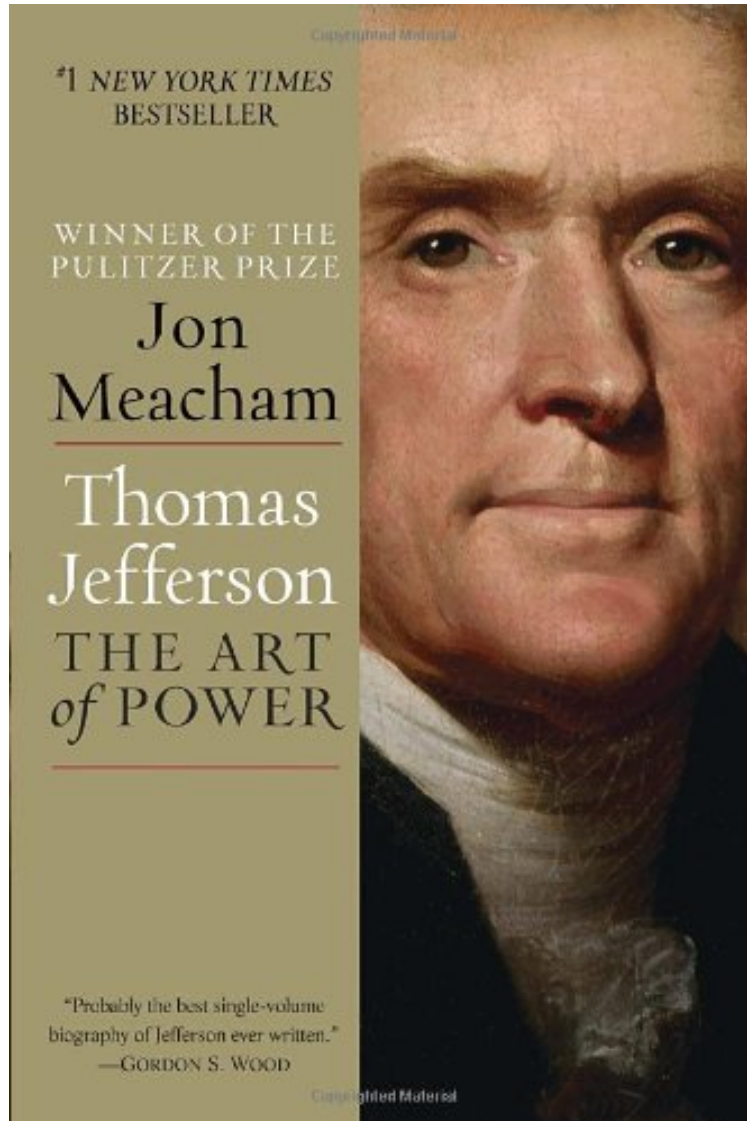


[Read free ebook] Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power

## Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power

*Jon Meacham*

*\*Download PDF / ePub / DOC / audiobook / ebooks*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#9884 in Books Meacham Jon 2013-10-29 2013-10-29 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.18 x 1.38 x 6.151, 2.31 #File Name: 0812979486800 pages Thomas Jefferson The Art of Power | File size: 77.Mb

**Jon Meacham : Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power:

69 of 70 people found the following review helpful. Re-balances the Modern Perception of Jefferson By Eric C. Evans THOMAS JEFFERSON: THE ART OF POWER, by Jon Meacham is a great read, I enjoyed it Prologue through Epilogue. It is lively, interesting and insightful. I have read quite a lot on the Revolutionary Era, including several other biographies of Thomas Jefferson, and even so I learned a lot about Jefferson in the reading of this book. However, there are elements of the book with which I take exception. Mr. Meacham states in the Author's Notes that

