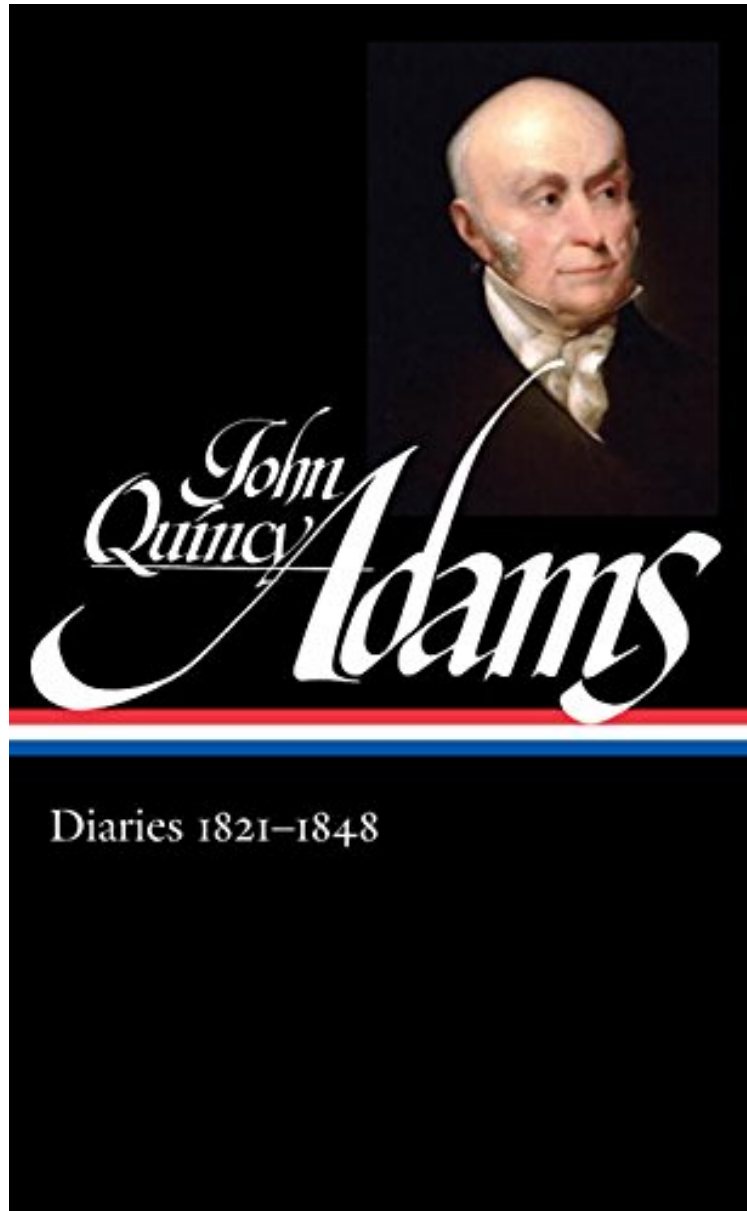


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John Quincy Adams: Diaries 1821-1848 (The Library of America)

