Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson is known as a Founding Father of the United States. He is most famous for writing the Declaration of Independence.

Growing Up

Thomas grew up in the English Colony of Virginia. Thomas enjoyed reading, exploring nature, and playing the violin. Thomas attended the college of William and Mary in Virginia. There he met his mentor, a law professor by the name of George Wythe. He became interested in law and would later decide to become a lawyer.

Before He Became President

Before he became president, Thomas Jefferson was a lawyer, farmer, politician who served as a member of Virginia's legislature.

By the 1770s, the American colonies, including Jefferson's Virginia, began to feel they were being unjustly treated by their British rulers. Thomas Jefferson became a leader in the fight for independence and represented Virginia at the Continental Congress.

Writing the Declaration of Independence

During the Second Continental Congress, Jefferson was tasked, together with John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, to write a Declaration of Independence. This document was to state that the colonies considered themselves free from British rule and were willing to fight for that freedom. Jefferson was the primary author of the document and wrote the first draft.

During and After the Revolutionary War

Jefferson held a number of political positions during and after the war including U.S. Minister to France, Governor of Virginia, the first Secretary of State under George Washington, and Vice President under John Adams.
Thomas Jefferson's Presidency

Jefferson became the third President of the United States on March 4, 1801. One of the first things he did was try to reduce the federal budget, moving power back into the hands of the states. He also lowered taxes, which made him popular to many people.

Some of his main accomplishments as president include:

- **The Louisiana Purchase** - He bought a large section of land to the west of the original 13 colonies from Napoleon of France. Although much of this land was unsettled, it was so large it nearly doubled the size of the United States. He also made a really good deal buying all this land for only 15 million dollars.
- **Lewis and Clark Expedition** - Once he had bought the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson needed to map the area and find out what was west of the country's land. He appointed Lewis and Clark to explore the western territory and report back on what was there.
- **Battling Pirates** - He sent American Navy ships to battle pirate ships on the coast of North Africa. These pirates had been attacking American merchant vessels, and Jefferson was determined to put a stop to it. This caused a minor war called the First Barbary War.

Fun Facts about Thomas Jefferson

- Jefferson was also an accomplished architect. He designed his famous home at Monticello as well as buildings for the University of Virginia.
- He had nine brothers and sisters.
- The White House was called the Presidential Mansion at the time when he lived there. He kept things informal, often answering the front door himself.
- The U.S. Congress purchased Jefferson's book collection in order to help him get out of debt. There were approximately 6000 books which became the start of the Library of Congress.
- He wrote his own epitaph for his tombstone. On it he listed what he considered his major accomplishments. He did not include becoming president of the United States.

Links

https://www.ducksters.com/biography/uspresidents/thomasjefferson.php (online article)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPeffaxcT4k (online video)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37ImxYIUVnU (online video)