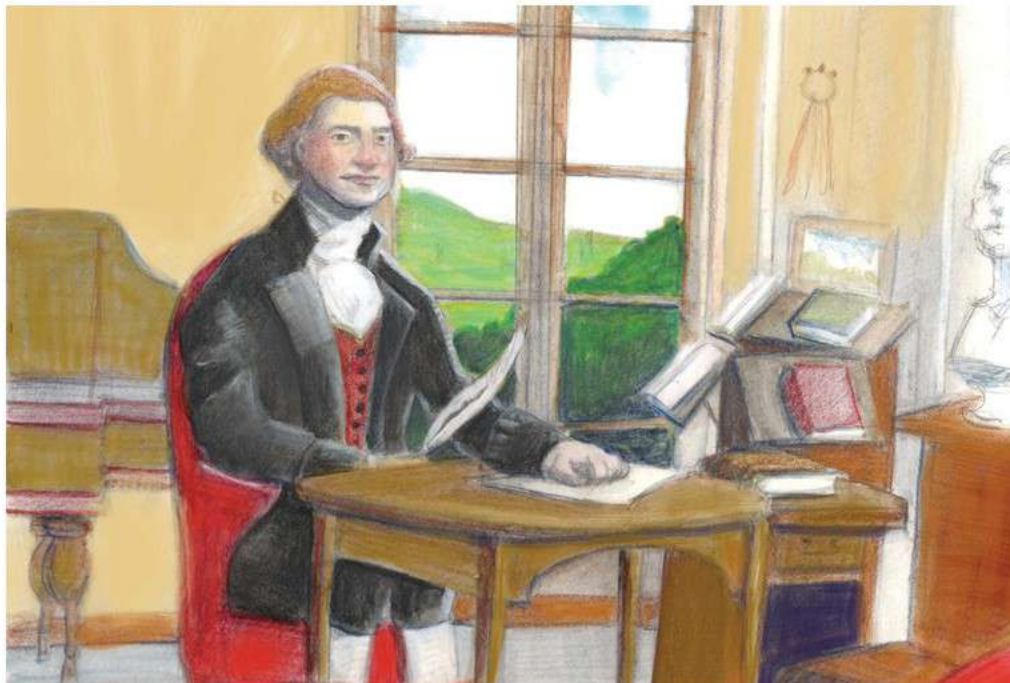
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It was long past midnight. The guests at the inn wanted to sleep, but they could not. Thomas Jefferson was keeping them awake. They could hear him pacing in his room and talking to himself. *Pacing is walking back and forth, over and over again. Why do you think Jefferson was pacing?* The guests thought, "We will complain to the manager of the inn tomorrow. She must ask Mr. Jefferson to be quiet. At least he has stopped playing his fiddle. *A fiddle is a violin.* He says it helps him think, but it keeps us awake."



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Thomas Jefferson was a wonderful writer. He wrote about what he grew on his farm and how he grew it; he wrote about music and art; he wrote about the best ways to design and construct houses and buildings; he wrote about animals and birds; he wrote about how to be a good friend; and he wrote about the Native Americans who had come to America long before the colonists. *Colonists are people who live in a colony but are ruled by another country.* He wrote about nearly everything, because nearly everything interested him.