this biography is, in part, a reaction to recent biographies of both George Washington, John Adams and Alexander Hamilton which have revised opinions of these three men, especially Hamilton. He writes, "Then came nearly two decades of highly acclaimed biographies of John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington that understandably emphasized the virtues of their protagonist, often at Jefferson's expense"(pg. 507). He cites specifically Joseph J. Ellis's *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams*, but I imagine he would also include in that list John Adams, by David McCullough and Ron Chernow's two most recent works: *Washington: A Life* and *Alexander Hamilton* (all of them highly readable, excellent biographies). Mr. Meacham does a good job--better than most--helping his reader understand that there was during the post-revolutionary period a real fear in certain quarters that the United States could revert to a monarchy. Not so well done in this book is separating over-heated political rhetoric from what Jefferson actually believed. The fact is, a man as unquestionably intelligent and savvy as Jefferson would have known the difference between hyperbolic political rhetoric-even his own-and reality. It is clear that by the end of Washington's second term Jefferson and the Republicans (largely whipped up by Jefferson and Madison) were frustrated and chaffing at the bit. Even then, I cannot accept, as Mr. Meacham seems to imply, that Jefferson put much store in all the monarchical conspiracy theories that had political currency at that time. On balance most historians seem to believe that it was Jefferson's actions and political maneuverings during the Washington administration which help ignite and escalate the overwrought, highly negative atmosphere that convulsed politics during Washington's second administration and beyond. However, Mr. Meacham does not see it that way. Rather he explains Jefferson's third-party maneuverings and obfuscations as a natural reaction to the situation in which he found himself and what, at his time, would have been expected of a man in his station. I did not completely accept this. Jefferson's relationship with Philip Ferneau and the *National Gazette* is not fully explored in this book and leaves the reader with the impression that Jefferson was only tangentially involved with the newspaper that regularly ravaged Washington and his administration. But at least Mr. Meacham does allude to the connection. What is a more egregious omission is any exploration of how duplicitous Jefferson (and especially Madison) became in dealing with Washington in his second administration. Although Washington knew and understood that he had political differences with the two men, he still considered them trustworthy confidants. He had no idea the degree to which, through indirect means, the two men were so actively working against him. Jefferson and Madison continued to allow themselves to be taken into Washington's confidence never once indicating that they were anything other than loyal friends. This I think is an essential part of Jefferson's character and should not be excluded from a biography of his life especially one whose stated thesis is to show how artful, skillful and subtle was his accumulation and use of power. The final difference I have with *THOMAS JEFFERSON: THE ART OF POWER* is the thesis that Mr. Meacham proposes at the beginning of the book and attempts to support throughout: that Jefferson's vision for America, which contrasted with Washington's and Hamilton's allowed him and his proteges to control the Presidency for 40 years with only one four year interruption by John Quincy Adams. It is, of course true enough that Madison, Monroe, Jackson and Van Buren were disciples of Jefferson. But Mr. Meacham's argument that Jefferson accomplished this feat by opposing and triumphing over the policies of Washington and Hamilton is not accurate. In fact, Mr. Meacham seems to believe that Jefferson was able to win the Presidency because, "He understood the country was open to--even eager for-- a government that seemed less intrusive and overbearing than the one Washington and Adams had created" (pg. 352). While it is true that Jefferson and his proteges could not wait for Washington to exit the stage, the country itself never gave that indication, not in the slightest degree. Had he run, Washington would have easily won a third term. Adams, of course, was defeated for reelection, but that was not a rejection by the voters of Washington. Adams's defeat was due more to yawning cleavage in the Federalist Party and the electoral advantage created by the 3/5 clause of the constitution giving a significant Electoral College advantage to states with large slave populations, than to any rejection of Washington, his policies or his style of governing. Moreover, what Jefferson did to consolidate his hold on power was adopted in deed, if not in word, the Hamiltonian idea that the country needed a stronger central government governed by a stronger executive. For all of Jefferson's concern over what he characterized as monarchical power grabs by Washington, Jefferson did more to increase the power of the President with the Louisiana Purchase than Washington did in his entire presidency. And that by no means was the only time Jefferson broadened and consolidated powers of the presidency. Where Washington had used restraint, Jefferson often resorted to expediency. Many such incidences are skillfully explored in this book. The inconstancy they pose to Jefferson's rhetoric are attributed by Mr. Meacham to "pragmatism." In reality, they were actions which if Washington or any other Federalist had engaged in would have been hailed as auguries of monarchism by the Jeffersonians. The part of this book I found most insightful and interesting is Mr. Meacham's discussion of the debt assumption crisis. I had always believed that Hamilton got the better of Jefferson in this bargain which both resolved the crisis created by the debt incurred by the state during the Revolutionary War and sited the nation's capitol on the Potomac. However, Mr. Meacham does an excellent job of explaining all of the many and complicated subtleties, which seemed to be overlooked by other historians, which came in to play here. He argues persuasively how, even though Hamilton got what he wanted in the bargain, Jefferson also negotiated some meaningful concessions. The bargain struck between these two antagonists was actually much more balanced than I originally believed. Having pointed to a few differences with Mr. Meacham and

