

## 24-A Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was the third president of the **United States**. He was also the author of the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. In an **age** of **greatness**, Jefferson was **noted** for his **curious** **mind**. He was **a** **farmer**, **scientist**, **architect**, and **inventor** as well as **a** **government** **leader**. He helped the **United States** get started, and his plans for the future helped it **grow**. Many of the good things Americans enjoy today have come from Jefferson's **devotion** to **human** **rights**.

Jefferson was **a** **tall**, **straight-bodied**, **loose-jointed** person. He stood and walked **straight** and his shoulders were **always** square. He had **hazel** **eyes** and **a** **long**, **high** **nose**. **No** one ever thought of him as **handsome**. His hair was **reddish**, **becoming** **sandy** as he grew **older**. Unlike other **gentlemen** of his **day**, he never wore **a** **wig**.

In the fashion of his **time**, Jefferson dressed in **a** **long**, **dark** **coat**; **a** **ruffled** **cravat** (in place of the **modern** **necktie**); **a** **red** **waistcoat**, short **knee**  **breeches**; and shoes with big, **bright** **buckles**. **Except** in his **days** of **courtship** and **married** **life**, he **paid** **little** **attention** to clothes. When he was president of the **United States**, Jefferson **made** **a** **habit** of **plainness**, **both** in his **personal** **appearance** and in **matters** of **ceremony**.

Jefferson was a courteous person, bowing to everyone he met. He was reserved, and no one ever called him by his first name. He was a very poor public speaker in a day of great orators. He talked in a thin, fine voice.

He loved music, played the violin well, liked to sing, and usually hummed or sang as he walked or rode. A good horseback rider, he often rode for pleasure when people generally rode only as a means of travel.

About 37 years after Jefferson's death, Abraham Lincoln described the American government as "of the people, by the people, for the people." He was defining the kind of government that Jefferson, more than any other official, had made possible. Even Jefferson's closest coworkers thought of human rights as including the protection of life and liberty and, above all, of private property. Their use of the words "all men are created equal" left out racial minorities. There is much evidence that Jefferson did not exclude them.

"Give the people light," said Jefferson, "and they will find their own way." He meant all the people.