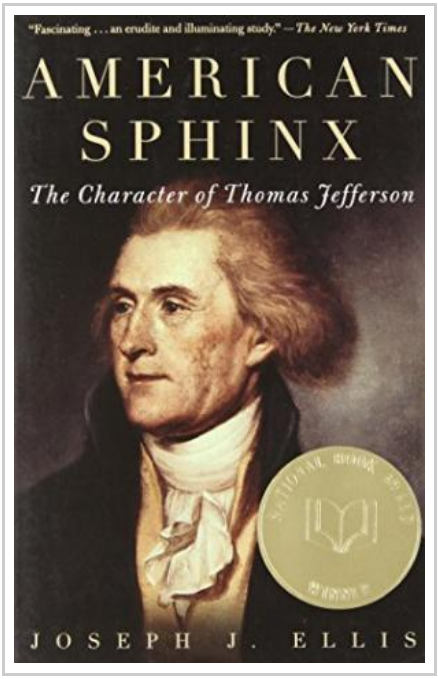


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American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson

By Joseph J. Ellis

Vintage. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 464 pages. Dimensions: 8.0in. x 5.1in. x 1.1in.National BestsellerFor a man who insisted that life on the public stage was not what he had in mind, Thomas Jefferson certainly spent a great deal of time in the spotlight--and not only during his active political career. After 1809, his longed-for retirement was compromised by a steady stream of guests and tourists who made of his estate at Monticello a virtual hotel, as well as by more than one thousand letters per year, most from strangers, which he insisted on answering personally. In his twilight years Jefferson was already taking on the luster of a national icon, which was polished off by his auspicious death (on July 4, 1826); and in the subsequent seventeen decades of his celebrity--now verging, thanks to virulent revisionists and television documentaries, on notoriety--has been inflated beyond recognition of the original person. For the historian Joseph J. Ellis, the experience of writing about Jefferson was as if a pathologist, just about to begin an autopsy, has discovered that the body on the operating table was still breathing. In American Sphinx, Ellis sifts the facts shrewdly from the legends and the rumors, treading...

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