



Thomas Jefferson as an American Hero

By Elizabeth Rice-Macfarlane

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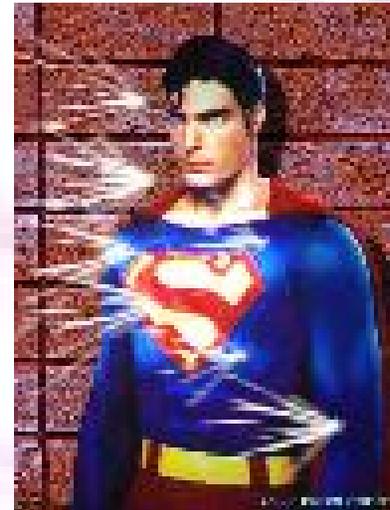
- Much of this text about heroes has come from Peter Gibbon's book: *A Call to Heroism* and needs to be duly credited. His book has given me the inspiration to continue to teach future generations about heroes of our past. I recommend it.

Essential Questions

1. What is a hero?
2. What character qualities make a hero?
3. How can studying the lives of great men and women improve our own lives?
4. Why is it that great individuals emerge out of crisis & suffering and become heroic?
5. How can greatness be achieved after suffering, failures, loss and grief?

SUPERMAN

Superman is known as the man of steel. He only has one flaw....



Kryptonite

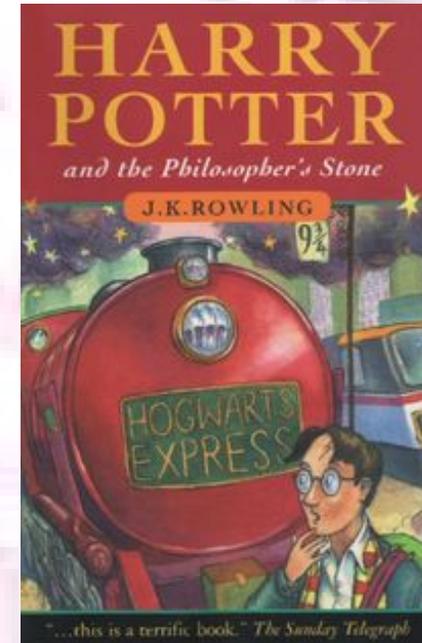
What makes
Superman a
hero?



Harry Potter

A legend among his own, with an arch rival...Lord Voldemort who seeks his destruction.

What makes him a hero?

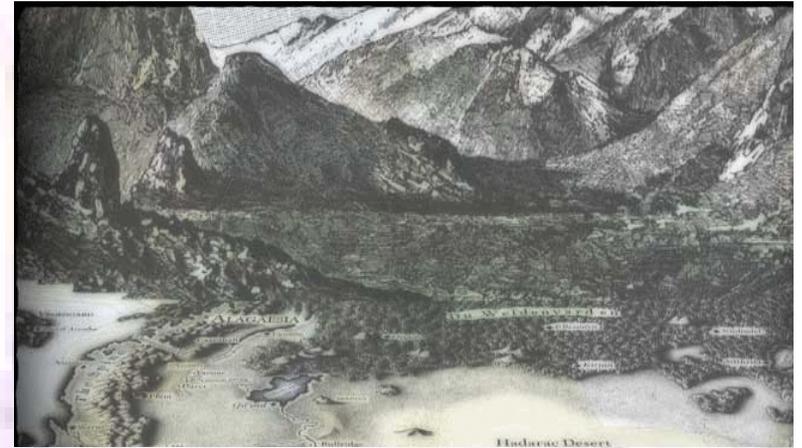


ERAGON

*Eragon rises to greatness
and power from the simplest of
beginnings. He discovers the
interests of the few do not work for
the common good.*

