

Signers and those who weren't at the table for the
US Constitution
For Safer Internet Day, 2017



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George Washington

George Washington served as a general and commander-in-chief of the colonial armies during the American Revolution. As the leader of the Revolutionary Army and later, head of state Washington is known for his serious side. But in fact, he was like the Hulk of the Founding Fathers. In 1814, Thomas Jefferson wrote about Washington: "His temper was naturally high toned; but reflection and resolution had obtained a firm and habitual ascendancy over it. If ever, however, it broke its bonds, he was most tremendous in his wrath."

Quotes from George Washington

"It will be found an unjust and unwise jealousy to deprive a man of his natural liberty upon the supposition he may abuse it."

"Associate yourself with men of good quality, if you esteem your reputation. Be not apt to relate news, if you know not the truth thereof. Speak no evil of the absent, for it is unjust. Undertake not what you cannot perform, but be careful to keep your promise. There is but one straight course, and that is to seek truth, and pursue it steadily."

"Knowledge is, in every country, the surest basis of public happiness."

"It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every Citizen who enjoys the protection of a Free Government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defense of it."

"Be courteous to all, but intimate with few."

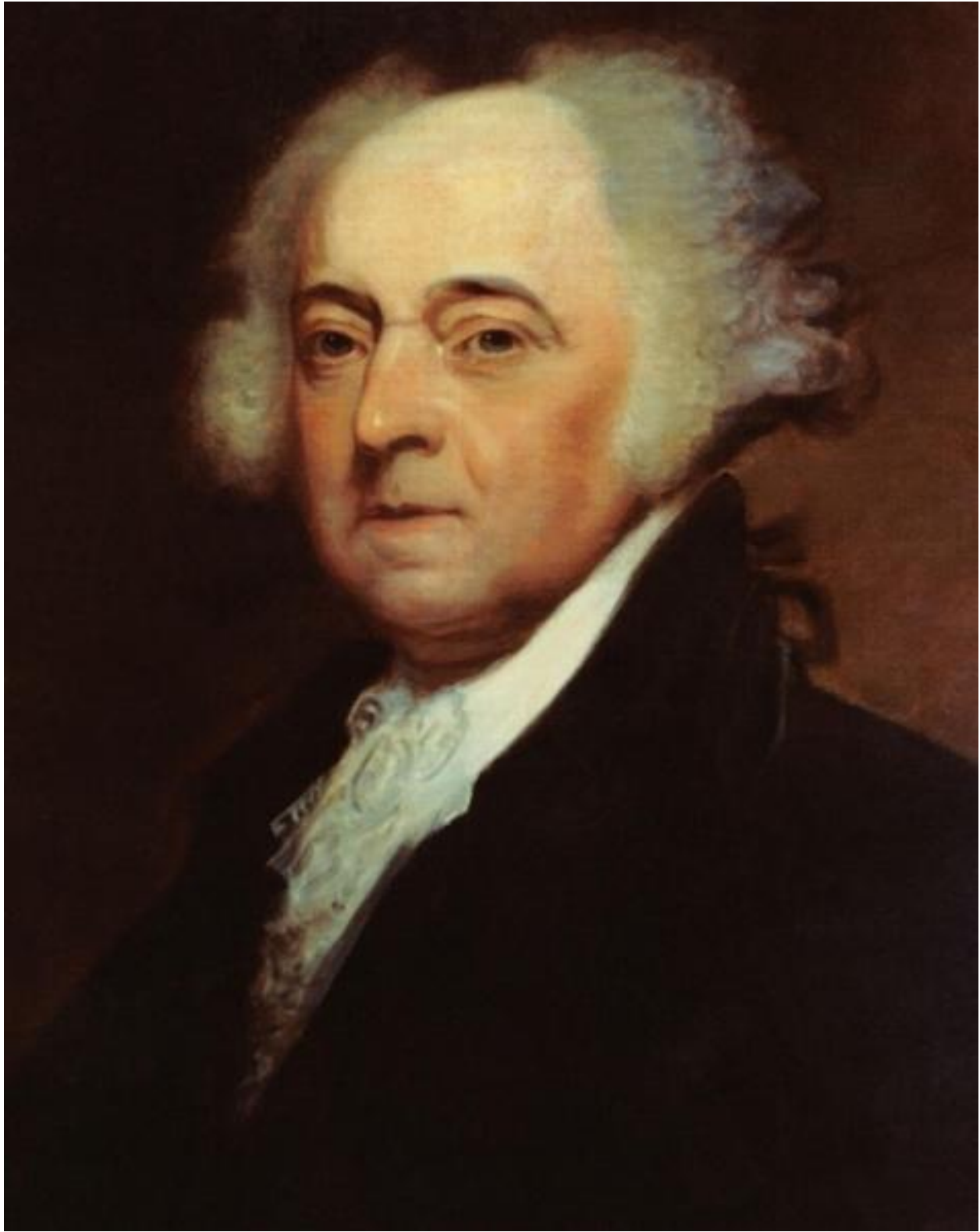
Questions to Consider

How might someone as wise as George Washington advise us to manage our own tempers when using the internet and social media?

When it comes to freedom of expression on the internet, would Washington go on the side of censorship or freedom?