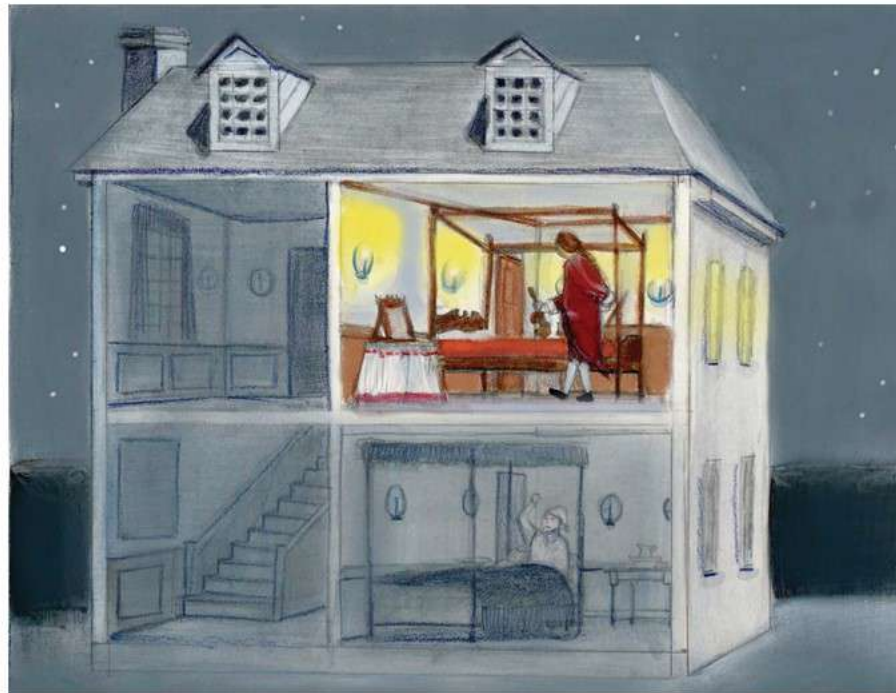


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At the time, however, Jefferson was trying to write a very important document, or paper, that is now famous in American history, the Declaration of Independence. *A declaration is a statement or announcement.*

Independence is another word for freedom. Thomas Jefferson believed people should be free to make most decisions for themselves, without a king or queen telling them what to do all the time. As he wrote the Declaration of Independence, he used an important word: liberty.

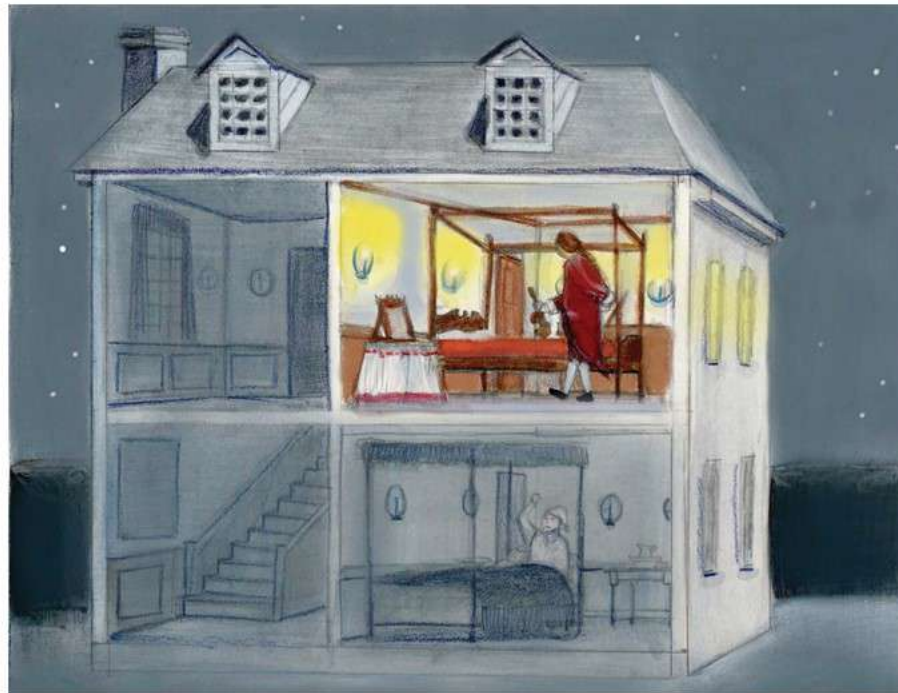
You learned the word liberty in the first read-aloud of this domain. What does liberty mean? (freedom)



