



Founding Frenemies

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were two of our country's most famous founding fathers. They were both presidents of the United States. They both helped to shape our new nation. Were they friends? Were they enemies? History says they were both.

When they first met, Adams and Jefferson were friends. They were both on the side of the United States. Having won their freedom from England, both men were ready to build a new nation.

As time went on, it became clear that they had different goals for their new country. Adams wanted a strong central government. Jefferson wanted individual states to have more rights.

Despite these different views, Adams and Jefferson had great respect for each other. They worked together helping President George Washington. But when Washington decided to stop being president, things changed.

Adams and Jefferson both ran for president. They went against each other in the election. They had different views about things like whether to help with the French Revolution. Adams won. Jefferson became vice president. Unfortunately they did not work well together.

By the next election, Adams and Jefferson were enemies. They called each other names. This time, Jefferson won. Adams was so upset that he didn't go to the inauguration. They didn't speak to each other for 12 years.

Another founding father, Benjamin Rush, thought it was silly that the two men wouldn't speak to each other. He wrote to both of them, saying that the other one wanted to reconnect. He told them that he had a dream that they would become friend again by writing letters to each other.

Rush's dream came true. Adams and Jefferson wrote more than 185 letters to each other. They still had different political beliefs. But they were united by their love of their country and their service to the new government.

Adams and Jefferson died on the same day - July 4, 1826. It seems fitting that these founding fathers would die together on the 50th birthday of the United States. They will be remembered for their contributions, and also for their feuding friendship.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Why did Adams and Jefferson disagree?
 - a. Adams wanted central government and Jefferson wanted states' rights
 - b. Jefferson wanted central government and Adams wanted states' rights
 - c. Adams wanted to stay connected to England and Jefferson wanted an independent nation
 - d. Jefferson wanted to stay connected to England and Adams wanted an independent nation

2. When did they stop speaking to each other?
 - a. When Adams was elected president
 - b. When Jefferson was elected president
 - c. When Adams didn't attend Jefferson's inauguration
 - d. When Washington stopped being president

3. Who helped Adams and Jefferson reconnect?
 - a. George Washington
 - b. Abigail Adams
 - c. Benjamin Rush
 - d. Alexander Hamilton

4. Why is it fitting that they died on July 4th?
 - a. Because they liked fireworks
 - b. Because they were frenemies
 - c. Because they wrote letters
 - d. Because they contributed a lot to the building of the nation

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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