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Thomas Jefferson was a prolific writer who designed this portable writing desk (which someone else made). He used it while writing the Declaration of Independence. It still survives, as an American treasure. Image online,

courtesy Library of Congress.

Thomas Jefferson lived a long life, marked by highs and lows:

- He became America's third president following a hotly contested [election](#) in 1800.
- His administration worked a [deal with France](#), doubling the country's size with the Louisiana Purchase.
- He [commissioned](#) Lewis and Clark to undertake their historic expedition, opening up the west to significant [expansion](#).

Always [concerned](#) that the federal government would exert too much power over the states, Jefferson disagreed with Alexander Hamilton's views of a strong central government. He once [told](#) his protege, James Madison:

...for god's sake, my dear Sir, take up your pen, select the most striking heresies, and cut him [Hamilton] to peices [sic] in the face of the public.

Jefferson was equally upset when his cousin, Chief Justice John Marshall, gave the United States Supreme Court the power of [judicial review](#). The following quote is just one example of the President's furious reaction:

If this opinion be sound, then indeed is our Constitution a complete felo de se [act of suicide]...The Constitution on this hypothesis is a mere thing of wax in the hands of the judiciary, which they may twist and shape into any form they please. (Letter from Jefferson to SpencerRoane, 1819.)

Remembered for many famous quotes, Jefferson's phrases still resonate. Let's examine a few.

- **His ten commandments of practical life** include [when to talk](#) if upset: "When angry, count ten before you speak; if very angry, an hundred." (Jefferson to Thomas Jefferson Smith, 21 February 1825.)
- **Educated, well-informed people can run their own lives:** "Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights." (Jefferson to Richard Price, 8 January 1789.)
- **Mankind is hard to understand:** "What a stupendous, what an incomprehensible machine is man! Who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment & death itself in vindication of his own liberty, and the next moment . . . inflict on his fellow men a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose." (Jefferson to Jean Nicholas Demeunier, 24 January 1786.)
- **Colonial Americans did not treat Native Americans fairly:** "The two principles on which our conduct towards the Indians should be founded, are justice & fear. after the injuries we have done them, they cannot love us . . ." (Jefferson to Benjamin Hawkins, 13 August 1786.)
- **Freedom of religion is key to an independent life:** "Our particular principles of religion are a [subject of accountability](#) to our god alone. [I enquire after no man's](#) and trouble none with mine; nor is it given to us in this life to know whether yours or mine, our friend's or our foe's, are exactly the right." (Jefferson to Miles King, 26 September 1814.)
- [By 1820](#), Jefferson worried that slavery in Missouri, disagreements over states' rights and other volatile issues would lead to civil war:

This momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union. it is hushed indeed for the moment, but this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. . .we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other." (Jefferson to John Holmes, 22 April 1820)

When it came to birthdays, there was only one which Mr. Jefferson wanted to celebrate, and ... it wasn't his own:

The only birthday which I recognize is that of my country's liberties.

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

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

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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