What does "Be courteous to all, but intimate with few" say about how he might approach his privacy setting online and what he might say about other people?

Sources: GilderLehrman.org, History.com, Biography.com, Brainyquote.com



John Adams

John Adams was a direct descendant of Puritan colonists from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He studied at Harvard University, where he received his undergraduate degree and master's, and in 1758 was admitted to the bar. In 1774, he served on the First Continental Congress and helped draft the Declaration of Independence.

If you could bend time and space to hang out with the Founding Fathers, here's a tip: Steer clear of John Adams. Few people ever met the exacting standards of this persnickety revolutionary. Even the revered George Washington fell short: Adams once sniped in his diary that Washington "is too illiterate, unread, unlearned for his status and reputation."

Benjamin Franklin, who worked alongside Adams in France during the Revolutionary War, may have said it best when he decreed that Adams "is always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes and in some things, absolutely out of his senses." Adams managed to become president, but by the end of his first term he'd alienated both his party and much of the American public. Unsurprisingly, he wasn't re-elected. Instead, Adams finally went home to his beloved wife, Abigail. At least she—unlike many of his colleagues—liked him

Quotes from John Adams

"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."

"Let us tenderly and kindly cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write."

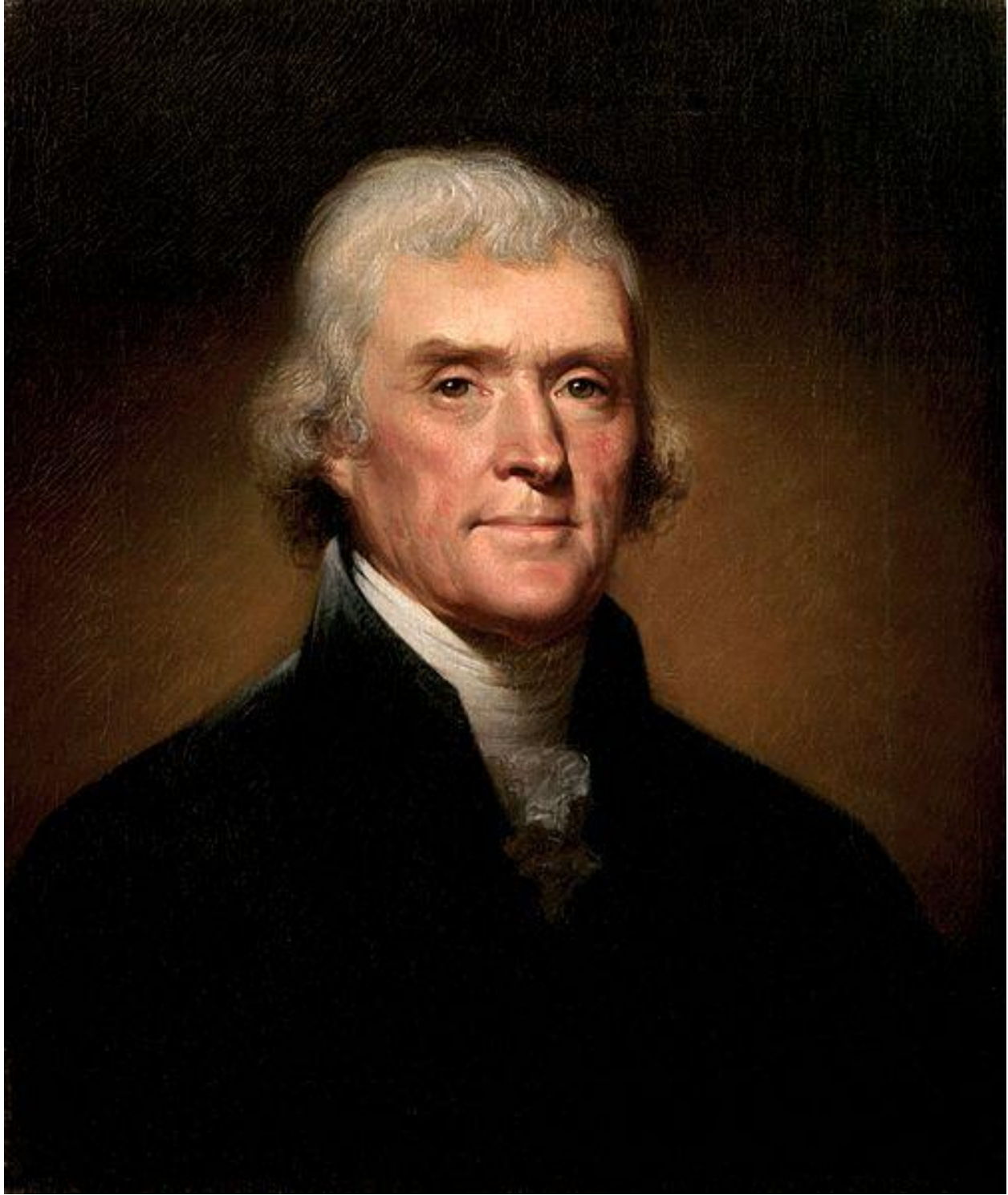
"Old minds are like old horses; you must exercise them if you wish to keep them in working order."

