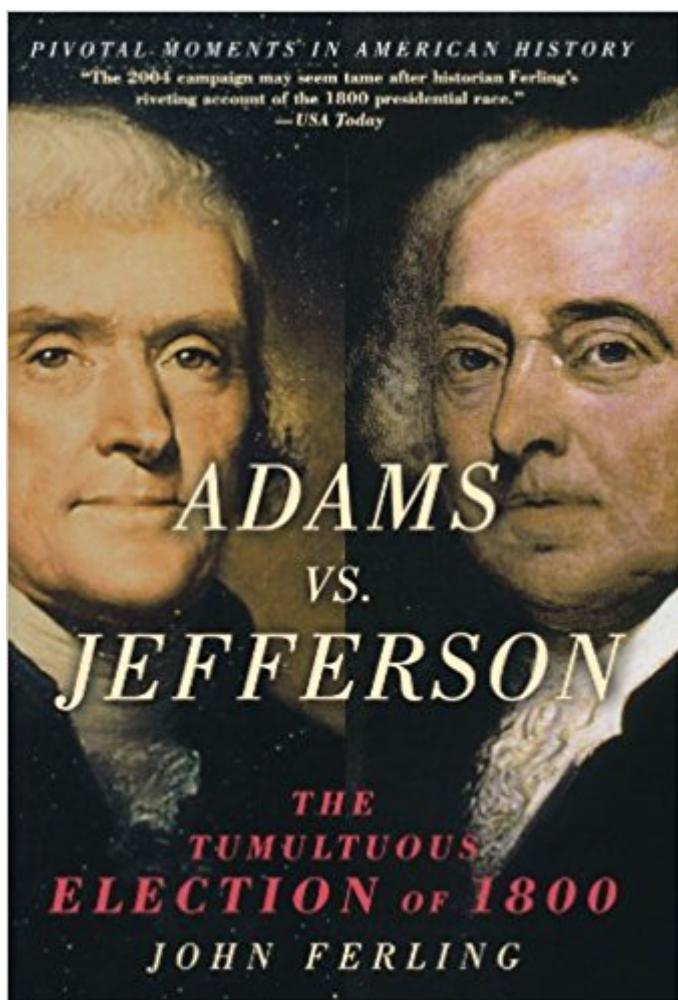


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# Adams Vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election Of 1800 (Pivotal Moments In American History)



## Synopsis

It was a contest of titans: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, two heroes of the Revolutionary era, once intimate friends, now icy antagonists locked in a fierce battle for the future of the United States. The election of 1800 was a thunderous clash of a campaign that climaxed in a deadlock in the Electoral College and led to a crisis in which the young republic teetered on the edge of collapse. Adams vs. Jefferson is the gripping account of a turning point in American history, a dramatic struggle between two parties with profoundly different visions of how the nation should be governed. The Federalists, led by Adams, were conservatives who favored a strong central government. The Republicans, led by Jefferson, were more egalitarian and believed that the Federalists had betrayed the Revolution of 1776 and were backsliding toward monarchy. The campaign itself was a barroom brawl every bit as ruthless as any modern contest, with mud-slinging, scare tactics, and backstabbing. The low point came when Alexander Hamilton printed a devastating attack on Adams, the head of his own party, in "fifty-four pages of unremitting vilification." The stalemate in the Electoral College dragged on through dozens of ballots. Tensions ran so high that the Republicans threatened civil war if the Federalists denied Jefferson the presidency. Finally a secret deal that changed a single vote gave Jefferson the White House. A devastated Adams left Washington before dawn on Inauguration Day, too embittered even to shake his rival's hand. With magisterial command, Ferling brings to life both the outsize personalities and the hotly contested political questions at stake. He shows not just why this moment was a milestone in U.S. history, but how strongly the issues--and the passions--of 1800 resonate with our own time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Veteran historian Ferling's account of one of America's most extraordinary political dramas lays bare the historically pugilist nature of American presidential politics. In 1800 the nation was struggling to its feet amidst an array of threats from foreign governments and a host of constitutional struggles. Against this backdrop, President John Adams, an elite, strong-willed Federalist, set to square off against his vice president, Thomas Jefferson, a populist Republican. The campaign was brutal. Republicans assailed the Federalists as scare-mongers. Federalists attacked Republicans as godless. But it was a constitutional quirk that nearly collapsed the nascent United States. Adams was eliminated, but Jefferson and his vice-<sup>presidential</sup> running mate, Aaron Burr, tied in the Electoral College with 73 votes, throwing the decision into the House of Representatives. That left the Federalist-dominated House to decide between two despised Republicans for president. After 36 votes, a political deal finally gave Jefferson the presidency, ending a standoff that had the nation on the brink of collapse. Although his account is dense at times, Ferling richly presents the twists and turns of the election, as well as a vivid portrait of a struggling new nation and the bruising political battles of our now revered founding fathers, including the major roles played by James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. In what has already proven to be a vicious 2004 campaign, readers will take some comfort in knowing that the vagaries of the political process, although no doubt exacerbated today by mass media, have changed little in over 200 years. Of even greater comfort, and Ferling's ultimate triumph, is showing that, historically, when faced with dire circumstances at home and abroad, American democracy has pulled through. B&w illus., maps.

