



**0. Thomas Jefferson - Story Preface**

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Image of Thomas Jefferson's portrait by Gilbert Stuart, in 1821, maintained at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

*Whenever you do a thing,  
act as if all the world were watching.*

Thomas Jefferson

If he ran for President today - in this "sound-bite" culture - Thomas Jefferson would likely get pummeled. It was his voice - more likely than not - which made him intensely dislike public speaking. Not made for the television age, it was high-pitched. In addition, he spoke with a lisp.

Jefferson despised giving speeches so much that he sent his "State of the Union" addresses to Congress. (That was, incidentally, a practice continued by all subsequent presidents until Woodrow Wilson.)

Known for his strong intellect, Tom Jefferson - the student - often studied fifteen hours a day. It was hard to keep him away from his books. John Page - future governor of Virginia and Jefferson's close friend at college - said Tom would rather "fly to his studies" than spend time with his friends.

Reflecting on Jefferson's broad-based knowledge, President Kennedy once welcomed a group of forty-nine Nobel laureates to the White House with these words:

*I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.*

(Address to Nobel Laureates, Dinner for Nobel Prize Winners of the Western Hemisphere, 29 April 1962.)

Who was this "silent member" of Congress whose Declaration of Independence voiced the loudest words king and parliament had yet heard from their American colonies? Let's take a virtual journey, to a small mountain in Virginia, where we'll meet the man and examine his writings.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Thomas-Jefferson>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Thomas-Jefferson>



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John Page

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