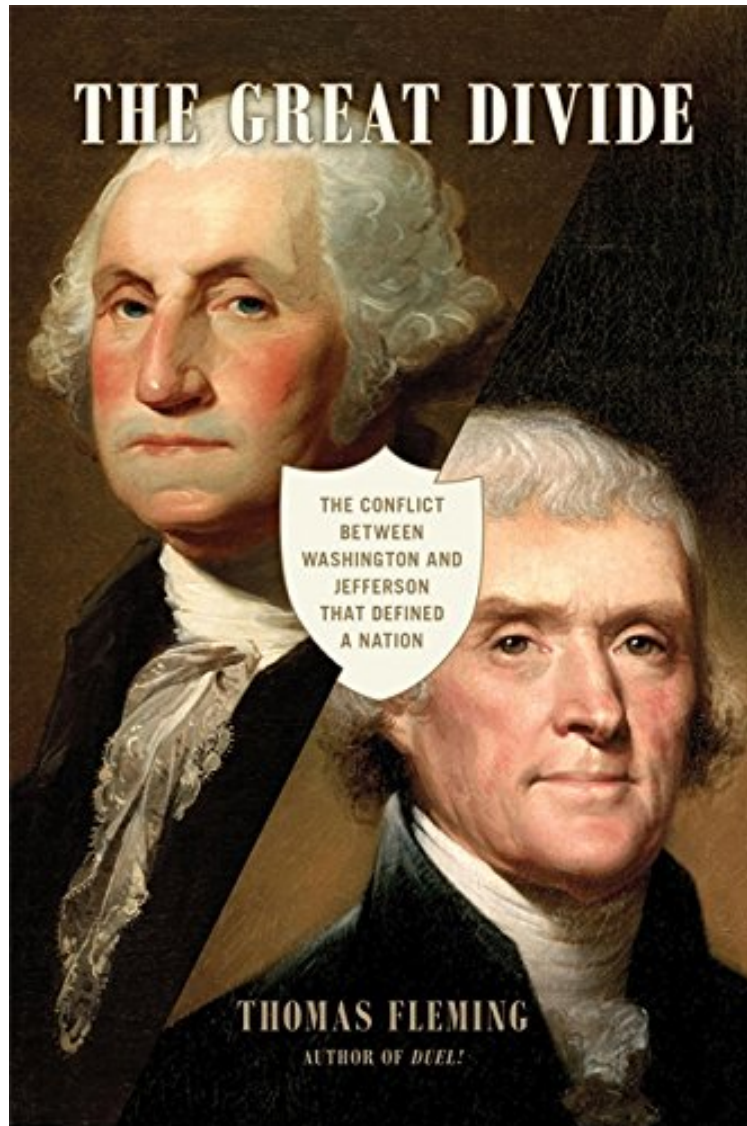


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The Great Divide: The Conflict between Washington and Jefferson that Defined a Nation

Thomas Fleming

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Thomas Fleming : The Great Divide: The Conflict between Washington and Jefferson that Defined a Nation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Great Divide: The Conflict between Washington and Jefferson that Defined a Nation:

65 of 66 people found the following review helpful. Interesting, but Jefferson's admirers won't like it By Robert Fisher Even before reading this book, the thought had occurred to me that the more I read of George Washington, the

