

Inspired by Robert Lawson's wonderful chapter book, [Ben and Me: An Astonishing Life of Benjamin Franklin by His Good Mouse Amos](#), fifth grader Arya created a similar story about Thomas Jefferson. As he wrote and revised this tale, using the tools at [WritingFix's 'Giving Credit Where Credit Might Be Due' lesson](#), Arya worked especially hard on his voice and organization skills. Work with a partner to decide which skills from the voice and organization traits Arya did his best work with. Be prepared to share your ideas with the whole class.

Jefferson's Secret

by Arya, 5th grade writer

It was a hot summer day. Yes, it was. I was finally picked up at the shop by a young lad, the son of Mr. Jefferson.

"Pa, I want the 'Inky' one!"

"Now, now Thomas, let me catch up."

Thomas, as he was called, got my name *almost* right. My name is Dinky. Yes, Dinky the pen. "Hi Thomas!" I said.

"Who said that?" Thomas asked, worried.

"Who said what?" asked his father as he rounded the corner.

"Nothing," answered Thomas.

"Okay, pick the pen up, then go."

Without a word, Thomas grabbed the pen and ran out the door as his father paid. Later, at home, Thomas was taking me to his room when I tried to talk again: "Hello Thomas..."

"Wh-wh-who said that?" he almost cried.

"No, don't cry, Thomas, look down!"

Thomas looked down at me, "Inky, you are *talking!*"

"No, no, I am Dinky – D-D-Dinky, not Inky!" Thomas looked hurt, so I said, "Look, I can write too!" On his hand, I wrote "Hello Thomas Jefferson" in what he later called "Neat cursive."

That brightened Thomas up. "I have to go show this to Pa!" he said, jumping.

I stopped him. "It has to be our little secret, or I won't do anything!"

"Fine!" Thomas said, and he carried me into his room. There, I believe, a true friendship began.

When Thomas was about 9 years old, he started taking foreign language classes. Of course, he brought me with him. He was first to learn French, then Latin, then Greek. On his first day of French class, he was asked to write down all the words in French he knew. Apparently, Thomas only knew a few words in French, so I decided to help him out. I wrote down 30 more words. Okay, I actually did the paper for him. Thomas was completely shocked! I was writing words that he didn't write, but he acted like he was writing.

When the teacher saw the paper, he was awestruck. He told Mr. Jefferson that Thomas could go straight to Latin where the same thing happened. Mr. Jefferson was so overjoyed that he couldn't say anything to Thomas other than, "Good job, son!"

And nobody ever realized that Thomas didn't do any of the work, which was good...and bad. You see, I was not getting the credit I deserved. It was fun at first, but it became boring. Well, Greek class was a breeze, even though I wasn't from Greece. And Thomas was good at Greek, and I was just glad to get a little break.

As the years passed, Thomas and I became AMAZING friends. We grew together, laughed together and shared moments together. Before you knew it, Thomas was done with college. We had never been separated.

But alas, one fine day, something fine didn't really happen! I was resting in my velvet case when Thomas whipped the top open. "Uh...excuse me!" I said annoyed.

"No time for that!" Thomas said, panicked. "We've got to go now!"

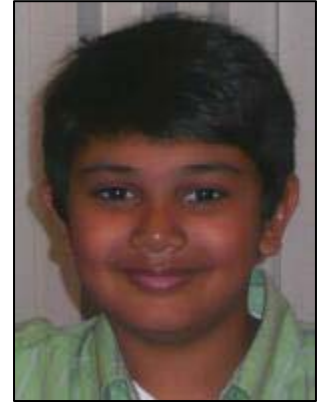
I was picked up and clutched in Thomas' hand as he bolted out the door. "What great event is happening now?" I shouted.

"Not an event, a... tragedy!" His red eyes spilled tears again.

I tried to soothe him "Okay, what...?"

He cut me off with, "You'll see."

We got out the door and walked to a cemetery. The sight was peaceful--peaceful that is until I saw the tragedy. Thomas' sister had died. Not just any of his 6 sisters, she was the oldest one, Jane Jefferson. As we



rounded the corner, the priest spoke: "Jane Jefferson, age 25, lies here today and forever..." I sort of tuned out the rest of the words. This was too big of a shock to take in at one time. The only thing that made me tune in was when I heard "Please speak Thomas Jefferson."