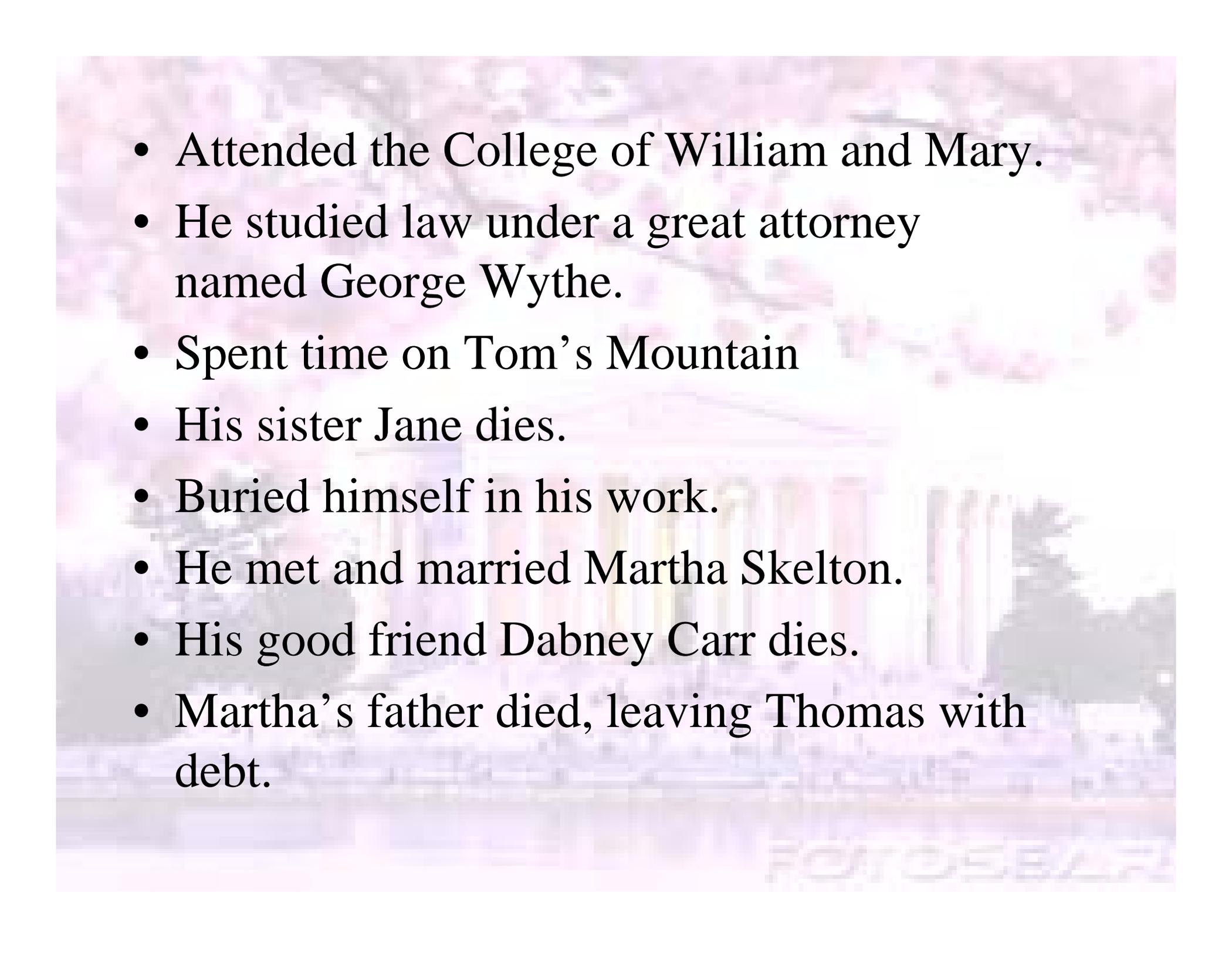
*What are the traits that make
Eragon a hero?*

Which of these
characteristics can
apply to heroes in
history?