"Liberty cannot be preserved without general knowledge among the people."

Questions to Consider

How might Adams have to think carefully about what he posts and publishes about others online, given what we know about his personality? What might he advise about thinking before posting?

Based on what he said about "liberty cannot be preserved without general knowledge of the people," what might Adams think about the need for a good education and keeping ourselves aware of current events?



Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was a draftsman of the U.S. Declaration of Independence; the nation's first secretary of state (1789-94); second vice president (1797-1801); and, as the third president (1801-09), the statesman responsible for the Louisiana Purchase. As the Declaration of Independence demonstrates, Thomas Jefferson had a way with words. Unfortunately for him, sentences that flowed effortlessly from his quill usually got stuck in his throat.

As a teenager, Jefferson fell for Rebecca Burwell. After mooning over her from a distance for more than a year, he decided to screw up his courage and actually talk to her. Unfortunately, it didn't go well. As Jefferson wrote: "I was prepared to say a great deal. I had dressed up in my own mind such thoughts as occurred to me, in as moving language as I know how, and expected to have performed in a tolerably creditable manner. But, good God! when I had an opportunity of venting them, a few broken sentences, uttered in great disorder, and interrupted with pauses of uncommon length, were the too visible marks of my strange confusion."

Jefferson entered politics, but remained tongue-tied. In 1776, [John Adams](#) noted: "Mr. Jefferson had been now about a Year a Member of Congress, but had attended his Duty in the House but a very small part of the time and when there had never spoken in public: and during the whole Time I satt [sic] with him in Congress, I never heard him utter three Sentences [sic] together." Fortunately, for both himself and America, Jefferson was around at a time when sound-bites weren't necessary for a politician to make his mark.

Quotes from Thomas Jefferson

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend."

