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A LADDER EDITION
PUBLISHED BY
PYRAMID BOOKS

This special edition is for readers for whom English is a second language. It can be read by anyone who has learned 2,000 words of English.



Thomas Jefferson

A Man Who Changed the World

Gene Lisitzky

THOMAS JEFFERSON

by

GENE LISITZKY

A Ladder Edition at the 2,000-Word Level

ADAPTED BY ADOLPH MYERS

THOMAS JEFFERSON

LADDER EDITION

Published July, 1957

First printing published February, 1957

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The Ladder Series books are specially prepared editions of well-known American books. They have been made easier to read for the enjoyment of readers for whom English is a second language.

The Series is built on a "ladder" of five steps—from 1,000 to 5,000 different English words. The books have been shortened but they keep the ideas, facts and pleasures found in them by American readers.

This book uses 2,000 English words. Some words in the book are above this step and will be found written in boldface letters. They are explained in the Glossary at the back.

The publisher hopes the reader will enjoy this Series, while going up the ladder to more difficult reading.



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Chapter One

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Chapter One

TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS

Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States, was born in 1743 in what was then the British Colony of Virginia.

In those days the people who lived in the eastern and western halves of Virginia were very different in their attitude and way of life. It could be said that although they spoke the same language and were ruled by the same government they lived on two different continents; or even in two different worlds.

The families who lived in the eastern half of the colony, along the Atlantic coast, still thought and talked about England as "home." They were determined to remain as English as those who had never left England. Most of them could not have continued living in this strange New World, to which they had come to seek their fortunes, without the latest books and newspapers from England, the latest clothes from London, the newest comforts and inventions from Liverpool. If for some reason they had been completely separated from all these things, most of them would probably have returned to England rather than live without them.

The families who lived inland, in the western half of the colony, however, were people who thought of themselves not as Englishmen but as Americans. To them "home" was not the British Isles but the 13 colonies on the Atlantic seacoast. They were not greatly interested in what was happening in England except as it affected their own interests. They looked west, toward the great unknown areas which seemed so full of promise of a full and free life, rather than east toward the Old World, with its injustices, cruelties, and quarrels that had been in existence for so long nothing was able to end them.

To which of these two worlds did Thomas Jefferson belong? The answer—and perhaps it is this which made his life so valuable and the story of it so interesting—is that he belonged to neither, and yet in a way to both. For, born as he was on the borderline between the two, he was able to look both east and west, to get what was best from both, and in a sense to help bring them together.

The differences between these two worlds are based on the fact that Virginia is divided into east and west halves by a long range of mountains called the Appalachians. From these mountains Virginia's rivers begin their journey to the Atlantic. For half the distance to that ocean the rivers are just ordinary streams, not very wide, with little waterfalls here and there. The country they flow through is somewhat hilly and is called the Piedmont, which means simply "foothills."

Halfway down to the sea the land becomes very flat. Many thousands of years ago this whole eastern half of Virginia sank down so low that the sea came in and filled the river valleys to the top of their banks. The ocean tides send their salt water up these rivers—the James, the York, the Potomac, and the Rappahannock—and when the tide is high these large rivers actually flow back upstream.

Accordingly, this part of Virginia is called the "tidewater" country.

The first English settlers in Virginia built their homes on this eastern plain. Over the land of the tidewater valleys they spread their great plantations, of such size that it would not have been possible to farm them without the labor of great numbers of African Negro slaves. The small ships of those days sailed up with the tide, to the planters' doorsteps, and brought with them the latest English newspapers and all the English manufactured goods that the people needed. It was because of these ships that the people in the east were able to feel closer to England, 3,000 miles away across the ocean, than they did to New York or Boston on the same seacoast.

When no land for new plantations remained in the eastern part of Tidewater Virginia, the colonists began to move west into the foothills. Here the rivers were not wide enough or deep enough for the ocean-going ships. Everything had to be carried over long, tiring trails. The news, by the time it arrived, was too old to be of interest. Articles from Liverpool cost too much to be bought by many. Instead of English-type stone houses there were wooden log cabins. Instead of silks and cottons the people wore clothing which they had made from animal furs and skins. Instead of great plantations there were only small farm clearings in the forest. A Tidewater planter would visit a neighbor in a carriage sent from England; a Piedmonter went visiting only with a gun.

The inland settlers were pioneers, adventurers, people who considered themselves Americans rather than Englishmen, while the lowland planters were just "living away from home" and always dreaming of the day when they could see "dear old England" again. These two different kinds of people even had different names. The Tidewater Virginians were called "Tuckahoes;" the in-

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land settlers were known as "Cohees." The Jeffersons, both father and son, were among those who were to bring Tuckahoes and Cohees together and to make of them one united people.

Peter, the father, born in 1707 in Chesterfield County, halfway between the two parts of Virginia, helped bring the east to the west by building plantations in the Piedmont like those in the Tidewater. Thomas, the son, brought the west to the east. He it was who carried "Americanism" down from the mountains to the seacoast.