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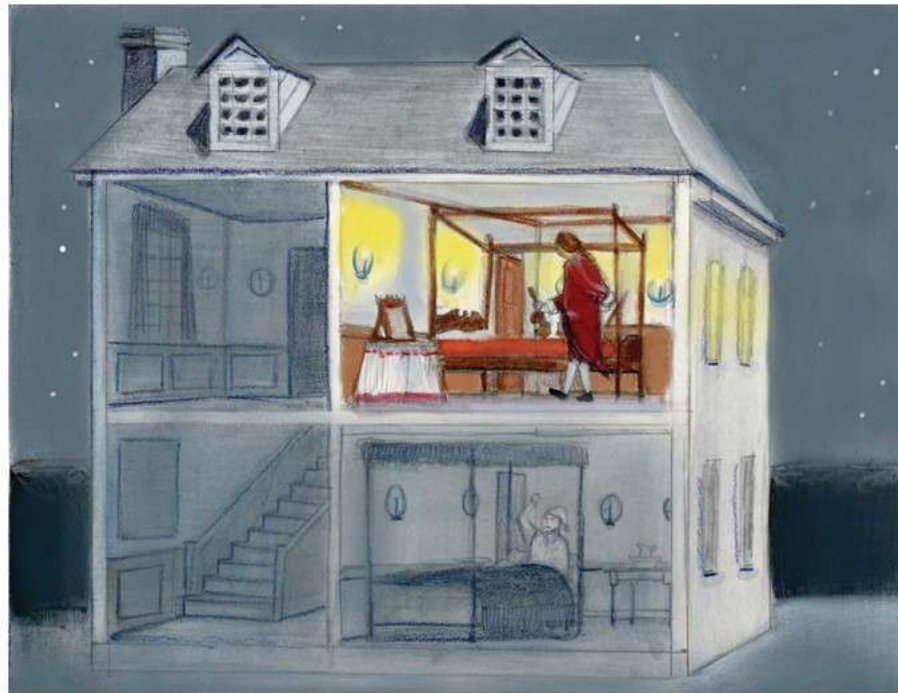
In writing about liberty, Jefferson wanted to choose the best words so that people reading his writing would understand and agree with his ideas.

Why was Thomas Jefferson writing this document? Like his friend George Washington, Jefferson thought it was time to start a new country and not be a part of Great Britain any longer. Not everyone in the colonies felt this way, though.



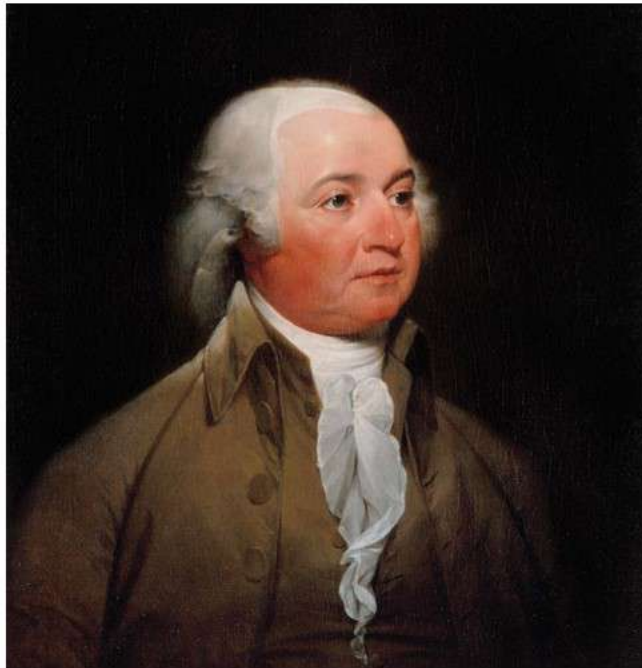
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Jefferson, along with a few others, needed to give good, strong reasons to make this big change. They were hoping to persuade, or urge, most of the colonists to believe the same thing. Leaders from all over the thirteen colonies met to talk about what to say. They chose five people to work on a document explaining the reasons for a new nation.



