



John Adams (The American Presidents Series, No. 2)

John Patrick Diggins

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A revealing look at the true beginning of American politics

Until recently rescued by David McCullough, John Adams has always been overshadowed by Washington and Jefferson. Volatile, impulsive, irritable, and self-pitying, Adams seemed temperamentally unsuited for the presidency. Yet in many ways he was the perfect successor to Washington in terms of ability, experience, and popularity.

Possessed of a far-ranging intelligence, Adams took office amid the birth of the government and multiple crises. Besides maintaining neutrality and regaining peace, his administration created the Department of the Navy, put the army on a surer footing, and left a solvent treasury. One of his shrewdest acts was surely the appointment of moderate Federalist John Marshall as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Though he was a Federalist, he sought to work outside the still-forming party system. In the end, this would be Adams's greatest failing and most useful lesson to later leaders.

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