"Delay is preferable to error. "

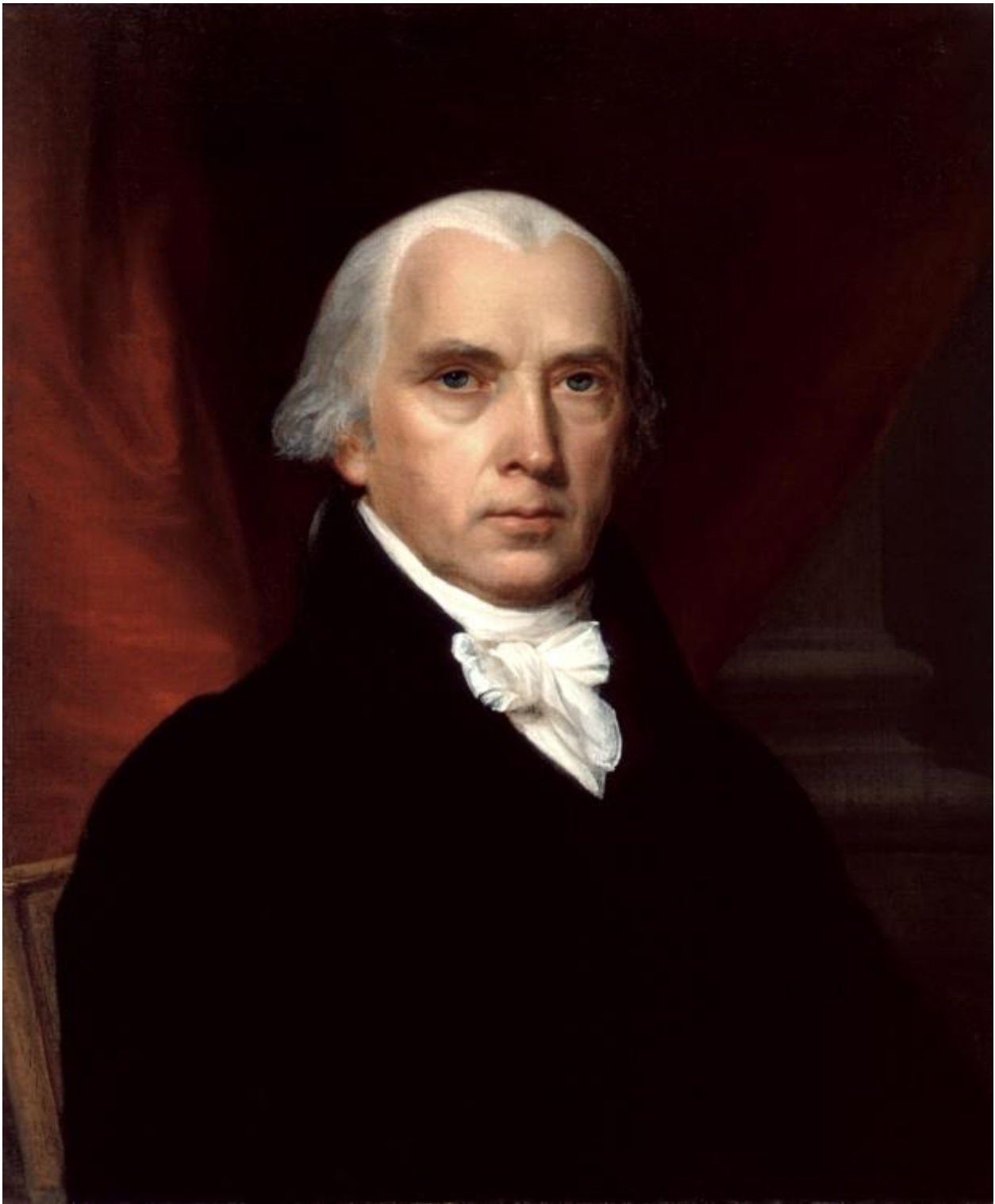
"Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you."

Questions to Consider

What does Jefferson's exquisite writing style and clumsy speaking style say about the various ways we can communicate and how some are better using some media than others?

Given what Jefferson said about "difference of opinion in politics," how might he respond to someone on Facebook who he strongly disagrees with?

Given what Jefferson said about "delay is preferable to error," what advice would he give to people who want to quickly post something they've heard but haven't throughout verified?



James Madison

James Madison wrote the first drafts of the U.S. Constitution, co-wrote the Federalist Papers and sponsored the Bill of Rights. He established the Democrat-Republican Party with President Thomas Jefferson, and became president himself in 1808. Madison initiated the War of 1812, and served two terms in the White House with first lady Dolley Madison.

James Madison may have had the strength to help found the United States of America and serve as the country's president during wartime, but he was powerless to control a wayward family member.

