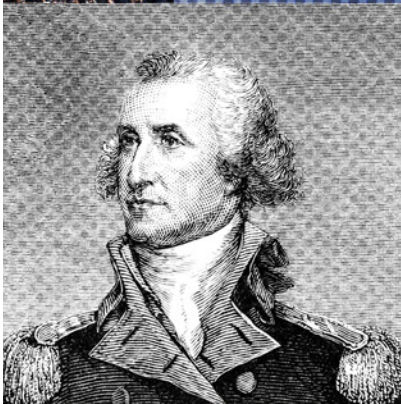
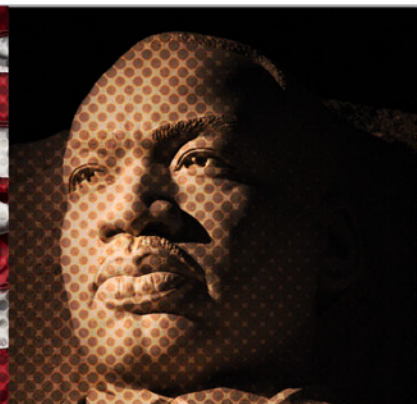


★★★★★ EDITED AND WITH A FOREWORD BY MICHAEL ALLEN ★★★★★

AMERICA'S FEDERAL HOLIDAYS

★★★★★★★★★ THE TRUE STORY ★★★★★★★★★



JOHN DE GREE | THE CLASSICAL HISTORIAN





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JOHN DE GREE



FOREWORD BY MICHAEL ALLEN

I am very happy that John De Gree's *America's Federal Holidays* is now in print. There is no other book quite like it, and it will prove extremely valuable to classroom teachers in America's public, private, charter, and home schools.

How many of today's elementary, secondary, and college students really understand the origins and meaning of the days they get to "take off" during the school year or their summer vacations? Unfortunately, students (and sometimes their parents and teachers!) become absorbed in the joy of the impending long weekend and forget "the reason for the season," as it were. How many of us could, off the tops of our heads, thoroughly and accurately state the historic origins of Memorial Day? New Year's Day? And while the roots of celebrating the Fourth of July and Christmas may seem obvious, in fact there is much more to the stories of these "days off" than we know. It is thus very important to make *America's Federal Holidays* part of the effort to train good citizens in our schools.

John De Gree is a seasoned classroom teacher with many years' experience in both public and private schools. His website and curriculum, *The Classical Historian*, is subscribed to by thousands of public, private, homeschool, and charter school parents and teachers. And John De Gree and his wife Zdenka are parents and teachers to their own seven children. This experience is obvious in each of the pages that follow. John's lessons on Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday, George Washington's Birthday, and all other official federal holidays are brimming with information that will make for good classroom learning. *America's Federal Holidays* will help teachers create lesson plans to use immediately prior to the respective holiday vacations.

On occasion, Americans appear more concerned with taking a well-earned vacation than pondering the reasons for the blessed event. "Blessed" is an apt term here, because all holidays stem historically from religious "days of rest" and, of course, the Sabbath. Indeed, one of the remarkable things we learn from *America's Federal Holidays* is that religion and religious motives form the basis for most of our federally recognized holidays.

So, the next time you get to take a three-day weekend, enjoy it! But before you do, read through John De Gree's *America's Federal Holidays* to understand why.

Michael Allen

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, TACOMA

CO-AUTHOR, *A PATRIOT'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES* AND *A PATRIOT'S HISTORY READER*

#1 BEST SELLING NEW YORK TIMES AUTHOR

INTRODUCTION

Americans designate eleven days of the year as federal holidays. Over the past centuries, various United States Congresses and Presidents have set aside these days to honor and to teach the meaning of our country's most important people and events. For a republic to thrive, it is essential that its citizens take an active part in understanding and appreciating its heroes and most important events. Because citizens in a republic carry the duty to vote for able leaders and decide the direction of our country, knowledge of what make the United States unique and strong is essential.

Americans have forgotten the meaning behind its federal holidays. In efforts to revise our country's history and to increase our leisure time, our federal holidays have lost their power. We don't appreciate the peaceful passing of power from one party to another that takes place on Inauguration Day. We don't recall who inspired Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We overlook the courage and perseverance of George Washington, the Father of Our Country. Independence Day has become a day of fireworks and feasts, instead of a remembrance of liberty and sacrifices. Memorial Day and Labor Day have become a way to mark the beginning and ending of summer. Christopher Columbus has moved from a place of honor, to dislike, to ignorance in the minds of most. Many schoolchildren falsely believe the first Thanksgiving was held so the Pilgrims could thank the Indians. And Christmas, an official federal holiday, is a word that is not even uttered in public places for fear of offending someone.

