

Founding Brothers, Joseph J. Ellis **Summer Reading Assignment**

During the 1790s, the greatest statesmen of their generation--and perhaps any--came together to define the new republic and direct its course for the coming centuries. Ellis focuses on six discrete moments that exemplify the most crucial issues facing the fragile new nation: Burr and Hamilton's deadly duel, and what may have really happened; Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison's secret dinner, during which the seat of the permanent capital was determined in exchange for passage of Hamilton's financial plan; Franklin's petition to end the "peculiar institution" of slavery--his last public act--and Madison's efforts to quash it; Washington's precedent-setting Farewell Address, announcing his retirement from public office and offering his country some final advice; Adams's difficult term as Washington's successor and his alleged scheme to pass the presidency on to his son; and finally, Adams and Jefferson's renewed correspondence at the end of their lives, in which they compared their different views of the Revolution and its legacy.

In a lively and engaging narrative, Ellis recounts the sometimes collaborative, sometimes archly antagonistic interactions between these men, and shows us the private characters behind the public personas: Adams, the ever-combative iconoclast, whose closest political collaborator was his wife, Abigail; Burr, crafty, smooth, and one of the most despised public figures of his time; Hamilton, whose audacious manner and deep economic savvy masked his humble origins; Jefferson, renowned for his eloquence, but so reclusive and taciturn that he rarely spoke more than a few sentences in public; Madison, small, sickly, and paralyzingly shy, yet one of the most effective debaters of his generation; and the stiffly formal Washington, the ultimate realist, larger-than-life, and America's only truly indispensable figure.

Ellis argues that the checks and balances that permitted the infant American republic to endure were not primarily legal, constitutional, or institutional, but intensely personal, rooted in the dynamic interaction of leaders with quite different visions and values. Revisiting the old-fashioned idea that character matters, *Founding Brothers* informs our understanding of American politics--then and now--and gives us a new perspective on the unpredictable forces that shape history.

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375405440&view=print>

Directions:

The following reading guide must be completed and turned in on the first day of school. There will be a brief quiz on the book and the reading guide may be used to complete it. This assignment, in conjunction with the quiz will be worth 5% of the first semester grade.

This assignment is separate from the textbook reading assignment. Both must be completed before the first day of school. The quiz for the textbook assignment will be on the second day of school.

Reading Guide

(adapted from Ms. Rengel and Ms. Ponti - Winter Park High School, FL)

Instructions:

For each chapter, answer the following questions *completely*. Answers must cite specific, relevant evidence from the text.

Introduction “The Generation”

1. Why were the major accomplishments of the Founding Brothers during the Revolution unprecedented? (3 reasons)
2. What were the assets and liabilities of the men in New York in 1789 as they began to govern under the new Constitution?
3. What distinguishes the American Revolution from most, if not all subsequent revolutions? Explain.
4. According to Ellis, why were the Founding Brothers successful? (He offers 4 reasons.)
5. Why does Ellis refer to the individuals as Founding Brothers NOT Founding Fathers?

Chapter 1 “The Duel” July 11, 1804

1. Why did the Burr-Hamilton duel become legendary?
2. Describe the 15 year relationship between Hamilton and Burr. Cite specific examples of the conflict between the two.
3. Why does Hamilton call Burr the “Catiline of America”? Provide examples that support Hamilton’s view of Burr.

Chapter 2 “The Dinner” June 20, 1790

1. Describe the members and agenda of “the dinner”.
2. What was the issue of assumption?
3. What was Hamilton’s plan for debt reconciliation? Why was Madison opposed to it?
4. List Madison’s objections to assumption.
5. Describe the “residency question” and how it is finally resolved.

Chapter 3 “The Silence” February 11, 1790

1. What occurred in the House of Representatives on February 11, 1790?
2. Describe in detail the arguments presented by James Jackson (GA) and William Loughton Smith (SC) in support of slavery.
3. Describe in detail the counterargument presented by John Laurance (NY) and Eldridge Gerry (MA) in response to Jackson and Smith’s justification of slavery.
4. What were the proposals for gradual emancipation? According to Ellis, could gradual emancipation have been feasible?
5. What was Benjamin Franklin’s role in the 1790 debate over slavery?
6. What does Ellis mean when he says that “Madison’s position on slavery captured the essence of what might be called ‘the Virginia straddle’”?

Chapter 4 “The Farewell”

1. How does Benjamin Franklin’s gift to George Washington symbolize how Washington was viewed by the nation? What evidence from Washington’s career supports this?
2. Why did Washington decide to retire? Consider private, public, and political concerns.
3. Regarding Washington’s Farewell, what was the purpose and main themes (128)? Discuss the advice he gives to America’s future leaders and the three salient features that arose from the political terrain (144).
4. What were Washington’s purpose/message in the Circular Letter (133), Proclamation of Neutrality (135), and the Address to the Cherokees (158)?
5. Why is Jay’s Treaty considered a “landmark in the shaping of American foreign policy”? Explain the controversy/issues surrounding the treaty including the opinions of the parties, Jefferson, Madison, and the majority of Americans.
6. A rift developed between Jefferson and Washington. What were the issues surrounding the rift? How does the rift reflect a greater rift amongst the revolutionary generation (especially between Republicans and Federalists)? What impact would this have on the nation?

Chapter 5 “The Collaborators”

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of John Adams as a presidential candidate?
2. A rift developed between Jefferson and Washington. What were the issues surrounding the rift? How does the rift reflect a greater rift amongst the revolutionary generation (especially between Republicans and Federalists)? What impact would this have on the nation?
3. What were Adams’s experiences as Vice President?
4. Why didn’t Jefferson join his friend Adams in bipartisan cooperation?
5. How did Adams respond to the XYZ Affair?
6. Why did Adams negotiate a diplomatic end to the Quasi-War with France which he knew would alienate him from his own political party?
7. What was the primary function of the collaboration between Jefferson and Madison? What was their response to the Alien and Sedition Acts?

Chapter 6 “The Friendship”

1. What was the significance of the “midnight judges”?
2. What were Jefferson’s misguided propositions about European affairs?
3. What does the correspondence between Adams and Jefferson reveal about their different views of government?

Important Note: Below is a statement that you must sign that verifies that the work you do in responding to the previous questions is your original work and that you received no assistance from any person nor book review nor electronic media.

My signature below verifies that the work contained herein is my own and that I received no assistance from any other source.

Student Signature

Date