



Inventing a Nation: Washington, Adams, Jefferson (Icons of America)

By Gore Vidal

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Inventing a Nation: Washington, Adams, Jefferson (Icons of America) By Gore Vidal

Gore Vidal, one of the master stylists of American literature and one of the most acute observers of American life and history, turns his immense literary and historiographic talent to a portrait of the formidable trio of George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson.

In *Inventing a Nation*, Vidal transports the reader into the minds, the living rooms (and bedrooms), the convention halls, and the salons of Washington, Jefferson, Adams, and others. We come to know these men, through Vidal's splendid and percipient prose, in ways we have not up to now—their opinions of each other, their worries about money, their concerns about creating a viable democracy. Vidal brings them to life at the key moments of decision in the birthing of our nation. He also illuminates the force and weight of the documents they wrote, the speeches they delivered, and the institutions of government by which we still live. More than two centuries later, America is still largely governed by the ideas championed by this triumvirate.

“Pure Vidal. . . *Inventing a Nation* is his edgy tribute to the way we were before the fall.”—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

“[Vidal offers] details that enliven and . . . reflections on the past that point sharply to today.” —Richard Eder, *New York Times*

“An engaging [and] . . . unblinking view of our national heroes by one who cherishes them, warts and all.”—Edmund S. Morgan, *New York Review of Books*

“[Vidal's] quick wit flickers over the canonical tale of our republic's founding, turning it into a dark and deliciously nuanced comedy of men, manners, and ideas.”—Amanda Heller, *Boston Sunday Globe*

“This entertaining and enlightening reappraisal of the Founders is a must for buffs of American civilization and its discontents.”—*Booklist*

“Gore Vidal . . . still understands American history backwards and forwards as few writers ever have.”—David Kipen, *National Public Radio*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this concise but hardly cohesive effort, the achievements of America's most venerable founding fathers—and a large supporting cast, including Alexander Hamilton and Ben Franklin—are eclipsed by their personal, psychological and political foibles. Our nation is often portrayed as a finished product, having been birthed by great thinkers and selfless patriots. Vidal illustrates that the new nation was, in fact, a messy, tenuous experiment, consistently teetering on the brink. Vidal sheds light on the shaky alliances, rivalries, egos, personal ambitions and political realities faced by the men who became the first three American presidents. Unfortunately, Vidal's greatest strength, his novelist's flair, runs amok here. At John Adams's inauguration, for example, Vidal asserts that Washington "won his last victory in the Mount Rushmore sweepstakes" by forcing Jefferson, the vice-president, to exit the hall before him, so Washington could claim the larger ovation. This is divined from a record that merely states, "Jefferson was obliged to leave the chamber first." Correspondence is used to support Vidal's acerbic appraisals, but without source notes, readers are left to wonder in what context the extracts were originally penned. Vidal's antipathy toward the "American Empire" and contempt for the American public drips thick from his sentences and shows up frequently in annoying parenthetical asides and interjected screeds. He sneers that the "majority" of Americans "don't know what the Electoral College is" and compares Truman to the bloody Roman tyrant Tiberius. This book was surely intended to be thought provoking. Unfortunately, it provokes more thought about its author than its subjects. Still, one has to appreciate the irony of a noted icon-smasher launching Yale's new American Icons series. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From [Booklist](#)

Much of Vidal's contempt for contemporary America may originate in his admiration of how the Founding Fathers handled human nature. At least the founders, Vidal seems to say in this sinuous essay, were not hypocrites disclaiming interest in power; rather, they made an honest attempt in the original Constitution to restrain what they saw as politicians' inevitable appetites for ambition and avarice. Long fascinated with the behind-the-scenes aspects of politics in the 1780s and 1790s, Vidal muses on Alexander Hamilton's machinations against John Adams and analyzes similar political sleights of hand by Jefferson, Aaron Burr, John Marshall, and James Madison. Along with these characteristically brilliant and acerbic reflections on power and personality, Vidal offers a generally positive portrayal of Washington, taking time to note how the Father of His Country looked with his wooden teeth. This entertaining and enlightening reappraisal of the founders is a must for buffs of American civilization and its discontents. *Gilbert Taylor*
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Review

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Carolyn Livingston:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Publication is very important thing for us to learn everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or perhaps goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. These are reading whatever they get because their hobby will be reading a book. Why not the person who don't like reading through a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book if they found difficult problem as well as exercise. Well, probably you'll have this Inventing a Nation: Washington, Adams, Jefferson (Icons of America).

Mary Bunnell:

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Jacqueline Thompson:

Playing with family in the park, coming to see the ocean world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, and then why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. 1 activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition details. Even you love Inventing a Nation: Washington, Adams, Jefferson (Icons of America), it is possible to enjoy both. It is good combination right, you still want to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout men. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

Ingrid Baumbach:

Inventing a Nation: Washington, Adams, Jefferson (Icons of America) can be one of your nice books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to put every word into pleasure arrangement in writing Inventing a Nation: Washington, Adams, Jefferson (Icons of America) nevertheless doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource data that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information may drawn you into fresh stage of crucial contemplating.

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