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"Ferling at his best. It would be hard to find a better guide to the complexities of this very complex election, and Ferling is particularly good at showing just how many contingencies there were.... Useful and lucid."--Herbert Sloan, American Historical Review

First of all, you have a quality writer who does extensive research. Then you have two Founding Fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Adams was a well educated crumuchion while Jefferson was a educated Virginian. Adams favored centralized government while Jefferson was far

more liberal in his views on governing citizens. His attitude was developed my years in the Virginia legislature and Paris. Few folks liked Adams. He simply lacked social graces. And as he grew older, he became more of a big government and keep the power and as much as the vote possible out of the hands of the male, land owning, privileged population. After all he was a New Englander and possessed few social graces. Jefferson, on the other hand was a Virginian and silver tongued. He was far more liberal than Adams and definitely not in sympathy with Adams Federalist party. A declaration that would be palpable to the Founders was directed by Adams and written by Jefferson and a few of his friends. Had Adams written the Declaration, we would still be modifying and making changes on the document as I write today. Washington stated that in the two yrs he observed Jefferson in Philadelphia that Jefferson hardly spoke to the delegates and remained very quiet and reflective during sessions. On the other hand, Adams was attempting to bestow the title of King upon George Washington. Hadn't the colonies had enough experience with a monarch?. They were not great friends during the Philadelphia time of our Independence. But Adams certainly respected Jefferson's ability to write a declaration that would unite all sections of the new nation in time of great revolution. And then they split with little or no communication with one another especially during Jefferson's presidency years. and then in time they wrote to each other. It was truly a love-hate relationship between these two statesmen. Finally on America's 50th Anniversary, both Adams and Jefferson died on July 4th, 1826. They were so close as patriots yet so distant in terms of political philosophies. They could have died best of friends or worst of enemies. Politically they were opposed. In terms of personal respect for one another, I think there was a great deal of mutual admiration. These two men were very instrumental in America gaining its independence and the help that France provided for the failing cause in 1778. The friendly relations that existed with France and Adams attempt to destroy these through rash talk and impoliteness were all salvaged by the grace and courtesy that Ben Franklin and Jefferson afforded our allies. Between these pages are a great deal of history that makes this book a meaningful reference for anyone enthralled with the Revolution and the characters that made it possible. Read and enjoy!

Ferling avoids the all-too-common historian trap of writing in minutiae and paints in broad strokes a canvas of two vividly colored personalities. Adams and Jefferson feature heavily in a story of post-revolutionary politics. In addition to the two main protagonists, Washington, Hamilton, Madison, both Pinckneys, Burr and Paine play their parts, while the fortunes of the Federalists and the Republicans ebb and flow. The year is 1800, a national election year; the campaign had started 13 months before Election Day; the ruling party held the White House and both houses of Congress;

the government was in the grips of extremists; a repressive act is passed to protect the people from aliens in a potential wartime period; international relations have occupied the presidency for years and remain uncomfortable, especially with the French; the media reports on the election campaign in "sound" bites; and shortly before the election, a president revered by the people dies. The confluence of these circumstances is what made the Presidential election of 1800 a "pivotal moment in American history". Using a wide range of primary and secondary material, Ferling analyzes the main players' motives -- e.g., Hamilton's defamatory "Letter from Alexander Hamilton, Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams". Ferling interprets Hamilton as a king-maker, ascribing the letter not to political ineptitude or to ensuring Jefferson's election but in support of a Pinckney triumph. Ferling puts forward numerous such interpretations that aim to glean motives for major "tumultuous" events surrounding the election. One example is Burr's attempted grab for the presidency, a volte-face prior to the Electoral College dead heat. Previously, Burr had assured Jefferson of his role as junior partner in their relationship. Ferling's tale culminates with the election of 1800. Unfortunately, Ferling does not adequately explain the psephology in the pre-Twelfth Amendment America. Once Ferling gets to the dead heat in the Electoral College, he's back in his stride, detailing the machinations and intrigue within the House of Representatives, culminating in Jefferson's win on the 36th ballot. The epilogue brings the story of the two protagonists full circle, their relationship restored. Remarkably, both men died within five hours of each other on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence -- in an America much changed, substantially as a result of their efforts. Although this is a good and useful book for both students and general readers as it stands, I feel it could have been stronger in some respects. If Ferling had written a somewhat longer work while confining his detailed narrative to the years 1796 to 1801, he could have included certain persons and institutions and addressed certain issues that properly belong to this major event. After 1796, George Washington largely disappears from this work, but not from the lives and careers of either Adams or Jefferson. Both John Marshall and the federal judiciary appear all too briefly. America's troubled foreign relations had a paramount influence on the election of 1800, but in "Adams vs. Jefferson", Europe is mostly a backdrop. And more could have been done with the relationship of slavery to the election, in 1800 and thereafter, especially considering that the balloting, as Ferling admits, revealed a growing split between northern and southern states.

I got this book because I saw on the news that Trump was given one on his first day in office. As his campaign was so unorthodox. So I decided to purchase it. Interesting book. Even back then they lacked civility!

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