

Honors U.S. History Summer Reading Assignment

Directions: Using the book, *American Creation* by Joseph Ellis, answer the following questions. All responses will be typed and a hard copy will be turned in on the **first day of full classes, Thursday September 5th.**

In the Prologue of *American Creation*, (pages 3-19 of the Knopf hardcover edition) Joseph Ellis poses two significant questions:

“What, specifically, did the founding generation achieve?”

“What did they fail to do?”

Write a brief response of 200-250 words that explains how Ellis responds to those questions.

Read Chapter 1, *The Year*, (pages 20-57 of the Knopf hardcover edition, *American Creation*) and respond to the following prompt in 200-250 words:

How does Ellis describe the contributions of John Adams, George Washington and Thomas Paine to the revolutionary cause? Of these three, who does he think made the greatest contribution? Explain why.

In Chapter 2, *The Winter*, (pages 58-86 of the Knopf hardcover edition) Ellis states that the pivotal moment of the War for Independence occurred at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78. How does Ellis support this claim? Explain in a response of 200-250 words.

In Chapter 3, *The Argument*, (pages 87-126 of the Knopf hardcover edition) Ellis asserts, “Even more than the Lincoln-Douglas debate over slavery, or the Darrow-Bryan debate over evolution, the Henry-Madison debate in June 1788 can lay plausible claim to being the most consequential debate in American history.” What was the source of the disagreement between Henry and Madison? Who made the stronger case? Why? Respond to these questions in 200-250 words.

In Chapter 4 of the *American Creation* the failure of Washington and the newly created federal government to effectively reach a just settlement with the Native Americans is revealed. Ellis notes that Washington, Knox and Jefferson negotiated a treaty with the Creek nation that the federal government did not have the power to enforce, and that “In the end, demography trumped diplomacy.” (p.130 of the Knopf hardcover edition) In a response of 200-250 words explain what Ellis is referring to in the above quotation.

In Chapter 5 Ellis chooses the title, *The Conspiracy* to explain the origin of political parties in America. He poses the question, “How did they [Madison and Jefferson] develop such a quasi-paranoid image of the Federalist agenda, an image that would cause one of the primary authors of *The Federalist* to repudiate all his previous arguments on behalf of a sovereign federal government and make Jefferson, a member of Washington’s cabinet, believe that his highest duty was to subvert the very government he was allegedly serving?” (P.171 of the Knopf hardcover edition) What was the nature of the conspiracy? To what extent was it real or imagined? How did it lead to the development of the two-party system?

Respond to these questions in 200-250 words.

In the last chapter of *American Creation, The Purchase*, Ellis points out that the Louisiana Purchase was both a triumph and a tragedy. Why was that the case? Your response should be 200-250 words.