his view of Thomas Jefferson, I very thoroughly enjoyed this book and will most likely read it again. It is beautifully written, meticulously researched and goes a long way to re-balance the modern image of Jefferson, reminding its readers the debt that is owed to the drafter of the Declaration of Independence and the Sage of Monticello. 674 of 715 people found the following review helpful. A New Thomas Jefferson? By James Hiller I've read a couple books on Thomas Jefferson in the past. American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History to name a couple. Up until this newest book by Jon Meacham, I thought that the essential character of Jefferson was essentially unknowable, a man of contradictions and hiddenness. Yet, Meacham manages, in his large but fascinating and quick read, to illuminate Jefferson through a new pair of eyes: that of his leadership. In doing so, we meet a new Jefferson, sometimes wily, always intelligent, always forward thinking. Jon Meacham wrote one of my favorite books, American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House, which I've read at least twice and listened to on my iPod while running each summer. Meacham has a way of writing his history that manages to avoid the endless onslaught of names and trivial facts, and truly centers on the person. By doing so, he creates a momentum in his writing that's compelling and hard to put down. Meacham's unique spin on Jefferson (if spin is the right word .... more of a focus) is how he developed his leadership and vision for America. This focus causes Meacham to rush in his writing through Jefferson's early years (before you know it, he's attending the second Continental Congress) and getting him to the national stage as quickly as possible, which was refreshing and never abrupt. He paints some familiar portraits of Jefferson, that of a hard working student in Williamsburg, a devoted husband (before being a bit of a scalawag in the wooing of women), and that of a slave owner who knew his status was wrong and failed to do anything about it. Because of this, Jefferson comes alive in his pages. While not overtly revelatory, the book manages to be revelatory because you feel, after reading it, that you know better this sphinx of a man. The challenge of any historian is trying to make a subject that many people have written about new; authors of Washington and Lincoln biographies suffer the same fate. Because of the strength of Meacham's writing style, though, and the speed in which you can devour the pages, Jefferson is illuminated. If you haven't read any book on Jefferson, this should be your initial entry into his world. It will be a journey, much like that of Jefferson and his wife as they traveled up the steep mountain of Monticello after they were married, which promises to bring much joy and excitement as you discover this man. And for those of you, like myself, who know a little of his story, it's still well worth your time. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. History brought to life. By Dave F This is an excellent window into the life of our third president, author of the Declaration of Independence, and one of the founders of our country. Author Jon Meacham points out that a one volume writing could not possibly thoroughly cover Jefferson's life. He concentrates on Jefferson's political life from his role in Virginia's House of Burgess through his eight year presidency ending in 1809. There is more, but that's the main thrust. Meacham paints Jefferson as imperfect, but undeniably brilliant. He was a passionate believer in the "American Experiment" of a democratic republic. Perhaps the leading advocate in staying the course of democracy, regardless of the difficulties. Jefferson was far from perfect, but his role in the founding of the United States was critical. There's no doubt of that after reading Jon Meacham's "Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power".

NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The New York Times Book Review The Washington Post Entertainment Weekly The Seattle Times St. Louis Post-Dispatch Bloomberg Businessweek In this magnificent biography, the Pulitzer Prizewinning author of American Lion and Franklin and Winston brings vividly to life an extraordinary man and his remarkable times. Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power gives us Jefferson the politician and president, a great and complex human being forever engaged in the wars of his era. Philosophers think; politicians maneuver. Jefferson's genius was that he was both and could do both, often simultaneously. Such is the art of power. Thomas Jefferson hated confrontation, and yet his understanding of power and of human nature enabled him to move men and to marshal ideas, to learn from his mistakes, and to prevail. Passionate about many things women, his family, books, science, architecture, gardens, friends, Monticello, and Paris Jefferson loved America most, and he strove over and over again, despite fierce opposition, to realize his vision: the creation, survival, and success of popular government in America. Jon Meacham lets us see Jefferson's world as Jefferson himself saw it, and to appreciate how Jefferson found the means to endure and win in the face of rife partisan division, economic uncertainty, and external threat. Drawing on archives in the United States, England, and France, as well as unpublished Jefferson presidential papers, Meacham presents Jefferson as the most successful political leader of the early republic, and perhaps in all of American history. The father of the ideal of individual liberty, of the Louisiana Purchase, of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and of the settling of the West, Jefferson recognized that the genius of humanity and the genius of the new nation lay in the possibility of progress, of discovering the undiscovered and seeking the unknown. From the writing of the Declaration of Independence to elegant dinners in Paris and in the President's House; from political maneuverings in the boardinghouses and legislative halls of Philadelphia and New York to the infant capital on the Potomac; from his complicated life at Monticello, his breathtaking house and plantation in Virginia, to the creation of the University of Virginia, Jefferson was central to the age. Here too is the personal Jefferson, a man of appetite, sensuality, and passion. The Jefferson story resonates today not least because he led his nation through ferocious partisanship and

cultural warfare amid economic change and external threats, and also because he embodies an eternal drama, the struggle of the leadership of a nation to achieve greatness in a difficult and confounding world. Praise for Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power This is probably the best single-volume biography of Jefferson ever written. Gordon S. Wood A big, grand, absorbing exploration of not just Jefferson and his role in history but also Jefferson the man, humanized as never before. Entertainment Weekly [Meacham] captures who Jefferson was, not just as a statesman but as a man. . . . By the end of the book . . . the reader is likely to feel as if he is losing a dear friend. . . . [An] absorbing tale. The Christian Science Monitor This terrific book allows us to see the political genius of Thomas Jefferson better than we have ever seen it before. In these endlessly fascinating pages, Jefferson emerges with such vitality that it seems as if he might still be alive today. Doris Kearns Goodwin From the Hardcover edition.