John Quincy Adams

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John Quincy Adams : John Quincy Adams: Diaries 1821-1848 (The Library of America) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised John Quincy Adams: Diaries 1821-1848 (The Library of America):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
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American pre-civil war history from one of the players.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. John Quincy Adams In The Library Of America: 1821 -- 1848
By Robin Friedman
John Quincy Adams (1767 -- 1848) served as the sixth president of the United States and combined a life of public service with study and intellectual activity. Beginning from adolescence and continuing until his death, Adams kept a detailed diary which offers invaluable insight into his public and private life and into the events of his day. The Library of America has published a two-volume set of excerpts from Adams' massive diary selected and edited by David Waldstreicher, Distinguished Professor of History at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. The first volume includes excerpts from the diary beginning with Adams' earliest entries in 1779 and concludes in 1821, with the end of the first presidential term of James Madison, with Adams serving as Secretary of State. The second volume, which I am reviewing here, begins in 1821, with Madison's inauguration for his second term. It includes in 1848, with Adams' final diary entry written three days before his death. In a diary entry of October 1846 (p.622), Adams reflects on the scope and breadth of his diary and realizes its unusual, probably unique, character in documenting the life of a statesman. The diary, and this volume, covers a momentous era and shows many changes in Adams' life and era. Adams reflects on the political events in which he was deeply involved, including his service as Secretary of State, President, and Congressman. He also displays a wide-ranging love for the life of the mind, including religion, philosophy, literature, languages, and science. The diary also includes personal details of Adams' life, including his marriage to Louisa Johnson, the tragic deaths of two of the couple's sons, and the deaths of Adams' celebrated parents, John and Abigail Adams. John Quincy Adams writes fully and well. It is a rare privilege to get to hear his voice and his thoughts. Earlier editions of Adams' diaries have tended to focus on the political entries. The new LOA edition is valuable because it allows the reader to see Adams' personal life as well. I find Adams' frequent reflections on religion and philosophy at least as interesting, and probably more so, than his reflections on the events of his day. This book is arranged in seven chapters, following the numbering of the companion LOA volume. Chapter VIII covers Adams' service as Secretary of State during Monroe's second term (1821 -- 1825) during which Adams played a large role in the development of the Monroe Doctrine. The entries for this period also show the political machinations of the day which ultimately led to Adams' election as president, even though he received a minority of the votes and allegations of a "corrupt bargain" which Henry Clay which dogged both Clay and Adams for the remainder of their lives. Adams' reflections show well that the messiness of the American political process is hardly a new phenomenon and thus offers the reader a broad, historical perspective into current events. In an entry of November 1822, (p.33) Adams reflects on his own historical reading on the history of Great Britain and writes: "The public history of all Countries, and all ages, is but a sort of mask richly coloured -- The interior working of the machinery must be foul. There is as much mining and countermining for power, as many fluctuations of friendship and enmity, as many attractions and repulsions, bargains and oppositions ... as might be told of our own times. ... And shall not I too, have a tale to tell?" Chapter IX of this book covers Adams' unfortunate presidency, dogged by the controversy over his election, by his status as a minority president, and by his own inflexibility. Adams sought early to unite the country through a strong Federal government for all the people and through a system of public improvements, including a national university. His administration never got off the ground. Chapter X of the book covers Adams' brief retirement from public life, his growing interest in botany, and tragedies in his personal life. The final three chapters of the book cover Adams' long 17-years of service (1831 -- 1848) in the U.S. House of Representatives as a member from Massachusetts. Adams' service in the House is itself a high accomplishment following his early long career as diplomat, Secretary of State, and President. The diary entries from these years tend to be more weighted towards political activity than the earlier entries. The selections describe meticulously Adams' activities in the House and the activities of his opponents. Many of the entries involve the "gag" rule. Adams became notorious for his attempts to present petitions from constituents and others calling for the elimination of slavery. The House, with the Southern members and their Northern supporters, enacted a "gag" rule forbidding the receipt of petitions relating to slavery. Adams persisted over his career and was twice nearly censured. Finally, in Adams' last term in Congress, the gag rule was abolished. Adams' efforts on the gag rule get much attention in the diaries. The entries from Adams' Congressional years also show his opposition to the acquisition of Texas and to the War with Mexico. They show as well his dogged persistence in the establishment of the Smithsonian Institution, with a bequest received from a British subject. In the latter part of his service in Congress, Adams participated in the defense of slaves on a Spanish slave ship in a case known as the "Amistad", the subject of a movie a few years ago. The diary shows Adams' work and reflections on his participation in the case. Adams attempted to distance himself from the Abolitionists, but he was a strong opponent of slavery. He was pessimistic about both the immediate and the ultimate fate of the Union based upon the divisions in our country resulting from slavery. These issues are still with us. In Adams' final diary entry of February 1848, (p. 626) he wrote a little poem you a young woman who had written to him: "Fair Lady, thou of human life Hast yet but little seen. Thy days of sorrow and of strife Are few and far between" Adams' diary is a work of literature in its own right. The perseverance required in reading through the two LOA volumes will be well rewarded. The volume includes a chronology of Adams' life together with explanatory notes to contextualize the diary entries and to help the reader. This volume and its companion volume make an

outstanding resource for readers interested in Adams and in American history. The LOA kindly sent me a review copy of the two-volume box set of Adams' diaries. Robin Friedman 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Agree with entirely with Mr. DeGroot. . . . By Fritz But wanted to give this the five stars he had obviously intended and which it so richly deserves. I keep calling friends saying, "Listen to this.." while reading something else from these revelatory volumes. An invaluable and eye-opening window into a distant and hither-to, inaccessible time. Gives you hope that we do persevere. Gives you perspective. We've been through a lot. A perceptive and enlightening diarist. Fascinating.