America's Federal Holidays, The True Story™ promotes the heroic people and events that are the reason for America's federal holidays. This book will encourage Americans to appreciate the shared history of our people, understand the meaning behind each day, and strengthen our citizens and our republic. Knowledge and understanding of our history will help students realize the uniqueness of what it means to be an American, and will inspire students to be their best.

Honoring Excellence and Virtues Provides Examples for Youth

The American Founding Fathers taught that for a republic to thrive, patriotism would be necessary. In order for citizens to make informed judgments, be inspired to defend their country, and be productive citizens, they should know the decisions earlier Americans made that helped form our country. Americans should learn what inspired individuals to accomplish challenging tasks. In learning about the great accomplishments of those who came before us, we are inspired to achieve, as well. A country with no heroes has no future.

Federal holidays teach our youth about what is important to our country. Memorial Day is set aside to give honor to those fallen in battle protecting our liberty. Veteran's Day shows respect to veterans for sacrificing their time to serve our country. Young people should honor those who labor and reflect what job or occupation they might have in the future on Labor Day. Columbus Day gives honor to a person who brought Western civilization to North and South America. Learning how the Pilgrims survived in a state of thanksgiving to God teaches Americans how to be grateful during challenging times. Learning about a person born of humble origin who later sacrifices his life for others on Christmas will help teach youth what is true love.

People are Not Without Flaws

It has become common to claim that many of America's political heroes were actually men with serious flaws, and, the argument goes, we shouldn't honor them. When we honor George Washington, or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or Christopher Columbus as great men who accomplished much for Western civilization, we are not claiming that these individuals were perfect. We are making the argument that without these individuals the United States may have lost the American Revolution, continued to practice segregation, or might have never been formed. These men are heroes for the country, but they are not examples of perfect men.