Thomas put me in his pocket. "Thomas Jefferson, do you have a something to say?"

"No!" Thomas choked, which surprised me. I poked him on his leg. He tried to keep a straight face. "I mean yes!"

"Then please come," said the priest.

Thomas rose and walked to the priest. As he did, he took me out of his pocket and clipped me to his collar. As soon as he got to the stand, I started whispering, "It was a great misfortune to lose a sister like Jane. I would have done anything to stop it. All of you people out there are sad, but not as sad as I am..."

That speech lasted five minutes, but this moment would last forever. It was hard to get over that sadness, but life did go on. Life was so dull too.

That was until 1776 when Thomas got a letter from Mr. John Hancock that told him to come to Paris for a 'surprise'. I was all for it, but Thomas was hesitant. "How do we know this is him?"

"Well, he signed it," I persuaded.

"I would have argued, Dinky, if someone else had made the point," he said. So off we went to Paris. where we saw Hancock waiting for us. He ran up and immediately shook Thomas' hand. Neither of them said "Hello" or "How are you." The first sentence was spoken by Thomas. "What is the surprise?"

"We are writing a Declaration of Independence!"

"Really?"

"Really! I just need your help with the words!"

"The words?" Thomas was surprised.

Hancock's face straightened. "Surely you didn't think I had it done by now! Well, come inside!" Hancock led Thomas inside and then handed him the draft. "What do you think?"

Thomas clipped me to his collar and acted like he was reading, "Well, it needs improvement."

"Like...?"

"Well... the beginning..." And this is where I came into play. I began whispering... "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth..." and, I led them through the whole declaration. And, my great work on July 4th, 1776 was signed. However, as the story goes, like always, Thomas got all the credit, not me.

Thomas went from being nobody to being a hero just like that! When anybody asked him how he did his work, he smiled and gave the credit to me, his lucky pen. So, I got some credit. On one occasion, the question was, rather than how did you do it, "Do you want to be the next governor of Virginia?"

And Thomas said "Why, yes, of course!" Well, that automatically put Thomas in a rough position, whether he liked it or not because pretty soon, Thomas couldn't walk 10 feet without being pounded with a question. I had to help him answer almost all of them. When election time came, Thomas was faced with a dilemma. "What should I do, Dinky? If I run for governor, some citizens won't like me. Whereas if I don't run, the others will be upset."

"Now, now Thomas, listen to me, you should do what your heart tells you. Remember, people actually make the decision when they vote."

"You're right, Dinky!" Thomas said, obviously feeling better. "I should do it!" So, Thomas ran for governor, and as I expected, he became the Governor of Virginia. Thanks to my advice and help.

In 1781, Thomas, who was better known as "Mr. Jefferson," stopped being the Governor, and in 1787, the constitution was signed. I told Thomas to attend the event, but he didn't bother. I told him that would ruin his reputation, and I was right. I overheard George Washington call Thomas "...a big fat lazy bum." I didn't bother to tell Thomas.

Like I said, the Constitution was signed in 1787, which meant that the first election would be in 1790. George Washington was unanimously voted the 1st President and his Vice President was John Adams. They were looking for a Secretary of State, who would become the next Vice President, and in the next term that person would be President.

I thought that if I could get Thomas to be the Secretary of State, then my help could take him to the maximum level. I decided to give it a shot. "Thomas! Thomas!" I yelled.

"What is it, Dinky?" he yawned.

"They are looking for a Secretary of State!"

"Who is the President?"

“Mr. Washington.”

“Then I am not going.”

“Why not?” I coaxed. “See, it says here that after Secretary, then you are Vice President, then you would be President! Wouldn't you like that?”

“Well... I have to make a big speech, and I don't know what to say!”

“Eh...hem!” I coughed.

“Sorry, Dinky, I forgot about your help.”

“It is all right. So you are willing to do it?”

“Sure!”

Thomas Jefferson made his (my) speech and became the 1st Secretary of State, 2nd Vice President and 3rd President of the United States. All of his accomplishments were great, although they were supposed to be mine. If he hadn't picked up me, Dinky the Pen, at the shop, you probably wouldn't have ever heard of the famous Thomas Jefferson.

What historical figure could you write a “Giving Credit Where Credit *Might* Be Due” story about? To what creature or what object might you give the credit for the historical person's accomplishments?