.com Best Books of the Month, November 2012: As multifaceted a character as has ever been seen in American history (not to mention politics), Thomas Jefferson was perhaps the ideal leader for the young nation still struggling with external threats and its own identity: a to-the-core individualist and visionary who both embodied and reconciled the contradictions of individualism and a shared nationality. Its no mean feat to render the life and times of such a figure (much less make it compulsively readable), but as with his Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Andrew Jackson (American Lion), Jon Meacham's Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power vividly illustrates the world and impact of our third president, deftly weaving the threads of Jefferson's personality into a complete portrait of a singularly complex politician and thinker--a philosopher president. --Jon Foro Praise for Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power Fascinating and insightful Many books have been written about Jefferson's life, but few have created such a vivid portrait Meacham immerses the reader in that period of history to explain Jefferson's behavior during an era when the nation was as contradictory as he was extraordinary essential. The Associated Press [A] accomplishes something more impressive than dissecting Jefferson's political skills by explaining his greatness, a different task from chronicling a life, though he does that too and handsomely. Even though I know quite a lot about Jefferson, I was repeatedly surprised by the fresh information Meacham brings to his work. Surely there is not a significant detail out there, in any pertinent archive, that he has missed. Joyce Appleby, Washington Post [Meacham] argues persuasively that for Jefferson the ideal of liberty was not incompatible with a strong federal government, and also that Jefferson's service in the Congress in 1776 left him thoroughly versed in the ways and means of politics Meacham wisely has chosen to look at Jefferson through a political lens, assessing how he balanced his ideals with pragmatism while also bending others to his will. And just as he scolded Jackson, another slaveholder and champion of individual liberty, for being a hypocrite, so Meacham gives a tough-minded account of Jefferson's slippery recalibrations on race Where other historians have found hypocrisy in Jefferson's use of executive power to complete the Louisiana Purchase, Meacham is nuanced and persuasive.. Jill Abramson, The New York Times Book [Meacham] does an excellent job getting inside Jefferson's head and his world Meacham presents Jefferson's life in a textured narrative that weaves together Jefferson's well-traveled career. USA Today A big, grand, absorbing exploration of not just Jefferson and his role in history but also Jefferson the man, humanized as never before. [Grade:] A-. Entertainment Weekly Impeccably researched and footnoted a model of clarity and explanation. Bloomberg [Meacham] captures who Jefferson was, not just as a statesman but as a man By the end of the book, as the 83-year-old Founding Father struggles to survive until the Fourth of July, 1826, the 50th anniversary of his masterful Declaration, the reader is likely to feel as if he is losing a dear friend [an] absorbing tale. Christian Science Monitor Absorbing . . . Jefferson emerges in the book not merely as a lofty thinker but as the ultimate political operator, a master pragmatist who got things done in times nearly as fractious as our own. Chicago Tribune [Jefferson's] life is a riveting story of our nation's founding an improbable turn of events that seems only in retrospect inevitable. Few are better suited to the telling than Jon Meacham. . . . Captivating. The Seattle Times [Meacham] brings to bear his focused and sensitive scholarship, rich prose style The Jefferson that emerges from these astute, dramatic pages is a figure worthy of continued study and appreciation [a] very impressive book. Booklist (Starred ) An outstanding biography that reveals an overlooked steeliness at Jefferson's core that accounts for so much of his political success. Kirkus s Jon Meacham understands Thomas Jefferson. With thorough and up-to-date research, elegant writing, deep insight, and an open mind, he brings Jefferson, the most talented politician of his generation and one of the most talented in our nation's history into full view. It is no small task to capture so capacious a life in one volume. Meacham has succeeded, giving us a rich presentation of our third president's life and times. This is an extraordinary work. Annette Gordon-Reed, author of The Hemingses of Monticello This terrific book allows us to see the political genius of Thomas Jefferson better than we have ever seen it before. In these endlessly fascinating pages, Jefferson emerges with such vitality that it seems as if he might still be alive today. Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of Team of Rivals Jon Meacham resolves the bundle of contradictions that was Thomas Jefferson by probing his love of progress and thirst for power. Here was a man endlessly, artfully intent on making the world something it had not been before. A thrilling and affecting portrait of our first philosopher-politician. Stacy Schiff, author of Cleopatra: A Life "A true triumph. In addition to being a brilliant biography, this book is a guide to the use of power. Jon Meacham shows how Jefferson's deft ability to compromise and improvise made him a transformational leader. We think of Jefferson as the embodiment of noble ideals, as he was, but Meacham

shows that he was a practical politician more than a moral theorist. The result is a fascinating look at how Jefferson wielded his driving desire for power and control."Walter Isaacson, author of Steve Jobs"This is probably the best single-volume biography of Jefferson ever written; it is certainly the most readable."Gordon Wood, author of The Radicalism of the American RevolutionThis is Jon Meacham's best book yet. Evocatively written and deeply researched, it sheds brilliant light on facets of Thomas Jefferson we haven't seen before, gives us original and unexpected new insights into his identity and character, and uses the irresistible story of this talented, manipulative, complicated man to bring us life lessons on universal subjects from family and friendship to politics and leadership. The Sage of Monticello made a considerable effort to turn his life into a mystery, but in a splendid match of biographer with subject, Meacham has cracked the Jefferson code."Michael BeschlossAbout the AuthorJon Meachamreceived the Pulitzer Prize for his 2008 biography of Andrew Jackson,American Lion. He is also the author of theNew York TimesbestsellersThomas Jefferson: The Art of Power, American Gospel,andFranklin and Winston. Meacham, who teaches at Vanderbilt University and at The University of the South, is a fellow of the Society of American Historians. He lives in Nashville and in Sewanee with his wife and children.