more I liked him and the more I read of Thomas Jefferson, the less I liked him. Thomas Fleming's *The Great Divide* is a book that would certainly confirm that viewpoint. Fleming portrays Washington as a model of prudent realism while Jefferson is presented as a man possessed of both excessive idealism and political ruthlessness. Reading of Jefferson's staunch support for the French Revolution, even as he received reports of the growing violence suggested he was not unlike the intellectuals of the 1930's who praised Stalin's Soviet Union. Actually, aside from Washington, other leading figures of the early Republic do not come across well. John Adams proved to have little political sense. Alexander Hamilton was brilliant but hotheaded and caught up in a sex scandal. James Madison allowed himself to come too much under Jefferson's sway, although the disastrous War of 1812 caused him to rethink Jefferson's anti-military policies. Fleming has written an interesting book, but I wonder if his portrait of Jefferson amounts to demonizing (next to Fleming's Jefferson, Aaron Burr looks like a tower of honor). I am seriously considering reading another Jefferson biography for the sake of balance.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. *Great Divide* by T Fleming
By Rachel I actually got this book at the library, but it was so good that I ordered it off here. My book came today, so I finished the book off with the copy that I just bought. This is my first time reading Thomas Fleming. I know some stuff on the American Revolution, but it was only till recently that I wanted to do an in-depth study on the war and the people around it. Fleming definitely didn't disappoint me at all, and I am looking forward to reading more of his books. Even though it was good, I did have some criticism on the book. I sometimes thought that book was flooded with too much information, and at times I thought were not focusing on either George Washington and Thomas Jefferson enough. The book also started off slow for me, it was not until I reached page 100 that I started to get more into it. I also want to add, if you're a big Thomas Jefferson fan then this book is not for you. He is not portrayed very well in this book. I found myself liking Washington better than I did Jefferson. Fleming makes it not secret the disdain that he has for Jefferson. The greatest divide between these two powerful men is that they had different ideologies on what makes a great nation, how the country should be run, and how much power should the federal government should have. This not only ruined Jefferson and Washington's once close friendship, but also the friendship between Washington/Madison. I have to admit that I found myself appalled by some of Jefferson's actions throughout the story. There were several things, but his visiting Martha Washington. He didn't bother to visit her at the time of her husband's death, but when he needed the Federalist vote to elect him as President then he makes the visit, had me twitching my eye in regards to him. Overall I think this is a good book. I think it was well researched, and Fleming really knows what he is talking about.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A very interesting book--focused on a comparison of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson
By Steven Peterson A very interesting book--focused on the differences between the first President, George Washington, and the third, Thomas Jefferson. Other works have explored Jefferson's quirky nature, one thinks of the book on "The American Sphinx." He could be nasty toward others, but at the same time he scintillated with his mind and his multiple skill sets. This book, though, explores one side of his life--his evolving relationship with George Washington. Up front, I would have to say that the book is somewhat one dimensional in its critical examination of Jefferson. The author, essentially, excoriates him. And, doubtless, a deification of Jefferson is way off base. He was a flawed person, even though his talent must be respected. His cavalier work as Governor of Virginia, his hiring of a writer as an employee of the State Department (while Jefferson was Secretary of State) to write attacks on Washington and his administration (bizarre, no?), and his suicidal embargo against England, France and other nations. The juxtaposition of Washington's wise, cautious, political approach to decisions and Jefferson's more idealistic perspective (changing over time) are at the heart of this book. Washington is looked at as a model president and Jefferson as a "loose cannon." Readers will have to determine if that approach succeeds. I sense that the author is too critical of Jefferson--even though one needs a realistic look at a complex and flawed person.

In the months after her husband's death, Martha Washington told several friends that the two worst days of her life were the day George died and the day Thomas Jefferson came to Mount Vernon to offer his condolences. What could elicit such a strong reaction from the nation's original first lady? Though history tends to cast the early years of America in a glow of camaraderie, there were, in fact, many conflicts among the Founding Fathers, none more important than the one between George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. The chief disagreement between these former friends centered on the highest, most original public office created by the Constitutional Convention: the presidency. They also argued violently about the nation's foreign policy, the role of merchants and farmers in a republic, and the durability of the union itself. At the root of all these disagreements were two sharply different visions for the nation's future. Acclaimed historian Thomas Fleming examines how the differing temperaments and leadership styles of Washington and Jefferson shaped two opposing views of the presidency and the nation. The clash between these two gifted men, both of whom cared deeply about the United States of America, profoundly influenced the next two centuries of America's history and resonates in the present day.

Praise for *The Great Divide* "Historians often speak of the conflict between Jefferson and Hamilton. Tom Fleming rightly focuses on Jefferson and Washington, for it was in the nexus of their competing visions of the nation's destiny

that the United States truly took shape. In this superb book, Fleming compellingly captures the drama of this clash of titans, showing how its outcome made the difference between national ruin and prosperity."Edward G. Lengel, Director, Papers of George Washington and author of *General George Washington, A Military Life*"George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were both tall Virginians who made crucial contributions to winning American independence. But they were otherwise polar opposites, with wildly diverging visions of their fledgling nation's destiny. In *The Great Divide*, Thomas Fleming quarries a lifetime's study of America's turbulent Founding Era to recount a character-clash waged against the backdrop of chronic domestic discord and overshadowed by blood-soaked revolution in France. The author's robust prose leaves no doubt where his own sympathies lie, but all readers of history will relish his gripping exploration of a conflict between realism and idealism that still resonates today."Stephen Brumwell, author of *George Washington: Gentleman Warrior* and winner of the George Washington Book Prize