



Social Studies Exemplary Text Student Handout

Mr. Jefferson came into Congress, in June, 1775, and brought with him a reputation for literature, science, and a happy talent of composition. Writings of his were handed about, remarkable for the peculiar felicity of expression. Though a silent member in Congress, he was so prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committees and in conversation, not even Samuel Adams was more so, that he soon seized upon my heart; and upon this occasion I gave him my vote, and did all in my power to procure the votes of others. I think he had one more vote than any other, and that placed him at the head of the committee. I had the next highest number, and that placed me second. The committee met, discussed the subject, and then appointed Mr. Jefferson and me to make the draught, I suppose because we were the two first on the list.

The subcommittee met. Jefferson proposed to me to make the draft. I said, 'I will not.'

'You should do it.'

'Oh! no.'

'Why will you not? You ought to do it.'

'I will not.'

'Why?'

'Reasons enough.'

'What can be your reasons?'

'Reason first, you are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second, I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can.'

'Well,' said Jefferson, 'if you are decided, I will do as well as I can.'

'Very well. When you have drawn it up, we will have a meeting.'

This is an example of exemplary text found in *Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf



Adams, J. (1776). "Letter on Thomas Jefferson." *Declaring Independence 1775–1776. Adams on Adams*. P. M. Zall, (Ed.). (2004). Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Adams Family Papers. Retrieved from
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/index.html>

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Social Studies Exemplary Text Teacher Resource

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Teacher introduces the text with minimal commentary and students read it independently. Teacher then reads passage aloud. Give a brief definition to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in text). Teacher guides the students through a series of text-dependent questions. Complete the performance task as a cumulative evaluation of the close-reading.

Text-Dependent Questions

1. What did Jefferson bring to Congress with him?
2. Why did the author give Jefferson his vote?
3. Who is the conversation between?
4. Why did the author not want to write the draft?
5. Who ended up writing the draft?
6. Does the author seem to respect and like Jefferson, based on the text?
7. What qualities do you think make a good writer? Does the text support that Thomas Jefferson possessed those qualities?
8. What insights does this letter provide about the drafting of the Declaration of Independence? What did you learn from reading this letter that you didn't already know? Does this letter change your view of how the Declaration of Independence was created? Why/why not?
9. Use the details from Adams's letter to get a sense of Adams's and Jefferson's distinct personalities. How does this letter provide insight into the kinds of people Adams and Jefferson were?

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EFL 4
Word Count 262

Performance Tasks for Informational Texts

Students determine the point of view of John Adams in his *Letter on Thomas Jefferson* and analyze how he distinguishes his position from an alternative approach articulated by Thomas Jefferson. [RI.7.6]

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