

FOUNDING BROTHERS: EPISODE IV

Act 1 - Jefferson and Unity

1. How did Jefferson try to move beyond party politics in his Inaugural Address? What did he say to ease the minds of the Federalists?
2. In trying to be a man of the people, Jefferson created a less aristocratic image of the presidency. What specific changes did he make to alter the image of the presidency?

Act 2 - Property and Propriety: Louisiana and Sally Hemings

3. There has been much debate about whether or not Jefferson fathered children with one of his enslaved workers, Sally Hemings. DNA testing indicates that he did. Given the fact that thousands of slave children were the result of sex between a master father and a slave mother, why is this specific example so important to Americans? What does it say about Jefferson's leadership, morality, and political philosophy? What does it say about America's relation to history and heroes?
4. Read the following excerpt from the Virginia Slave codes of the seventeenth century: "Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a Negro woman should be slave or free, be it enacted and declared...that all children born in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother..." How might this have affected the development of habits and customs that made Jefferson's relationship with Hemings more likely? How do we make sense of the fact that Jefferson listed his slaves, including Sally and her children, alongside his list of farm animals?
5. Why was the Louisiana Purchase so important to the United States? Joseph Ellis says it was "probably the greatest executive decision in American history." Do you agree?

Act 3 - Hamilton and "Honor" - the Duel

6. Historian Carol Berken suggested that the reason Hamilton and Burr hated each other so much is that they were so alike. Do you think this is true? In what ways does Berken see the two as similar?
7. How are we to judge the duel between Hamilton and Aaron Burr in 1804? Does such an event do justice to the concept of "honor"? What is "honor"?
8. Do you think Burr meant to kill Hamilton? What evidence does the video offer to help us decide?

Act 4 - Adams and Jefferson together again: Posterity

9. Compare the relative success Adams and Jefferson each had in trying to stay out of war. Jefferson's ill-fated Embargo Act of 1807 used economic coercion to avoid war but crippled the economy. In what ways was Jefferson's situation similar to, or different from, Adams? Did Jefferson manage to avoid war? Was his action worth it?
10. Thanks to Benjamin Rush, in 1812 Adams and Jefferson began a flourishing correspondence of 158 letters over next 14 years. What do you think the two men were trying to say to each other and to posterity?
11. In 1826, in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the signing of Declaration of Independence, celebration organizers asked both Adams and Jefferson to share some words with the public. Compare what each man said.