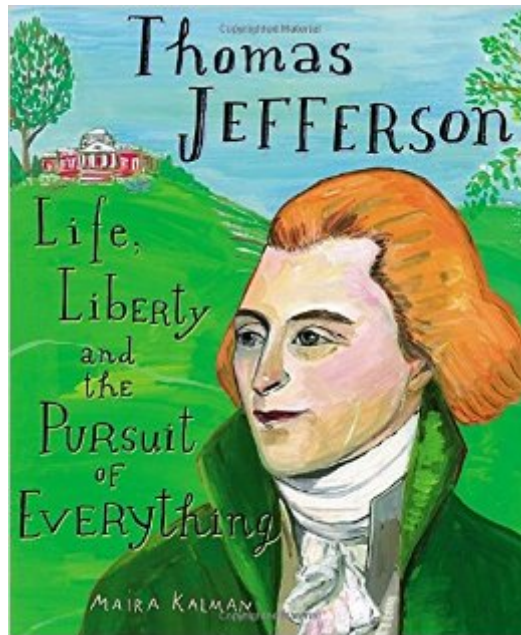


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Thomas Jefferson: Life, Liberty And The Pursuit Of Everything



Synopsis

Renowned artist Maira Kalman sheds light on the fascinating life and interests of the Renaissance man who was our third president. Thomas Jefferson is perhaps best known for writing the Declaration of Independence, but there's so much more to discover. This energetic man was interested in everything. He played violin, spoke seven languages and was a scientist, naturalist, botanist, mathematician and architect. He designed his magnificent home, Monticello, which is full of objects he collected from around the world. Our first foodie, he grew over fifteen kinds of peas and advocated a mostly vegetarian diet. And oh yes, as our third president, he doubled the size of the United States and sent Lewis and Clark to explore it. He also started the Library of Congress and said, "I cannot live without books." But monumental figures can have monumental flaws, and Jefferson was no exception. Although he called slavery an "abomination," he owned about 150 slaves. As she did in *Looking at Lincoln*, Maira Kalman shares a president's remarkable, complicated life with young readers, making history come alive with her captivating text and stunning illustrations.

Book Information

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Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

Customer Reviews

In some ways I liked this book. The illustrations are colorful and imaginative, the text is fun and

informative. Topics range from Jefferson's love of books and music to the Declaration of Independence. I must agree unfortunately, however, with another reviewer who politely stated that she would remove some pages. I would start with the page that states "the monumental man had monumental flaws" because even though Jefferson spoke out against slavery, he owned slaves and supposedly "had children with" one of them. Perhaps before we make a negative judgement about an obviously good person who spent his life trying to help us, we should take a cue from our children and ask one of their favorite questions, "Why?" • How could a man who spoke so strongly and persistently against slavery still own slaves? Aren't there pieces missing in this puzzle? Jefferson was one of the earliest, most outspoken and most active champions for the abolishment of slavery... in a time and place where it was not popular to do so. Ironically, had Jefferson been in the kind of position he despised -- that of a monarch or a dictator -- slavery could have ended decades earlier, and without our tragic Civil War. Instead, he worked within the law to try and change these laws. Before we judge him so harshly, perhaps we should look more closely into his world. Did you know, for example, that during much of Jefferson's life, it was illegal to simply free slaves without the approval of the Governor and his Counsel, and without some declaration of a good deed? How did Jefferson respond to these many restrictive laws? He took action, and tried to change the laws by writing many long bills.

Meriwether Lewis had a "pointy nose". Thomas Jefferson had "monumental flaws". These are attitudes I'm trying to guide my children away from. I can hear a young, budding bully say, "Yeah, so you may play the violin, but you have monumental flaws!" I wouldn't encourage my children to look at their grandma or grandpa, or brother or sister, or their friends or teachers and point out their unusual facial features or other supposed flaws ~ or more importantly, to pass judgements on who they are. Aren't these forms of bullying? Aren't we trying to get away from that? We have inherited so much wisdom along these lines. We have the ancient "Golden Rule" • urging us to treat others as we would want to be treated. And kindness is important enough to have an entire Commandment devoted to not bearing "false witness" • against our neighbor • because rumors are just as damaging to the entire society as they are to those being slandered. The Sally story is included. In the back of the book, Ms. Kalman notes that "some controversy remains". Well, if we don't know for sure, why would we want to push it on our children? Those who personally knew Jefferson or who were acquainted with Monticello and Sally Hemings did not "believe" the story because, in their own words, it was the opposite of who Jefferson was. And though we know very little about Sally Hemings, that doesn't give anyone the right to remake her

into someone she most likely wouldn't even recognize, much less approve of. Sally is being unfairly used, just as is Jefferson. If the goal truly is to introduce Jefferson to children, more appropriate, interesting and fun would have been references to Jefferson's relationship with his daughters and grandchildren.

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