Uniform Monday Holiday Act

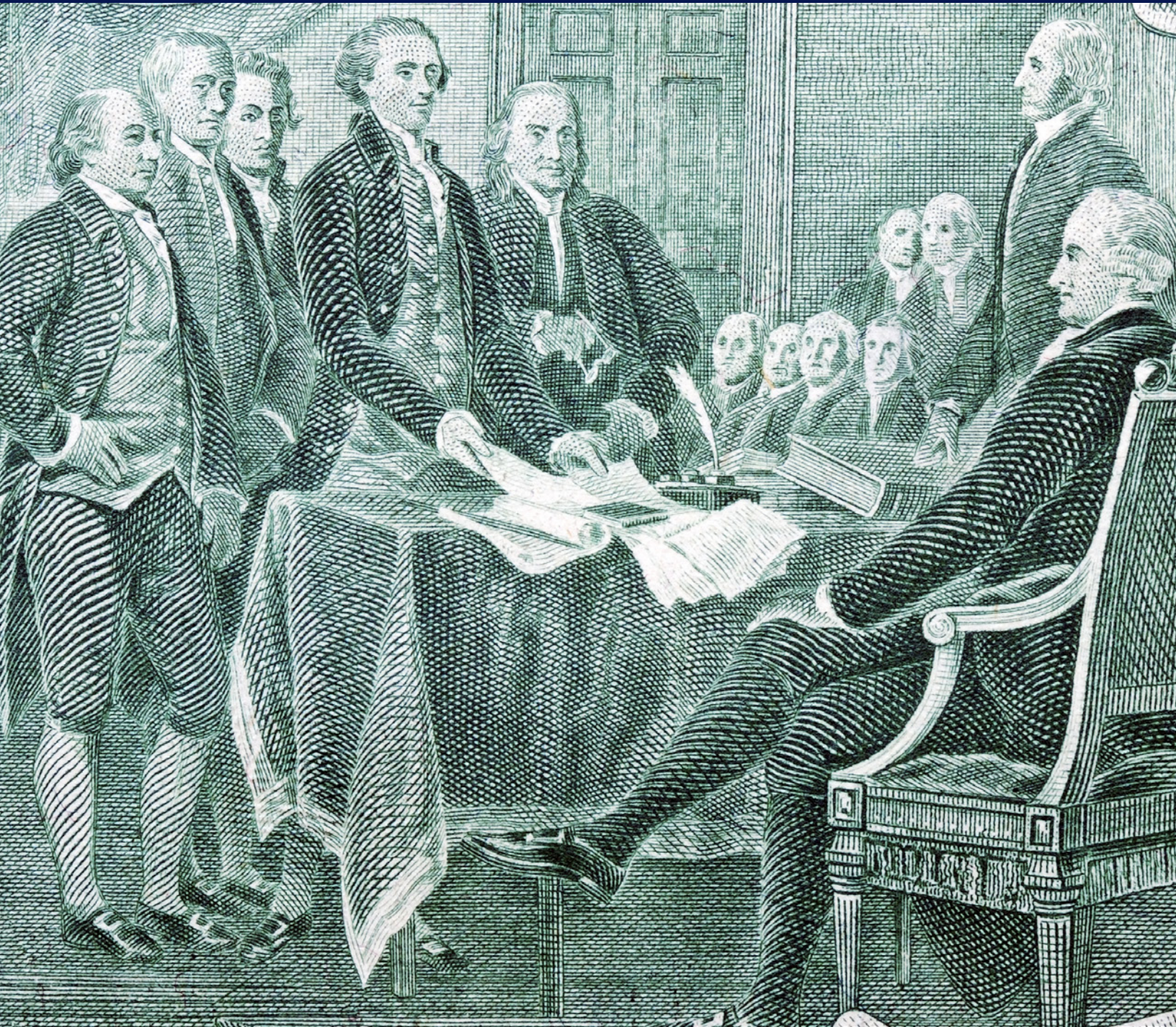
In 1968, an act of Congress changed the date Americans celebrate four holidays. This act declared that from 1971, Washington's Birthday (originally February 22), Memorial Day (May 30), Columbus Day (October 12), and Veterans Day (November 11) would all be celebrated on Mondays. The main reason for this was to enable federal workers and other Americans to have longer weekends. Later, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was added on a Monday as well. The primary result of this act is that many Americans don't care about the people and events that are the reasons behind the federal holidays. They are just happy to have a three day weekend. Realizing this, in 1975, Congress placed Veterans Day back on November 11th to keep the practice of honoring veterans as the main reason for the holiday, however, it left all of the other "Monday Holidays" intact.

The Lessons

Lessons should be read out loud to students in classrooms and to whole families at home. Each lesson has a short essay that describes the most important parts of the holiday. Some lessons include primary source documents. These are followed by 10 text-dependent questions. These questions are designed for ages 8 and older, although there will be some younger children able to answer the questions, and, a few of the questions may be too challenging for some 8 year olds. After the 10 questions, there are a few questions marked "Research and Analysis." For this, the teacher may assign one or all of the activities for the student to do on his own. These activities are more challenging than the 10 text-dependent questions, and are appropriate for ages 12 and older.



★★★★ CHAPTER SIX ★★★★★
INDEPENDENCE DAY



July 4th

On July 4th, 1776, delegates at the Continental Congress adopted "The Declaration of Independence." This declaration stated that the 13 English colonies were now formally separated from Great Britain and part of a new country, the United States of America. The chief writer of the declaration, Thomas Jefferson, wrote the ideals of the young nation and explained to the world why the states were breaking with the mother country, Great Britain.

Colonial Period

Throughout the 1600s and 1700s, British colonists slowly grew to see themselves as something different from English. At the founding of the first colony in 1607, the most colonists of America were proud of their rights from Great Britain. At the same time, however, those in America enjoyed greater freedoms than the people in all of Europe. In America, for example, many colonists enjoyed the right to vote, to choose their own legislature, and had great economic freedoms.

From 1754-1763, some colonists fought alongside the British in the French and Indian War. In this worldwide conflict, France and England fought over control of North America. In America, a young George Washington distinguished himself as a capable and valiant officer. Washington successfully led a British retreat, after the British General Braddock was killed at the Battle of Monongahela. The British won the war and became the dominant power of North America.

The French and Indian War was a spark to America's independence. During the war, many English colonists realized they were different than the British soldiers. Often, the British officers looked down upon the colonists and did not respect their customs and fighting. After the war, King George III and Parliament faced a huge war debt. To pay off the debt, the English chose to levy taxes on the colonists. As the colonists were not used to being taxed without voting on it, they protested. This eventually led to the separation of the two nations.