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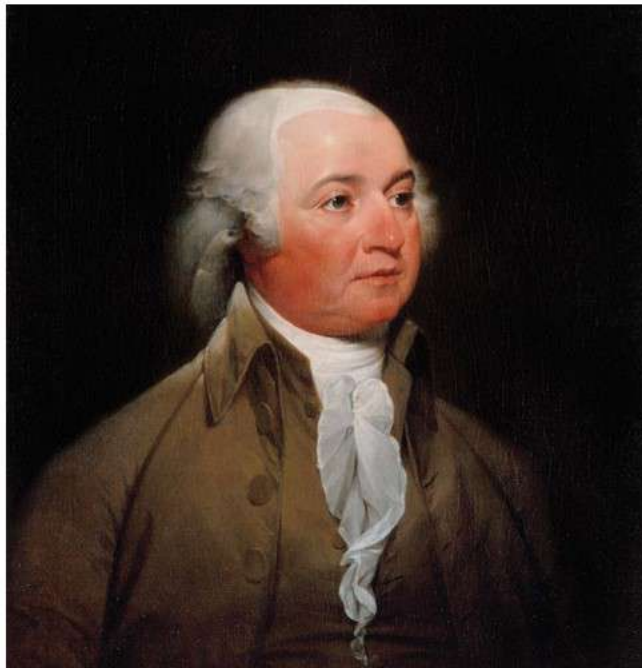
One of the people working with Jefferson was John Adams. Jefferson and Adams were great friends, although Adams was as different as he could be from Jefferson. John Adams lived in the north, Thomas Jefferson in the south. Adams was short and older; Jefferson was tall and younger. Adams loved to talk, especially in front of a crowd; Jefferson loved to read and write but was shy in front of a crowd. However, they were alike in at least one thing: they agreed it was time to start a new nation.



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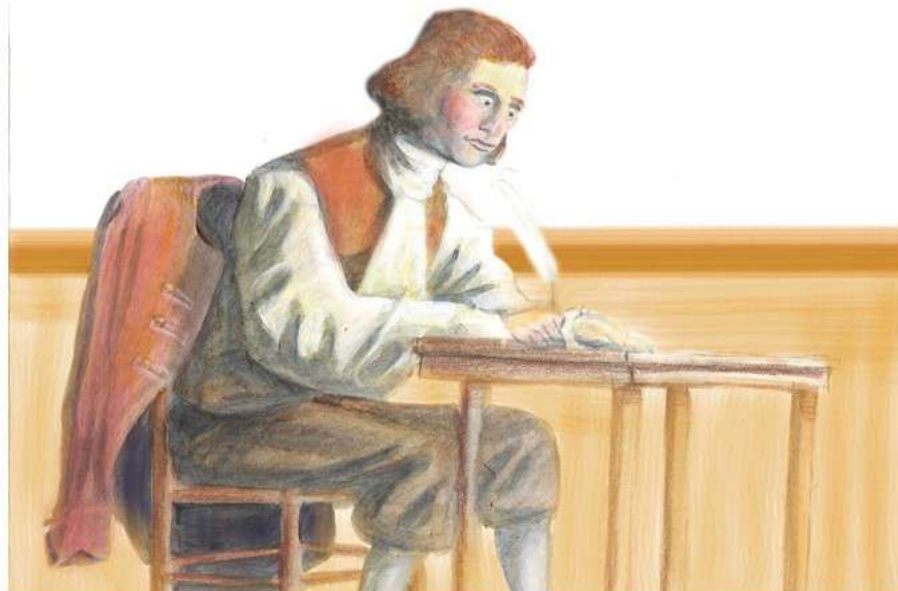
Because John Adams was older, Jefferson suggested, "John, you should write the paper explaining our ideas."

"No, Thomas," Adams replied. "I have angered so many people by arguing for a new country that some of them do not like me. They might not want to help us start a country if they know that I wrote the paper announcing it. Everyone likes you, though, so they will be more likely to help. Besides, you are a better writer than I am. You will find the best way to say everything."