When Madison wed his wife, Dolley, in 1794, she was a widow who brought her young son, John Payne Todd, into the marriage. Todd grew up to be a disappointment—his interests were gambling, drinking and spending money, and he spent time in debtor's prison.

Madison likely spent a total of \$40,000 (about \$843,000 today) in a vain attempt to expunge Todd's debts (\$20,000 of which was paid out in secret, as he wanted to protect Dolley from knowing the extent of her son's shortcomings). It was a staggering sum of money at the time, and it meant that Madison didn't leave his wife enough to live on after his death (Dolley survived in part because Congress bought Madison's papers).

Quotes from James Madison

"Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

"As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed."

"The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty."

Questions to Consider

Since Madison knew something about family secrets, what might worry him about our lack of privacy online? What might he advise about what we should/should not share on social media?

Madison said, "people...must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives" and "knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty." What might he say about our era of fake news?

Sources: GilderLehrman.org, History.com, Biography.com, Brainyquote.com



John Jay

Initially wary of the disruption that independence would bring, John Jay soon devoted himself to the American Revolution. John Jay helped America gain independence, and later worked toward passage of the country's new Constitution. Jay served in the Continental Congress, was a diplomat, wrote some of The Federalist Papers and became the first Chief Justice of the United States (Supreme Court) . But after being appointed as the first Chief Justice, Jay soon came to hate his new job.

At the time, Supreme Court justices were required to travel to circuit courts around the country in order to hear cases. Given the era's road and travel conditions, it wasn't a pleasant task. Jay decided that "the office of a Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States was in a degree intolerable," and was happy to head to England to negotiate a treaty in 1794. He resigned from the court in 1795 to become New York's governor.

When John Adams became president, he tried to get Jay to take up his old position as chief justice. Jay adamantly refused. He died in Bedford, New York, on May 17, 1829, at the age of 83.

Quotes from John Jay

"Those who own the country ought to govern it."

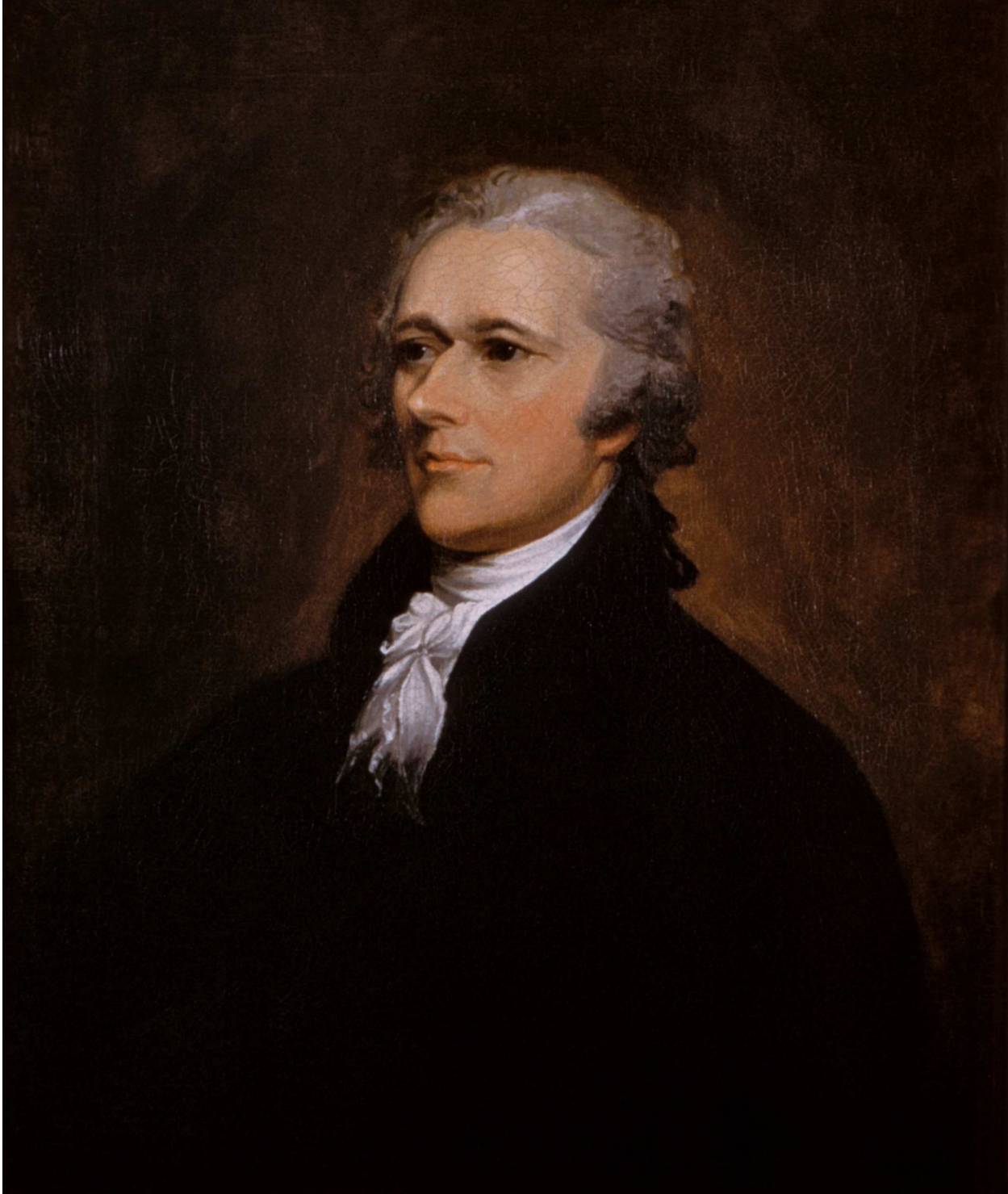
"It is much to be wished that slavery may be abolished. The honor of the States, as well as justice and humanity, in my opinion, loudly call upon them to emancipate these unhappy people. To contend for our own liberty, and to deny that blessing to others, involves an inconsistency not to be excused."

