

In seventeen days, young Thomas Jefferson put on paper a one-page document that changed the world. It was the Declaration of Independence. It told why the American people would fight the British and King George for their freedom.



On July 4, 1776, the Liberty Bell rang out from Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where the Continental Congress was meeting.

Bong, Bong

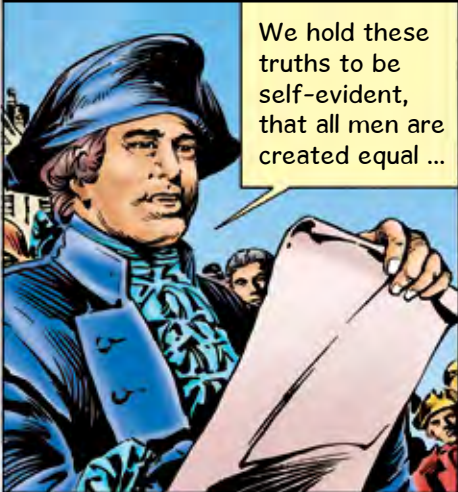
Listen! They've passed the Declaration of Independence.

We'll fight for our freedom. It's official!



Post riders rode away, north and south, to carry copies to every American colony.

In every town the paper was read aloud.



We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ...



It has a fine sound. Who wrote it?

Thomas Jefferson, a red-headed 33-year-old Virginian, they say.



The first thing Tom Jefferson remembered was a day when his family moved from one plantation home to another one.

Here you go, Tom! This will be a long horseback rider for a two-year-old.



Before long, his father taught him to be a good rider.

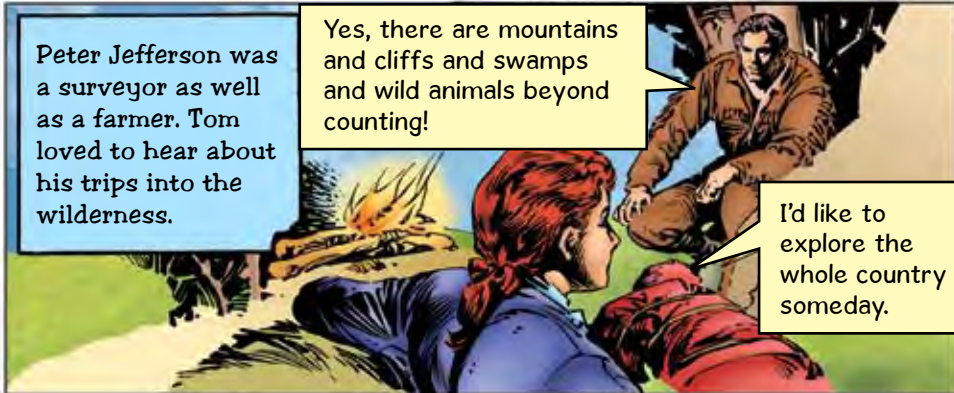
Good work, son! Soon I'll enter you in a real fox hunt.



He taught Tom to befriend the Native Americans who sometimes camped nearby.

Chief, this is my son, Thomas.

How kolah.



Peter Jefferson was a surveyor as well as a farmer. Tom loved to hear about his trips into the wilderness.

Yes, there are mountains and cliffs and swamps and wild animals beyond counting!

I'd like to explore the whole country someday.



When Tom was fourteen, his father died suddenly. Tom was the man of the family. He was helped by his teacher, the Reverend James Maury.

I am afraid I don't know enough to run a big plantation.

You will find your father has taught you well. And his executors will help you.

Under Tom's management the plantation continued to support the family comfortably.

When Tom was seventeen, they talked of his future.

Tom, I've taught you as much as I can. You have a fine mind. You should go to college.



I'd like that! And it's what my father wanted. But what about Shadwell?

Things are running smoothly. You have good overseers. Your mother feels she can manage.

Then I'll do it! I want to learn about everything.



There were three colleges in America. Tom went to the nearest one, William and Mary. It was several days ride from Shadwell.



I'll reach the Dandridge's home tonight. I'm sure they'll give me a bed.



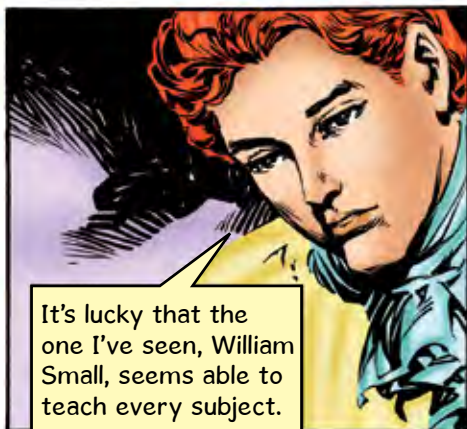
William and Mary was in Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia and a town of two or three hundred houses.

Why, it's a big city!

Tom took an examination and entered college as a junior. He talked to other students.

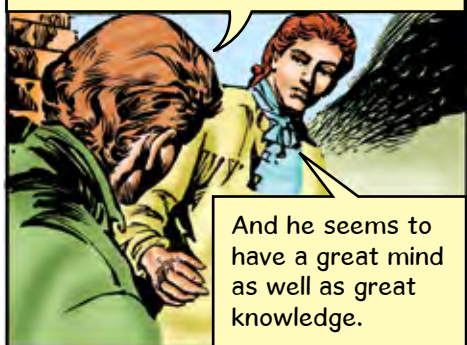
I thought there were seven professors but I've seen only one.

Two of them were fired for fighting. Two or three others are in England suing the college trustees. And the president himself has become a drunkard.



It's lucky that the one I've seen, William Small, seems able to teach every subject.

Yes, the great Scot knows everything from mathematics and physics to grammar and astronomy!



And he seems to have a great mind as well as great knowledge.