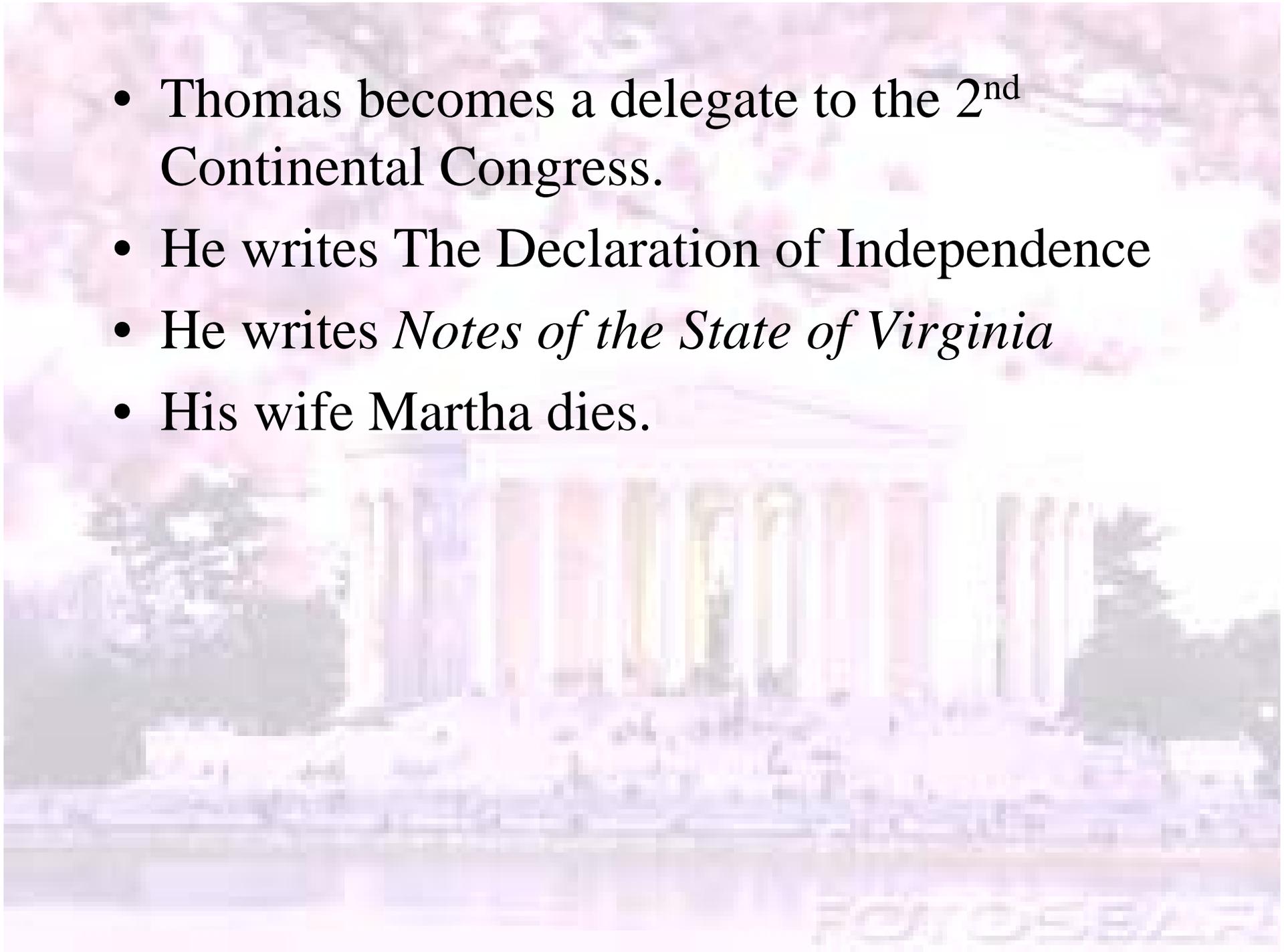


What events happened in Thomas's life that had an influence on him?

- At the age of 9 he begins studying science, math, Latin , Greek and French at a boys school.
- Because the school was so far away, he had to live with the schoolmaster and his family.
- Family influences of being together for holidays and summers.
- Thomas learns to play the violin.
- His father dies when Thomas is 14
- Going away to school, where he met a life long friend: Dabney Carr

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- Attended the College of William and Mary.
 - He studied law under a great attorney named George Wythe.
 - Spent time on Tom's Mountain
 - His sister Jane dies.
 - Buried himself in his work.
 - He met and married Martha Skelton.
 - His good friend Dabney Carr dies.
 - Martha's father died, leaving Thomas with debt.

