



Thomas Jefferson was the third president of the United States, the second vice president, an author of the Declaration of Independence, an inventor, a university founder, and an architect. This remarkably gifted American was born on April 13, 1743, and died in his Virginia home, Monticello, on the fourth of July in 1826. He was a man of many political, diplomatic, and creative talents. In 1934, a congressional act approved the creation of a memorial in Washington, D.C., to commemorate his many contributions toward shaping the United States into the strong country that it became.

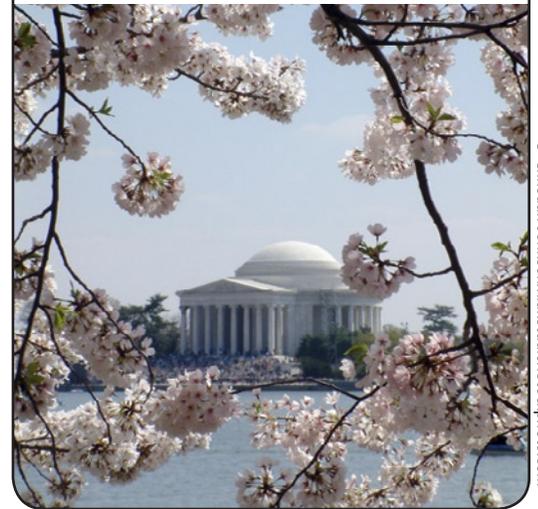
As an architect, Jefferson designed his gracious home, Monticello, to reflect his appreciation of classic Italian architecture. Monticello means “little mountain” in Italian, and his beloved home sits on a rise above the surrounding countryside. Monticello’s design features a large central dome with an expanse of white columns across the front. Jefferson’s architectural style was honored by John Russell Pope, who designed the Jefferson Memorial. Pope modeled some of the memorial after the beautiful Pantheon in Rome and included elements found in Jefferson’s designs for the University of Virginia and Monticello. The memorial is crowned with a dome in the center and is encircled on all sides by large white columns. At the time of its design, some people debated whether the columns would look too similar to the columns of the Lincoln Memorial. As the discussion stalled the memorial’s construction, President Franklin D. Roosevelt stepped in and approved Pope’s design, including his beautiful rows of columns.

Under the central dome of the memorial stands a nineteen-foot-tall bronze statue of Thomas Jefferson. Just as with the Lincoln Memorial, quotations—taken from Jefferson’s writings—are etched into the walls surrounding the statue, including the preamble to the Declaration of Independence.

The Jefferson Memorial sits on a large pond and is flanked by thousands of cherry trees given to the United States by the country of Japan in 1912. Visiting the memorial in spring, you’ll find the elegance of the memorial’s shimmering white columns framed by pink and white cherry trees in full bloom.

Do You Know?