When Peter himself was born the Jefferson family had already lived in America for many years, but they had not become large plantation owners. Like most of his neighbors Peter Jefferson was a self-made man in a self-made land. Though he had received no regular school education he managed to read a great deal of the best literature of the time and many books on science. In a new country which is just beginning to be settled, perhaps the most important work of all is that of surveying, mapmaking, fixing the borders between lands. To become a surveyor, Peter taught himself mathematics. Two other great American statesmen, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, also worked for many years as land surveyors.

In addition to being a surveyor Peter Jefferson also became a judge and a sheriff. Once again it is not surprising that in a new country of this kind these three public offices should be held by the same individual—usually the one who was the hardest working and most able to take care of things.

Peter's work as surveyor took him to all parts of the county, and it was during these travels that he met the man who was to become his best friend—William Randolph.

The Randolphs are to this day one of the most respected families of Tidewater Virginia. William was a real "Tuckahoe." The great house and thousands of acres which his father had left to him were in fact named "Tuckahoe." It was far west for a tidewater plantation, but tobacco-growing quickly ruins the soil, and the big plantation owners were always going further west for new land which had never been used before.

In 1737, when Peter Jefferson was 30 years old, he and his friend William Randolph traveled up the James River and followed a branch of it, the Rivanna, in search of new plantations.

At a place not far from the source of the Rivanna River in the mountains they came to some fine-looking land that had not yet been claimed. There they put their markers around thousands of acres.

Peter Jefferson and William Randolph were the third and fourth settlers in this territory. Their plan was to grow wheat and tobacco and then float it downstream on flat riverboats to a point where the water was deep enough for ocean-going ships.

Their first task was to prepare the land for farming and to build their houses. In the middle of all this work Peter Jefferson fell in love with Jane Randolph, a 19-year-old cousin of William's and in 1739 he married her. The self-educated county surveyor was now the owner of a large plantation and had married into one of the best families of Virginia.

On his new land Peter Jefferson built his new home for his new wife. It was then the custom for planters to name their plantations in honor of some place that was dear to them in England. So Peter, to please his wife Jane, called the plain wooden house which he had built on the north

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bank of the Rivanna River "Shadwell," after the district in London where Jane Randolph had been born.

Here, at Shadwell, while the forest was being cleared, were born three daughters—Jane, Mary, and Elizabeth—and one son, Thomas.

The farm remained wild country for a long time, during which Peter could step out of his front door any morning and shoot some animal from his porch. But by the year 1744 the land around Shadwell had so many new settlers on it that it was made into the County of Albemarle. A county needs a government. A government needs officers. Peter Jefferson was now an old settler, and it is not surprising that he was made one of the justices of the peace. William Randolph, too, was honored with the position of sheriff. It was not long before Albemarle County had a courthouse and prison.

But every colony had military as well as civil duties. The Indians had not ceased entirely to be a danger, and the French in the Ohio territory were also coming near. Peter Jefferson was therefore made lieutenant colonel of the militia, under the command of the Albemarle County Surveyor, Professor Joshua Fry, of William and Mary College in Williamsburg.

When little Tom Jefferson was only two years old something happened which, though itself sad, put an entirely different kind of life within reach of the Jefferson family. William Randolph died. His last request to Peter, his best friend, was that he should take care of his three children, who would be without a father. He suggested that to do this Peter should move to Tuckahoe, William's own plantation, and bring his entire family.

All these last wishes of his dying friend Peter faithfully followed. Thus it was that Tom Jefferson, the Cohee child, was introduced to life on a tidewater plantation.

How happy his mother must have been as they approached Tuckahoe, her old home, with its avenue of beautiful trees. It was six years since she had last lived in a lovely old house like this, full of fine furniture and surrounded by English park-like gardens with fine bushes and hundreds of different flowers.

From the house, which was built on the top of a wooded hill, they had a wonderful view of the James River valley and of the whole plantation around. Here it would be cool in the hottest summers.

Tuckahoe, like most of the Virginia planters' houses, was built in the form of a big letter H. It looked like two separate but similar houses connected by a long sitting-room. It was an excellent arrangement for guests, for they could have almost a whole house to themselves. And the Virginia planters were always having visitors, some of whom might stay for weeks or months.

The seven children now at Tuckahoe—four Jeffersons and three Randolphs—were enough for a school, and so a schoolhouse was built for them in the gardens near the house. It is still there for everyone to see. Here at the age of five Tom Jefferson began to learn to read and write.

Handwriting was considered the most important of the children's studies. Tom made rapid progress in this art, and his writing always remained fine and easy to read.

After school and on holidays the plantation was a wonderful playground for the children. Not only were there trees to climb and horses to ride and ponds to swim in but there were also all the various farm buildings, where Negro slaves were busy making thread, cloth, furniture, soap, and everything else that was needed to manage the plantation.

There were also the great buildings in which the tobacco was dried and stored, and where the animals were