"But the safety of the people of America against dangers from foreign force depends not only on their forbearing to give just causes of war to other nations, but also on their placing and continuing themselves in such a situation as not to invite hostility or insult; for it need not be observed that there are pretended as well as just causes of war."

Questions to consider about John Jay

As someone who disliked his job, what might Jay have been tempted to post online? What advice would he give about posting about one's career if he were smart about social media?

Jay said, "To contend for our own liberty, and to deny that blessing to others, involves an inconsistency not to be excused." How might Jay have used social media to speak out for others in our time? What would he have said?



Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton was born circa January 11, 1755 or 1757 (the exact date is unknown), on the island of Nevis, British West Indies. From his out-of-wedlock birth on a Caribbean island, Alexander Hamilton climbed into the upper echelons of the newly formed United States. He accomplished this because he had the skills to succeed in a ye olde version of Game of Thrones.

In 1777, Hamilton became General George Washington's assistant. In 1788, he convinced New Yorkers to agree to ratify the U.S Constitution. He then served as the nation's first secretary of the treasury, from 1789 to 1795. Hamilton had a lot of sway as George Washington's treasury secretary. Even after he resigned from Washington's cabinet, he remained a close presidential advisor and a controlling figure in the Federalist Party. When John Adams became president after Washington, he discovered that his cabinet members were taking their marching orders from Hamilton.

Hamilton felt no qualms about this, declaring: "As the president nominates his ministers and may displace them when he pleases, it must be his own fault if he be not surrounded by men who for ability and integrity deserve his confidence." Or, in other words, "Hey, don't blame me because Adams sucks at politics." On July 12, 1804, in New York City, Hamilton died of a gunshot wound that he sustained during a duel with Aaron Burr.

Quotes from Hamilton

"There are seasons in every country when noise and impudence pass current for worth; and in popular commotions especially, the clamors of interested and factious men are often mistaken for patriotism."

"Men give me credit for some genius. All the genius I have lies in this; when I have a subject in hand, I study it profoundly."

Questions to Consider

Given his strong opinions about politics and the decisions of his fellow politicians – and his decision to engage in a duel with a fellow politician that ended in his own death – what could we learn about expressing ourselves from Hamilton? What might Hamilton say about balancing freedom of speech with creating a positive progressive dialogue?

Hamilton seemed to emphasize the importance of studying information and keeping a level head. How might Hamilton respond if he saw people reposting or spreading false information in his social media feed?