- Thomas becomes a delegate to the 2nd Continental Congress.
- He writes The Declaration of Independence
- He writes *Notes of the State of Virginia*
- His wife Martha dies.



Thomas Jefferson

Greatest Enigma of Americans.

If he were a monument, he would be a Sphinx

If he were a painting he would be the Mona Lisa

If he were a character in a play he would be Hamlet.

If he were a science project he would be the nucleus.

Joseph Ellis interview with Ken Burns



The Sphinx



The Mona Lisa



**The heroic can not be common,
nor the common heroic.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

How does Jefferson fit this definition?



**Heroes tell us why
we are who we are.**

**How do we describe a hero?
What makes Jefferson a hero?**

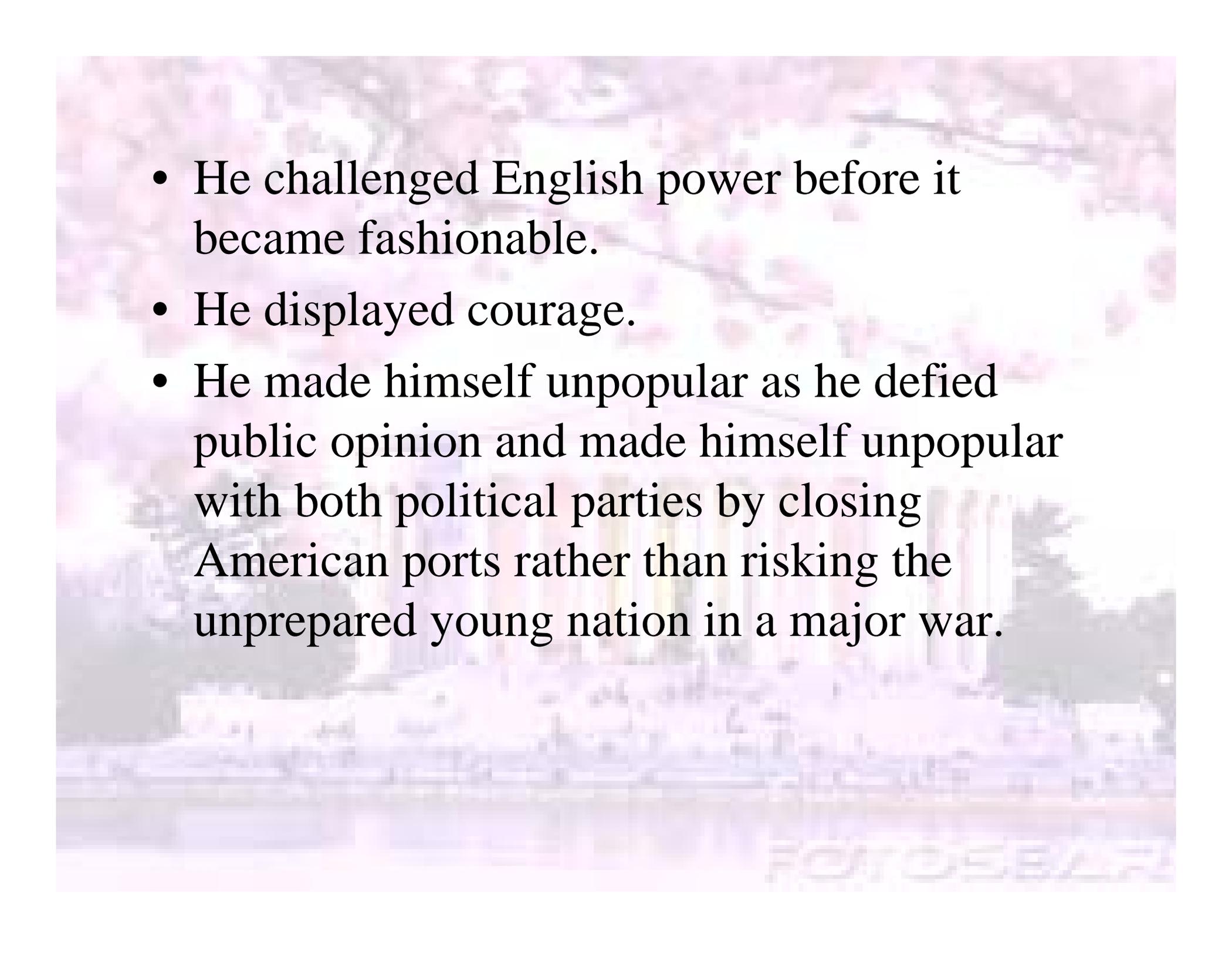
How can studying the lives of great men and women improve our own lives?

