

## Example of a Monologue for Thomas Jefferson

Jean-Leon Gerome Ferris, *Drafting of the Declaration of Independence*

Good morning! It seems that I have fallen asleep for just a moment. Please forgive my rudeness. Let me introduce myself. I am Mr. Thomas Jefferson from Virginia. You know it is about the middle of June in 1776. We are in Philadelphia gathered for an important task to create a document to express our discontent with the rule of King George over his subjects in these colonies. I have been selected to pen this very document. One that I am sure even your grandchild will become familiar with for this is a moment that will not be forgotten. I am only 33 years of age and am working with four other very capable men, two are with me now. As you can see Mr. John Adams and Mr. Benjamin Franklin seem to be asleep at the moment. That is a bit surprising, especially Mr. Adams, we can hardly get him to sit still and keep quiet for even a moment during our meetings of the Congress. I am hardly a speaker at all but as Mr. Adams put it I have the “reputation of a masterly pen.”

I have worked for two and a half weeks in the parlor of my rented room rising before dawn, eating my tea and biscuits and then using my quill pen to record our collected thoughts. “I see my job as trying to bring together and harmonize a variety of different opinions.” Let me assure you this is not an easy task. I have ripped up and tossed away many of my early drafts. Even as I am speaking to you it occurred to me to not refer to the people of these colonies as “our fellow subjects” but rather as “citizens.” Yes, we are citizens of a newly established country as we break away from the tyrannical rule of King George.

You must have heard that “I cannot live without books.” I have relied heavily on my readings of the great philosopher, John Locke, as well as our fellow citizens, Mr. Thomas Paine and Mr. George Mason. “I did not consider it part of my charge to invent new ideas but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject.” These ideas include that “all men are created equal” and have the rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” I have set forth that governments should not get their power from a king but rather from the people. We have many complaints with the rule of King George. I am sure you are well aware of the unfair taxes so I will not bore you with that. But I do want to make it clear that I specifically included an attack of the slave trade. Slavery is a “cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty.” Mr. Franklin and Mr. Adams agree with me on this crucial issue. In fact, they have made very little changes to the draft I have placed before them. Look, Mr. Adams is finally waking from his nap. Let’s hear what he has to say.