**Who was missing?
Women
From the Perspective of Abigail Adams**

While her husband, John Adams, worked diligently with the other authors and signers of the Declaration of Independence in 1775 and 1776, Abigail Adams maintained their home and cared for their children in Massachusetts.

She and John exchanged letters often and perhaps her most famous letter encouraged her husband to include women. She wrote, "I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation." The U.S. Constitution, written just over a decade later, did not provide females with the same rights as male citizens.

Quotes from Adams

"If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or representation."

"If we mean to have heroes, statesmen and philosophers, we should have learned women."

"Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and diligence."

"I've always felt that a person's intelligence is directly reflected by the number of conflicting points of view he can entertain simultaneously on the same topic."

Questions to Consider

How might Adams react to the way men and women treat one another online today? What might she advise?

Adams puts great emphasis on choosing to learn in her quotes. What might she advise about choosing the best sources of information and sharing those sources on social media?

Sources: GilderLehrman.org, History.com, Biography.com, Brainyquote.com



**Who was missing?
Native Americans
From the Perspective of Tecumseh**

In Article 1, Section 8 states, "[The Congress shall have Power...] To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes." This meant that the U.S. government could negotiate treaties with them over land, resources, and more. Often, the tribal leaders they negotiated with did not actually speak for all of the groups or lands mentioned in the treaty. And usually Native Americans did not get a fair price for their land or appropriate lands to live on moving forward. Additionally, Native Americans did not have any of the rights that American citizens had. In essence, Native Americans were not included in the creation of the Constitution and were never intended to be a part of the society and government the Constitution created. They were outcasts.

Tecumseh, a Shawnee who rose to prominence soon after the Constitution was ratified, seemed reluctant to accept his brother's religious teachings until June 16, 1806, when his brother, known as "The Prophet," accurately predicted an eclipse of the sun, and Indians from throughout the Midwest flocked to the Shawnee village at Greenville, Ohio. Tecumseh slowly transformed his brother's religious following into a political movement. In 1808 Tecumseh and his brother moved their village to the juncture of the Tippecanoe and Wabash rivers, where the new settlement, Prophetstown, continued to attract Indians. After the loss of much Indian land at the Treaty of Fort Wayne (1809), Tecumseh gradually eclipsed his brother as the primary leader of the movement. After a long war and series of battles and alliances, Tecumseh was killed by American forces at the Battle of the Thames on October 5, 1813.

Quotes from Tecumseh

"Show respect to all people, but grovel to none."