For the 250th anniversary of John Quincy Adams's birth, a landmark new selected edition of an American masterpiece: the incomparable self-portrait of a man and his times from the Revolution to the coming of the Civil War. The diary of John Quincy Adams is one of the most extraordinary works in American literature. Begun in 1779 at the age of twelve and kept more or less faithfully until his death almost 70 years later, and totaling some fifteen thousand closely-written manuscript pages, it is both an unrivaled record of historical events and personalities from the nation's founding to the antebellum era and a masterpiece of American self-portraiture, tracing the spiritual, literary, and scientific interests of an exceptionally lively mind. Now, for the 250th anniversary of Adams's birth, Library of America and historian David Waldstreicher present a two-volume reader's edition of diary selections based for the first time on the original manuscripts, restoring personal and revealing passages suppressed in earlier editions. Volume 2 opens with Adams serving as Secretary of State, amid political maneuverings within and outside James Monroe's cabinet to become his successor, a process that culminates in Adams's election to the presidency by the House of Representatives after the deadlocked four-way contest of 1824. Even as Adams takes the oath of office, rivals Henry Clay, his Secretary of State, John C. Calhoun, his vice president, and an embittered Andrew Jackson, eye the election of 1828. The diary records in candid detail his frustration as his far-sighted agenda for national improvement founders on the rocks of internecine political factionalism, conflict that results in his becoming only the second president, with his father, to fail to secure reelection. After a short-lived retirement, Adams returns to public service as a Congressman from Massachusetts, and for the last seventeen years of his life he leads efforts to resist the extension of slavery and to end the notorious "gag rule" that stifles debate on the issue in Congress. In 1841 he further burnishes his reputation as a scourge of the Slave Power by successfully defending African mutineers of the slave ship *Amistad* before the Supreme Court. The diary achieves perhaps its greatest force in its prescient anticipation of the Civil War and Emancipation, an "object," as Adams described it during the Missouri Crisis, "vast in its compass, awful in its prospects, sublime and beautiful in its issue."

"JQA is a masterly diarist. . . . [This] will be the standard readers edition of this masterpiece, which gives an account of both a fascinating life and a thrilling, disastrous period of American history." --Richard Brookhiser, *The Wall Street Journal*"The latest entry in the prestigious Library of America collection is a distinct treat, something long overdue for an attractive, accessible edition. . . . Readers don't encounter mere bare memos of events -- they're again and again immersed in well-drawn scenes and vivid personalities. Adams displays a dramatist's ear not only for dialogue but also for pacing. . . . It's an astonishing sustained performance. . . . Reading these entries for hours on end is spellbinding." --*The Christian Science Monitor*"One of the greatest of American diaries by one of America's greatest statesmen." --Gordon S. Wood, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*"There is no figure in American history like John Quincy Adams, a lawyer, scholar, poet, and statesman of boundless energy and vision. And in the annals of American history there is nothing comparable to his diaries, both as the lifetime record of a turbulent era and its people, and as a revealing portrait of an extraordinary man and his famous family. Based upon the original manuscript volumes, and including scores of passages suppressed in earlier editions, this Library of America edition restores a national treasure in all its richness and surprising passion." --Edith B. Gelles, author of *Abigail John: Portrait of a Marriage*"The candid diary of John Quincy Adams records the day-to-day insights, hopes, passions, and frustrations of one of America's wisest and most courageous patriots. Spanning almost seventy years, it addresses issues as varied as foreign policy, civil liberties, gender equality, and government aid for science, but especially the scourge of slavery, which Adams foresaw would rend the Union he worked so hard to build up. The Library of America here makes available an unparalleled resource for the study of our nation's politics, history, and enduring values." --Daniel Walker Howe, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*About the Author John Quincy Adams (1767 -1848) was one of the most experienced and well-traveled American statesmen of his era. Before becoming the sixth president of the United States in 1825, he had served as a diplomat in the Netherlands, Prussia, Russia, and England, and had led the American commission that negotiated the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812. After the last of his European posts he served as Secretary of State under James Monroe, and was the principal architect of the Monroe Doctrine. After his presidency, Adams was selected to represent southeastern Massachusetts in the U.S. House of Representatives, serving for the remainder of his life, until his fatal collapse at his Congressional desk. David Waldstreicher is Distinguished Professor of History at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, and the author of *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification* (2009); *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery and the American Revolution* (2004); and *In the*

Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820 (1997). As editor, his books include *A Companion to John Adams and John Quincy Adams* (2013). From the Boxed Set edition.