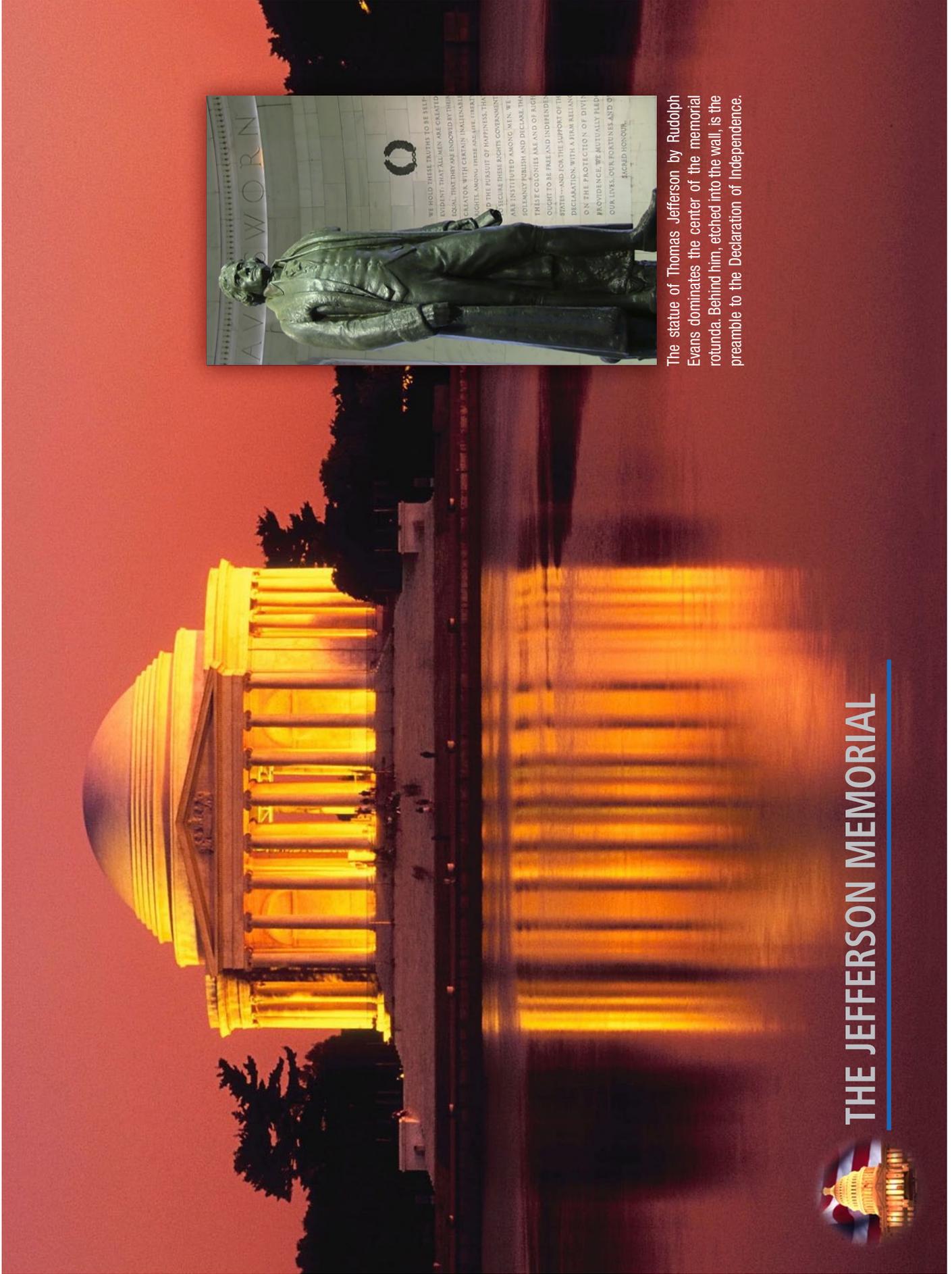
The Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, and the original design of the Washington Monument, were all created in the Greco-Roman style, which has its origins in the period of 300–400 BC. Constructed at a time when the architectural community was striding toward modernism and building the nation’s first skyscrapers, the memorial uses its quiet classicism to honor the man who helped bring this Italian design influence to America.



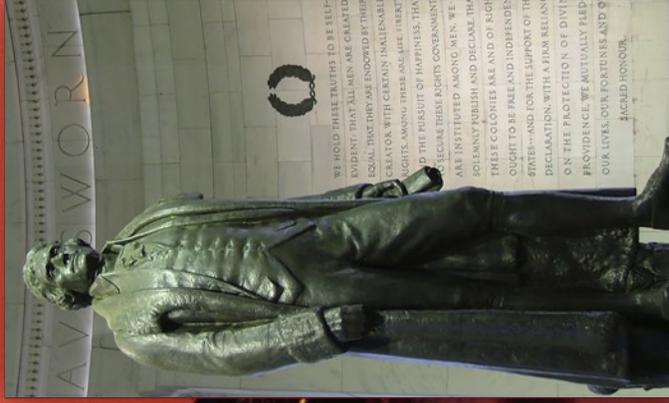
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Discussion questions

1. What traits did Jefferson have that other presidents also had?
2. How did Jefferson’s traits make him a good leader?
3. Name four features the Jefferson Memorial shares with other buildings.
4. Why might Pope design the memorial with Jefferson standing and facing the White House surrounded by his own words?



THE JEFFERSON MEMORIAL



The statue of Thomas Jefferson by Rudolph Evans dominates the center of the memorial rotunda. Behind him, etched into the wall, is the preamble to the Declaration of Independence.