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John Adams, by David McCullough, Simon & Schuster, 2001

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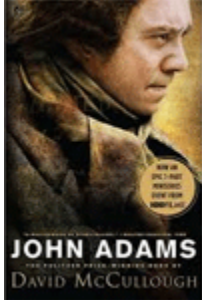
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Because Ideas Matter...

The faculty and staff of Butler University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presents

Recommended Readings



John Adams

by David McCullough, Simon & Schuster, 2001

Reviewed by Richard McGowan

The Pulitzer prize-winning *John Adams* may be the perfect book to read in this, an election year. While certainly a history book, as the 67 pages of notes and bibliography attest, *John Adams* is, perhaps more importantly, a story of relationships.

McCullough has brought to life our widely literate second president and his wife, the brilliant and influential Abigail Smith. As McCullough states: "His marriage to Abigail Smith was the most important decision of John Adams's life." The excerpts from letters between "My Dearest Friend" and "Miss Adorable" alone make the book worth reading—even if the two seem antiquated and quaint in their devotion, love, sacrifice, and fidelity for and to each other.

The book also shows Adams's relationships with other founding fathers, among them Jefferson, Hamilton, Franklin, and Washington. The account of friendship, estrangement, and reconciliation between our second president and our third president is especially compelling reading in an election year. The presidential contest between the two was nothing if not a cantankerous, partisan, 'vicious' affair.

In those days, the candidates did no direct campaigning, so a cluster of their friends demonstrated electioneering at its worst.

Observations and detail abound: Adams thought "Franklin to be lazy, neglectful of details, and not easy to work with" and Adams referred to Hamilton as "another Bonaparte." But the heart of the book is the likeable and brave man, John Adams, and his equally likeable, well-matched collaborator, Abigail. Excellent reading.

- Richard McGowan is Instructor of Business Ethics at Butler University.