

## **HIST 5453 – New American Republic**

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### **Adams vs Jefferson**

#### **Response Paper**

The first theme that came to mind while reading *Adams vs Jefferson* is the idea of how opposite John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were from each other. Not only were they politically opposite, which caused a decades-long rift in their friendship in the later years, but they also were opposite in look, personality, and temperament. Author John Ferling discusses the differences between Adams and Jefferson in detail between chapters 1, 2, and 6. Adams is known for being boisterous and quick tempered. According to page 97, Adams was on the shorter fuller figured side in physical attributes. Whereas, according to page 23, Jefferson was more quiet, tall, and slender. John Adams was a natural leader. Thomas Jefferson had a tendency to work behind the scenes. Understanding their personalities and their personal stories help the reader understand the friendship the two had with each other and then their eventual opposition in politics and fallout.

A second theme I discovered in *Adams vs Jefferson* is a combined emotion of fear and anxiety. These emotions can be felt while reading the entirety of the book. Everyone involved was anxious and fearful of what direction the new nation was heading. Adams' and Jefferson's emotions were described on page 114. Ferling described Alexander Hamilton as fearful, anxious

and shaken on page 134. These descriptions are good reminders of how the common citizens may have felt. If the potential leaders were concerned about where the country is headed, these emotions can be fed into the public. The citizens of the United States showed their fears and anxieties through protesting decisions made by the government in the way of erecting Liberty Poles and the opposition tearing them down. Ferling discusses the Liberty Pole protests starting on page 155. His goal with discussing the Liberty Pole is to show an example of how these fears and anxieties can surface on a tangible level.

The third theme I observed is the idea that the election of 1800 is a historic turning point in the history of the United States. For the first time in the history of the United States, party lines have been drawn. The election of 1800 had numerous decisions hanging in the balance. With the election of Thomas Jefferson, the impact was felt nationally. As a Republican, Thomas Jefferson was able to change the Federalist implementations to a more Republican government. The change in parties and the hard fight within and between them set the stage of the future political struggles that the United States sees today. As time has passed, the party lines have become even more of a person's individual identity. One aspect that has not changed is how sensitive and touchy the topic of politics can be. After reading *Adams vs Jefferson*, I can imagine the fiery conversations that I have observed in modern times being transported to similar conversations leading up to the election of 1800.

John Ferling's *Adams vs Jefferson* should be an essential reading for those who are studying not only the political intricacy in Early America, but the personal lives of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Understanding the complexities of each of the lives of Adams and Jefferson, as well as how their lives intertwine with each other, brings this book into context and vice versa. *Adams vs Jefferson* would show a different side of academic learning when one is

focused on the individuals involved in the election of 1800. This book would also be a good background reading for a government class due to the fact that I found it as an easy read. This book delves deep in the academic side of early American political history but the approach is reader friendly. Ferling found a great balance between the academic and the general audience.