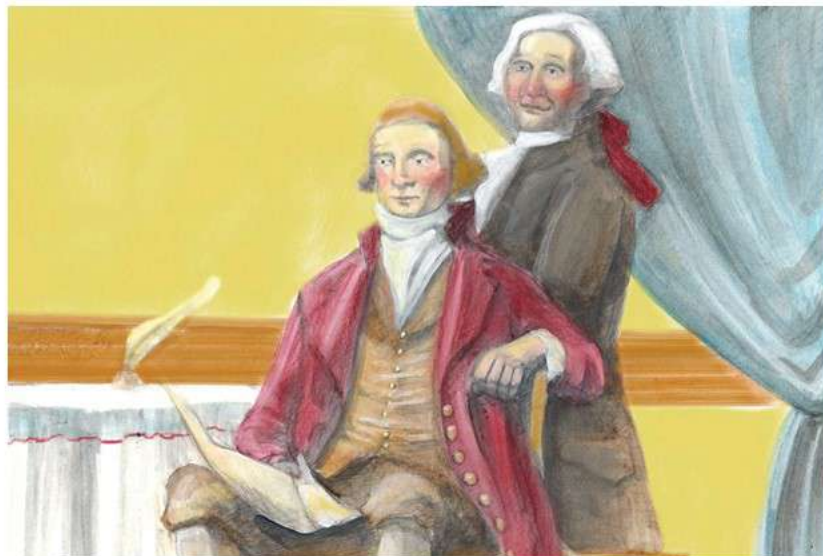
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So on this particular night at the inn, Thomas Jefferson wanted to make this important document the very best thing he had ever written. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson wanted to explain to people that America could be different from any other nation in the world. He thought about every word before he wrote it down. That is why he was walking up and down in his room, speaking aloud the words he was deciding to use. "Life, liberty, and . . . what should come next? The pursuit of happiness," he told himself. At last he began to write.



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On the second of July, Jefferson finished his declaration and showed it to John Adams and the others working with him, who suggested a few small changes. *So, with a little help from some others, Jefferson wrote his declaration.* Jefferson's declaration said that every person should feel safe to live, to be free, and to decide what to do in order to be happy. He wrote that everyone, not only kings or queens, had the right to do these things. Jefferson's declaration said that this was the reason to start a new nation: the United States of America. His friend John Adams smiled and said, "I told you, Thomas; you were the man to write it."



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Two days after Jefferson finished the Declaration of Independence—on the fourth of July—the other leaders voted to officially begin this new country that would be independent from Great Britain. That is why we call the Fourth of July “Independence Day.”



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After the new nation was born, Americans read Thomas Jefferson's document again and again whenever they were deciding how the country should work. People in other countries said, "We want to be free, too," and followed America's example by making changes in their countries. Jefferson's words about liberty changed people's lives all over the world.