The Declaration of Independence

In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson is inspired from John Locke in writing the ideals of the new nation, "We hold these truths to be self evident: That all men are created equal." The notion that all men are created equal involves a number of ideas. The first is that there is one Creator of all men. Jefferson and the Founding Fathers believed in one God who created all things. The second idea in this statement is that the Creator gave all humans political equality. Paraphrasing John Locke, Jefferson wrote that one Englishman should not have more political rights than another. An important part of equal rights was the right of all men to own private property.

At the time of the Declaration, women could not vote and there were slaves in America. However, Jefferson's writing on political equality was his vision of an ideal. It is important for a people to have an ideal to strive for. Eventually, the U.S.A. would rid itself of slavery, black Americans would enjoy equal political rights, and women would gain the right to vote.

Does political equality mean economic equality? Some people have falsely argued this. Having the same political rights does not mean that a people will be equal in every way. Jefferson did not write that all people will have the same amount of money, for example. This would require the end of freedom, as some people would have their property taken from them by force.





Jefferson continues to borrow from John Locke in writing in the Declaration “that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” These are commonly referred to as the “natural rights.” They are natural because man has them through birth. No government gives man these rights. They are his naturally, from God. The right to life means that nobody is allowed to take a human life. Murder is against the law. Liberty means the right to political freedoms, such as the right of free speech, free press, and the right of religious freedom. The pursuit of freedom had commonly been understood to mean the right to own private property, but it also seems to imply more than this. In most places of the world in the 1700s, people did not have the means or rights to acquire and retain property. Property was the right held only by the ruler, or by the ruling class. In the new country of the U.S.A., the American Founding Fathers firmly

believed in every man’s right to own land. This right allowed a person independence from government, and the ability to establish a family and enjoy the fruits of one’s labor.

On July 4th, Americans celebrate Independence Day by spending time with family, watching fireworks, listening to speeches given by military and political leaders, and taking time off from life’s work. July 4th may be called America’s first federal holiday, because on this day our country established itself as an independent country. On July 4th, take the time to read out loud the Declaration of Independence, and reflect on all of the work America’s Founding Fathers put into establishing our country, as well as all of the sacrifices Americans have made for their country over more than two centuries.

QUESTIONS:

1. When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?
2. What did the Declaration of Independence state about the 13 English colonies?
3. Who distinguished himself as a brave soldier during the French and Indian War?
4. Why did the colonists protest the taxes of the English King and Parliament?
5. Where did Thomas Jefferson get his ideas from in writing the Declaration of Independence?
6. What is the difference between political equality and economic equality?
7. What did Jefferson write about the belief in God?
8. Was owning private property normal or unique in the 1700s?
9. Why can July 4th be called America's first federal holiday?
10. How did you celebrate the last July 4th?

RESEARCH OR ANALYSIS:

Students can create a very simple 5 Question quiz on the American Revolution. Then, students ask as many people these questions, keeping track of the score of each person. After asking at least 10 people, students report to the teacher how much, or how little, these 10 people know. The idea behind this is to find out how much Americans know and don't know about the beginning of their country, and to show students the level of knowledge or ignorance of their fellow Americans.



ABOUT THE CLASSICAL HISTORIAN

After working in private and public and home school education for over twenty years, John realized the great need in American society to promote independent and critical thinking through research and thoughtful discussion. His wife Zdenka, born and raised in Czechoslovakia, could not find fun and beautiful games that taught their children history. John and Zdenka founded The Classical Historian (www.classicalhistorian.com) to fill these two voids. Their materials are inspired by the best that is offered in the Western tradition of education: openness, analysis, healthy competition in games, respect towards opposing viewpoints, recognition of an absolute truth, and academic honesty. The Classical Historian teaches students what they want to know how they want to learn. John and Zdenka De Gree home school their children in San Clemente, California.



BOOK DESIGN: JASON PEARSON

Jason runs Pearpod, a small boutique agency in San Clemente, California. Pearpod develops projects for non-profits and faith initiatives, including: World Vision, Scripture Union, Saddleback Church, and American Bible Society. Jason has also developed design and marketing for Hollywood faith & family films such as The Passion of the Christ, Narnia, Trade of Innocents and Son of God. Jason and his wife Melinda home school their five kids (including triplets).





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