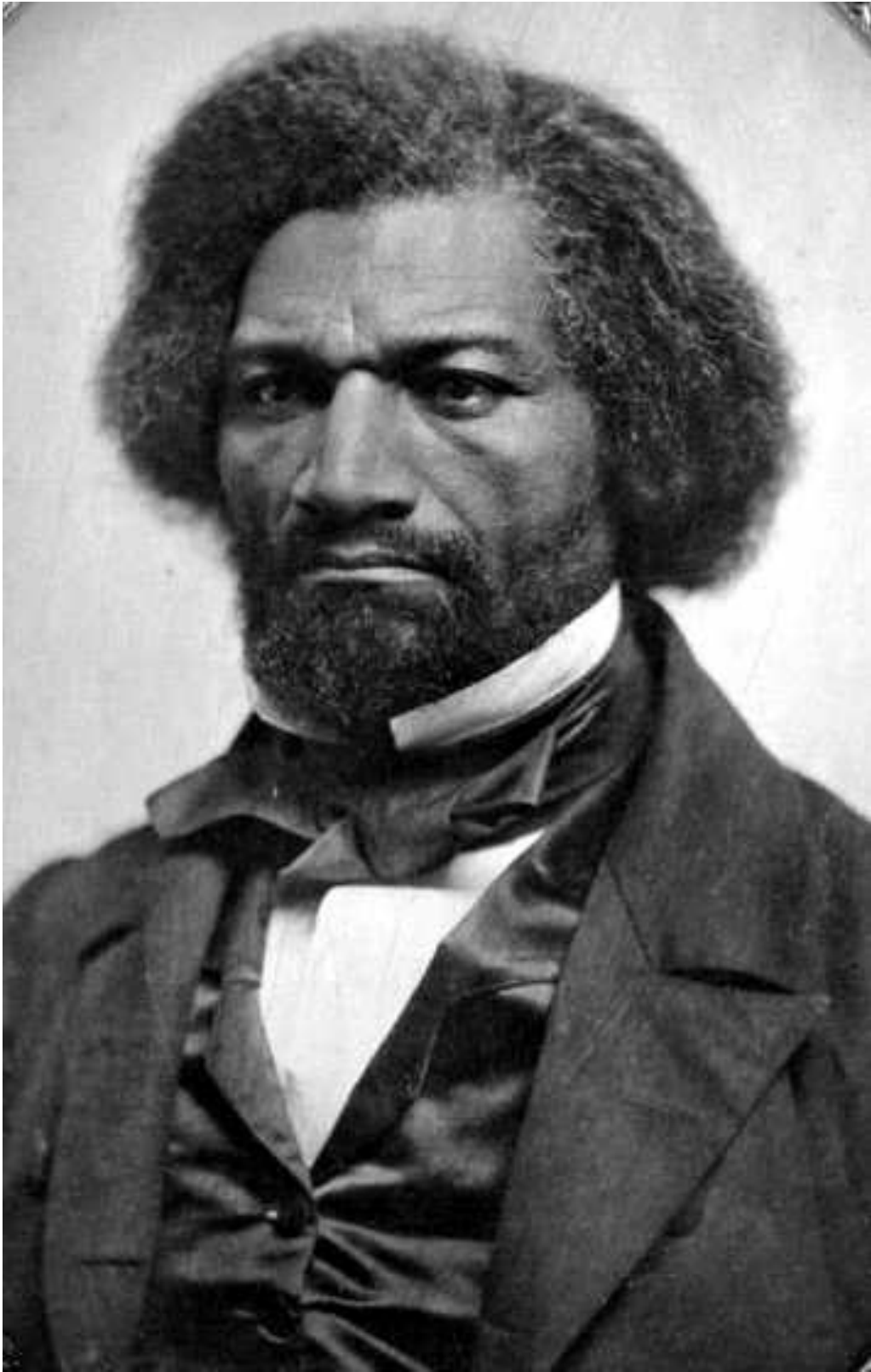
"Always give a word or sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, or even a stranger, if in a lonely place."

Questions to Consider

What would Tecumseh have posted or published to increase awareness about the hardships he and his people were facing in the early 19th century?

After experiencing these hardships, how might Tecumseh react when they see social media platforms being used to exclude or bully people online? What advice would they give?

Despite his unimaginable hardships, Tecumseh remained focused on showing respect and empathy to others according to the quotes above. Can we use social media to do that?



**Who was missing?
African Americans
From the Perspective of Frederick Douglass**

African Americans, whether free or enslaved, were not recognized with citizenship rights in the U.S. Constitution. In the census of 1790, in the entire country, 3.8 million people were counted and 700,000 of them, or 18 percent, were slaves. In South Carolina, 43 percent of the population were slaves. Virginia, with the largest slave population of almost 300,000, had 39 percent of its population made up of slaves. Despite making up a significant portion of the population, slaves were not counted as whole people in the Constitution. In the Enumeration Clause, where representatives are apportioned to the states, each state is given a number of representatives based on its population - in that population, slaves, called "other persons," are only counted as three-fifths of a whole person. Later in the document, the Fugitive Slave Clause firmly establishes that an escaped slave cannot become free by fleeing to a state that had abolished slavery. It even said that they must be returned "on Claim of Party," meaning slaves were legally owned by other people.

Abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass was born into slavery sometime around 1818 in Talbot County, Maryland, decades after the Constitution was ratified. He became one of the most famous intellectuals of his time, advising presidents and lecturing to thousands on a range of causes, including women's rights and Irish home rule. Among Douglass's writings are several autobiographies eloquently describing his experiences in slavery and his life after the Civil War, including the well-known work *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. He died on February 20, 1895.

Quotes from Douglass

"Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have the exact measure of the injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them."

"Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground."

Questions to Consider

African Americans did not have a voice in American society during this era. How might enslaved or free African Americans from the early American republic react to the way the internet can be used to give a voice to the voiceless?

What might Douglass say about efforts to use the internet to organize peaceful protests and other actions?