- Heroes give us hope that the future will be different than the past.
- Heroes teach us that we can overcome and improve our own lives.
- Heroes gives us the ability to stand for something.
- Heroes show us that we can emerge from crisis better than we were before.
- Heroes think new thoughts.
- “Heroes soar, but always they suffer.”

What does this mean to you?

What makes Jefferson a heroic figure like Superman, Harry Potter and Eragon?

- Eragon, Harry Potter and Superman all lose their families...so does Jefferson. They experience loss and grief.
- Jefferson overcomes his sorrow and writes something wonderful: The Declaration of Independence.
- Invented a plow—did not patent the plow because he wanted all to use it.

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- He challenged English power before it became fashionable.
 - He displayed courage.
 - He made himself unpopular as he defied public opinion and made himself unpopular with both political parties by closing American ports rather than risking the unprepared young nation in a major war.

- He did not like politics, yet we find him working for the betterment of the common good through politics.
- He hated to speak in public, was not good at it...yet we find him in the public eye as governor of Virginia and a member of the House of Burgesses at a very young age.
- He gave us our ideas on the separation of church and state. Which is the basis of religious freedom.
- He was disciplined, ambitious.
- He believed that integrity was as important as intellectual excellence.

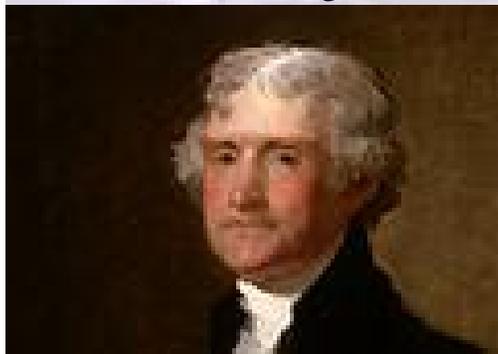
Bio Poem

- **1. First name**
- **2. 4 traits that describe character**
- **3. A relative of...**
- **4. Lover of 3 things or people**
- **5. Who feels 3 things**
- **6. Who needs 3 things**
- **7. Who fears 3 things**
- **8. Who gives 3 things**
- **9. Who would like to see 3 things**
- **10. Resident of _____**
- **11. Last name**

My sample of a bio poem on Jefferson

- 1. Thomas**
- 2. Surveyor, violinist, a reluctant politician, a champion of small government**
- 3. Husband to Martha**
- 4. Lover of fine wine, good books**
- 5. Feels small government is best/debt leads to corruption/federalists are tyrannical**
- 6. Needs a living wife/ Monticello/ his children**
- 7. Fears contention/ monarchy / England**
- 8. Gives his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor.**
- 9. Wants Hamilton out of government/ Louisiana Purchased/ history done right**
- 10. Virginia**
- 11. Jefferson**

“It has also been a great solace to me, to believe that you are engaged in vindicating to posterity the course we have pursued for preserving to them, in all their purity, the blessings of self-government...”



-- Thomas Jefferson to James Madison

Teacher's Notes and Lesson Plan

- Teacher's Notes
- Students will read *Thomas Jefferson* by Cheryl Harness.
- Literature circle....divide students into groups with the following: recorder, tracker or discussion director, illustrator, connector (put the reading together), vocabulary enricher, summarizer.
- Read the book. The group will discuss, list important events in Jefferson's life.

Teacher's notes continued...

- Use page 32 and 33 from Thomas Jefferson by Cheryl Harness as further discussion about the other influences in Jefferson's life.
- Assessment or alternative assessment: individual or group bio-poem
- A Bio poem on heroes (in general) is a good idea.
- Have student write about their national hero.
- Have students write about their personal hero.