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## **President John Adams**

John Adams was born on October 30, 1735 in Braintree, Massachusetts just outside of Boston. His father was a church deacon, farmer and shoemaker. Adams attended local schools and entered Harvard College at age fifteen, graduating in 1755. After studying law in Worcester, Massachusetts, he began his law career in Boston in 1758. He became a prominent lawyer and was chosen to defend the British soldiers who were incriminated in the Boston Massacre in March 1770.

Adams became involved with the movement towards American independence and in 1774 was a delegate to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. He was also a delegate to the Second Continental Congress that went into session just after the first battles of the Revolutionary War in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. Adams became the leader of the independence movement within the Continental Congress and he served on more committees in this congress than any other delegate. Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and others worked to prepare the Declaration of Independence.

In 1778 Adams began his long tenure in foreign service to the newly emerging country. He traveled to Europe to enlist aid from France and The Netherlands for the Revolutionary War. Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay and Henry Laurens negotiated the Treaty of Paris which formally ended the Revolutionary War between America and Great Britain. At the end of the Revolutionary War Adams served as America's first minister to Britain. He remained in Europe as an American envoy for ten years, returning to seek election as vice president in 1788. Adams served two terms as vice president under George Washington. At that time the office of vice president did not have any particular duties.

In the early days of American government, the president and vice president were elected separately votes cast by the Electoral College. Simply put, the candidate who won the majority of electoral votes became the president and the candidate with the second highest number of votes became the vice president. At the time of Adams, nine states selected electors by votes in the state legislature and seven states selected electors by popular vote.

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After President Washington retired, Adams was ready to seek the presidency in the election of 1796. The two political parties at the time were Federalist and Democratic-Republican. Based on the election system of separate criteria for electing the president and vice president, each party nominated two candidates for president. The Federalists nominated Adams and Thomas Pinckney while the Democratic-Republicans nominated Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. Adams received three more electoral votes and a majority to win the presidency and Jefferson, the recipient of the second highest number of votes, became vice president. Note that the president and vice president belonged to different political parties.

In the presidential election of 1800, the same candidates competed against each other: Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. The fourth candidate was Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina. In this highly contested election, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr tied with seventy-three electoral votes each. The election again went to the House of Representatives; Jefferson became president.

Adams believed that the presidency was an executive position and he did not interact with Congress at all. Adams had spent a considerable part of his diplomatic career negotiating with the French government. The French Revolution, including the executions of King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, had a ripple effect across Europe and caused other European nations to declare war on France. Adams' reaction to these wars in terms of scaling up the American military and the Alien and Sedition Acts passed by Congress cost Adams his re-election as president.

After being president, Adams retired from public life. After decades of service to the new country and many years spent in Europe, Adams enjoyed twenty-six years of family life with his wife, children and grandchildren on his family farm in Quincy, Massachusetts. Adams was a prolific writer on a wide variety of subjects and also wrote his autobiography. Although political rivals for decades, in later life Adam and Jefferson became friends and exchanged letters for fourteen years.

It was an interesting twist of fate that Adams and Jefferson, both signers of the Declaration of Independence and presidents of the United States, died on the same day, July 4, 1826. This date was the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

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Circle True or False after analyzing each of the following statements.

1. True False As a prominent lawyer in Boston, Adams defended the American soldiers who were incriminated in the Boston Massacre in March 1770.
2. True False Adams was a delegate to both the First and Second Continental Congress.
3. True False Adams worked with Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin in writing the Declaration of Independence.
4. True False Adams worked with Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin in negotiating the Treaty of Paris which ended the Revolutionary War.
5. True False Adams served two terms as vice president under President Thomas Jefferson.
6. True False At the time of Adams, all electors in the Electoral College were selected by popular vote just like they are today.
7. True False Thomas Jefferson served as vice president under Adams.
8. True False Adams was a candidate for president in the elections of 1796 and 1800. Both elections were decided by the House of Representatives.
9. True False After being defeated for a second term as president, Adams retired to his family farm.
10. True False Adams died on the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

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**Answers**

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. False
5. False
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. True
10. True