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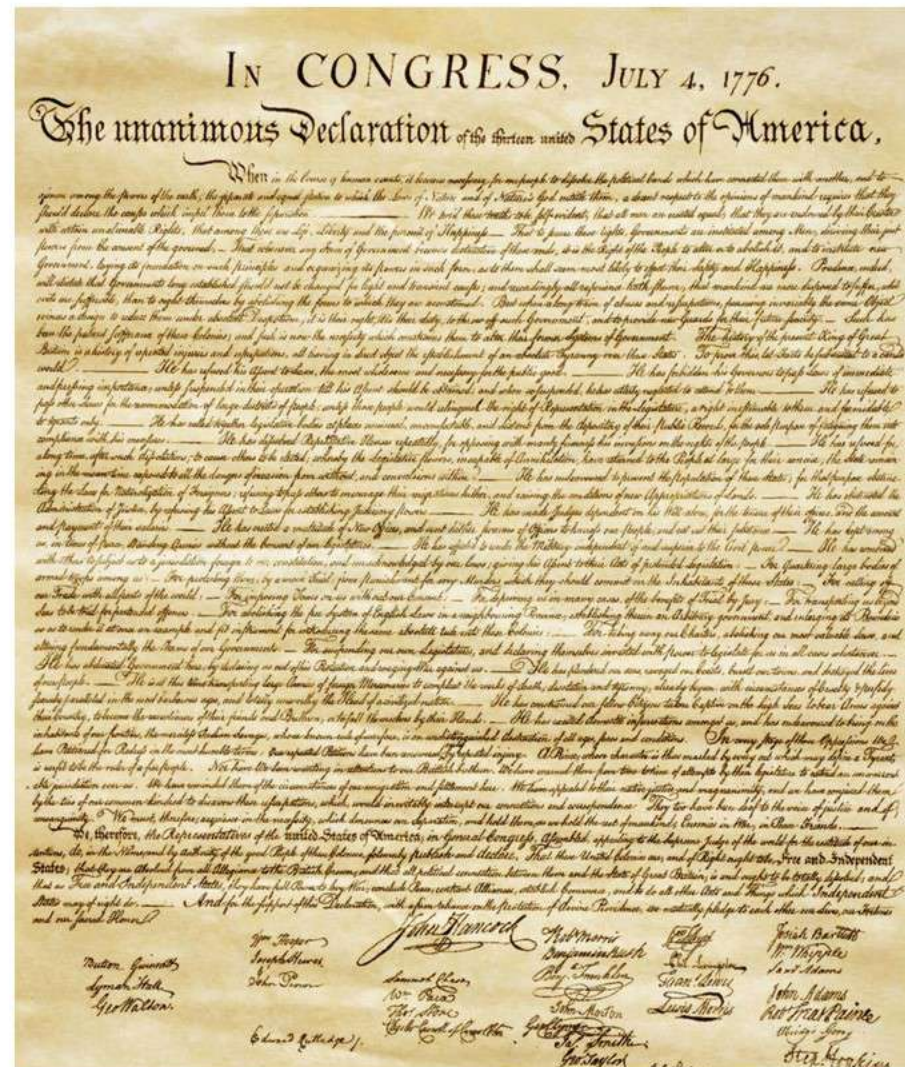
Thirteen years after Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and after the colonists won the American Revolution against Great Britain, George Washington became the first president of the United States. Later, when Washington announced, "I have been president long enough. Let someone else have a turn," Jefferson's friend John Adams became our second president.

Here the word turn means a chance to do something in a certain order. Four years later, Thomas Jefferson became the third president of the United States, and many people believe he was one of the best presidents America has had.



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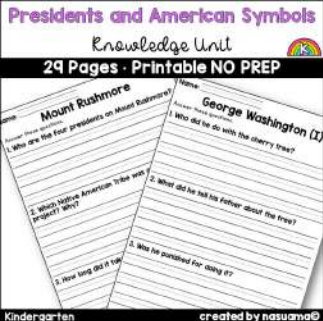
Whenever he was not sure about what to do, Jefferson read the words he himself had written. They always helped him make good decisions, and they are still helping us today.



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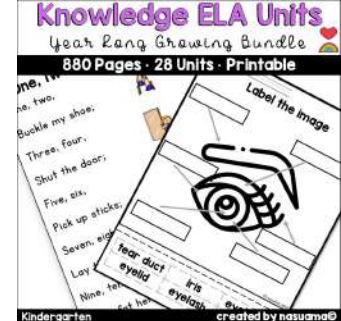
Do you recognize this statue? It's the Statue of Liberty. When America celebrated the one hundredth birthday of the Declaration of Independence, the government of France gave the nation the Statue of Liberty as a gift for America's birthday. France wanted to show how much they admired *or thought of with respect* America's love of freedom and liberty, which Thomas Jefferson wrote about so beautifully in the Declaration of Independence. This statue still stands in New York Harbor, welcoming thousands of visitors each year. So, whenever you see this famous statue, remember how hard Thomas Jefferson worked to declare that every person should have liberty, or be free.





PRESIDENTS AND AMERICAN SYMBOLS

BUNDLE



Name: _____

Thomas Jefferson

Answer these questions.

1. What did Thomas Jefferson write?

2. When is the Independence Day celebration?

DO YOU NEED EXTRA ACTIVITIES?

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