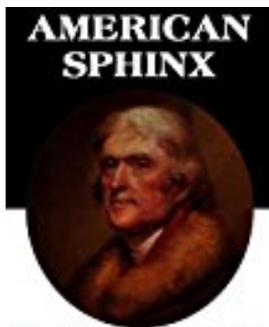


[PDF] American Sphinx: The Character Of Thomas Jefferson (Library Edition)

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The Character of Thomas Jefferson

Joseph J. Ellis

Books Details:

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Description:

Well timed to coincide with Ken Burns's documentary (on which the author served as a consultant), this new biography doesn't aim to displace the many massive tomes about America's third president that already weigh down bookshelves. Instead, as suggested by the subtitle--"The Character of Thomas Jefferson"--Ellis searches for the "living, breathing person" underneath the icon and tries to elucidate his actual beliefs. Jefferson's most ardent admirers may find this perspective too critical,

but Ellis's portrait of a complex, sometimes devious man who both sought and abhorred power has the ring of truth. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Penetrating Jefferson's placid, elegant facade, this extraordinary biography brings the sage of Monticello down to earth without either condemning or idolizing him. Jefferson saw the American Revolution as the opening shot in a global struggle destined to sweep over the world, and his political outlook, in Ellis's judgment, was more radical than liberal. A Francophile, an obsessive letter-writer, a tongue-tied public speaker, a sentimental soul who placed women on a pedestal and sobbed for weeks after his wife's death, Jefferson saw himself as a yeoman farmer but was actually a heavily indebted, slaveholding Virginia planter. His retreat from his early anti-slavery advocacy to a position of silence and procrastination reflected his conviction that whites and blacks were inherently different and could not live together in harmony, maintains Mount Holyoke historian Ellis, biographer of John Adams (Passionate Sage). Jefferson clung to idyllic visions, embracing, for example, the "Saxon myth," the utterly groundless theory that the earliest migrants from England came to America at their own expense, making a total break with the mother country. His romantic idealism, exemplified by his view of the American West as endlessly renewable, was consonant with future generations' political innocence, their youthful hopes and illusions, making our third president, in Ellis's shrewd psychological portrait, a progenitor of the American Dream. History Book Club selection.

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