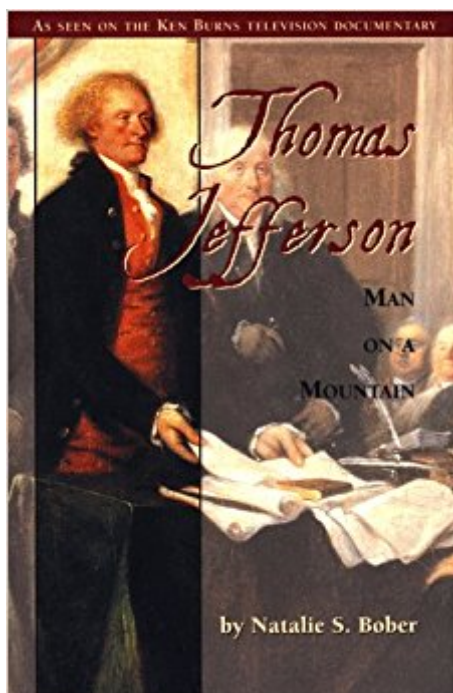


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# Thomas Jefferson: Man On A Mountain



## Synopsis

Natalie Bober's critically acclaimed biography of Thomas Jefferson brings a human dimension to this president. This comprehensive biography includes a wealth of helpful supplemental material. "A marvelously readable and informative biography."--School Library Journal. Young Adult.

## Book Information

Age Range: 12 and up

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up Jefferson has been briefly described in a number of series biographies, especially for younger grades, but he has, surprisingly, been neglected as a subject for young adults. Bober's excellent biography does more than fill that gap. She presents a portrait of a very human, immensely gifted man who lived at the critical time of the formation of the American polity. An insatiable reader, he absorbed the learning of his time (happily the period of Enlightened thinking) and directed his energies to the law, the government, and the arts of living. His achievements in public life as well as in the private sphere were equally impressive. But Bober does not spare readers the sorrows and griefs of his family life, the criticisms leveled against his public policies, or the self-doubts, financial troubles, and sometimes tempestuous but always honorable emotional life of this charming man. Using Jefferson's own writings, quotations from contemporaries, documents and historical data, she has constructed a marvelously readable and informative biography that breathes life into an "American hero" and shows him as the person he must have been. Shirley Wilton, Ocean County College, Toms River, N.J. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc.

--This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Bober has taken on an extremely vital, but difficult, task: writing a history that speaks to young people, black and white alike, in a way that is respectful to both cultures.... Hits all the relevant points that young readers should know about the third president, while adding new perspectives that are always nuanced. The detail is rich and her presentation is elegant. (Annette Gordon-Reed New York Law School, author of *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*) --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I learned more of personal side of TM and the early days of commonwealth of Virginia. Also how people struggled during that period. To travel from Williamsburg to Charlottesville it took TM 3 days as versus only 2 hours these days. I feel thankful for all the fights and sacrifice the founding fathers have done, for us to be here today.

Many years ago, after a visit to the home of Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, I bought this book, but I never got the opportunity to read it until now. Natalie Bober's biography is very detailed, easy to understand, and puts you right into the life of Thomas Jefferson. At many moments I could literally imagine Jefferson going to Williamsburg, meeting his wife, going to France, etc. The book is wonderful in that it portrays Jefferson as human and someone who we can sympathize with (especially with the deaths of his wife and many children), in a country where we often paint the founding fathers as immortal and flawless when in reality they were not. I found this book to be a wonderful non-fiction read. However, an author should try to be neutral when painting the picture of someone who once lived. I found several instances where it seemed like Bober was definitely asserting an opinion. Nevertheless, we all have our opinions, and sometimes it is hard to take our bias out of things we write. After having read this book, I am amazed and grateful at how much Jefferson did for Virginians and Americans. He transported goods on the Rivanna River, built his own home, was the US ambassador to France, wrote the Declaration of Independence, the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, was a student of the College of William and Mary, and founded the University of Virginia. For one who wants to know more about Jefferson, this is a great read. However, it doesn't get too detailed like other biographies might. The Jefferson enthusiast may want to supplement this book with others that may specialize in other areas of Jefferson's life (i.e. books about Thomas Jefferson and the Hemings family). So, I encourage you to read this book! I also encourage you to visit Monticello, Charlottesville, and the

University of Virginia. To see the places that Jefferson influenced has been a privilege for me and will be for many generations to come.

As a life long Jefferson fan, I enjoyed this book immensely, but am concerned that Bober does not offer a critical analysis of her subject. She says that one of her goals in writing this book is to make Jefferson appear more human. While she goes into great detail about Jefferson's family values and other interests aside from politics, she omits any mention of his mortal flaws which are exactly what make him human. Any reader can tell that Bober reveres Jefferson like a Revolutionary God (and indeed he was one), but she is unable to maintain any degree of impartiality as a biographer. For instance, Bober enthusiastically discusses the various ways Jefferson tried to bring an end to the peculiar institution of slavery through his writings, but she never questions why if this was so important to him, he failed to take advantage of his executive power as president to ensure that the Louisiana territory he purchased in 1803 remained slave free? Why didn't he fight harder to retain the clause prohibiting slavery in his original draft of the Declaration of Independence? The Jefferson of Bober's imagination is not capable of such double standards or inconsistencies in character. Bober only briefly mentions that while Jefferson professed to be against slavery, he owned several hundred slaves at Monticello and his other plantations. Why was his rhetoric inconsistent with his actions? Bober conveniently ignores the fact that Monticello was built entirely by slaves. (This I know because I have a degree in history, but a less informed reader would be misled). Jefferson may have thought that ending slavery was a good idea, but he did not pursue this cause with the same passion with which he fought for the freedom of white Americans from the British. Bober dismisses the notion that Jefferson had an affair with his slave Sally Hemings and instead suggests that the president's nephew was the father of Sally's children, yet Bober's evidence to support her argument is scant. In fact, she spends as little time as possible on this topic, preferring to discuss Jefferson's contributions to his country. While this approach is refreshing when compared to the massive number of volumes out there on "Jefferson's scandals," Bober has neglected an important part of Jeffersonian history. Recent DNA testing has proven that Sally Heming's children were fathered by a Jefferson male which could be Thomas or possibly someone else. All this said, Bober does an excellent job of bringing Thomas Jefferson to life and articulating his accomplishments in a meaningful way. It's a shame that her work is decidedly unbalanced and therefore irresponsible from an historical point of view.

A magnificent book for an incredible man. Told in story book fashion, as all history should be,

Bober's writing style is a mesmerizing tribute to the subject. It is a shame that a man of Jefferson's character and vision would probably be unelectable in today's visionless sea of pluralism and status quo where the details of the day outshine the necessities of tomorrow.

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