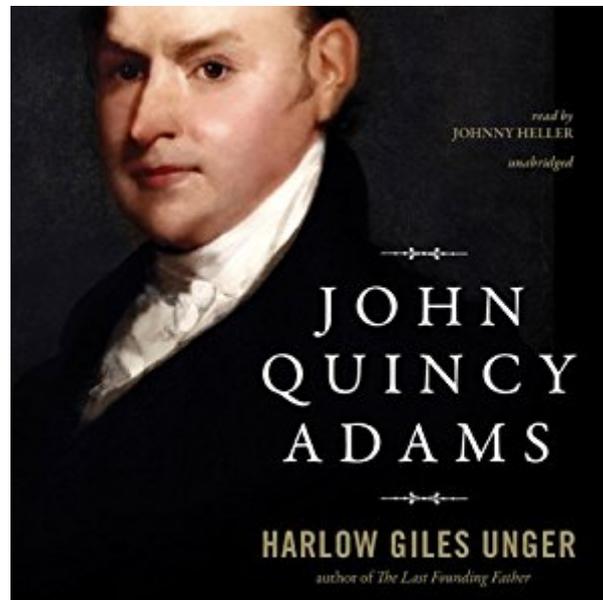


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# John Quincy Adams



## Synopsis

He fought for Washington, served with Lincoln, witnessed Bunker Hill, and sounded the clarion against slavery on the eve of the Civil War. He negotiated an end to the War of 1812, engineered the annexation of Florida, and won the Supreme Court decision that freed the African captives of La Amistad. He served his nation as minister to six countries, secretary of state, senator, congressman, and president. John Quincy Adams was all of these things and more. In this masterful biography, award-winning author Harlow Giles Unger reveals Adams as a towering figure in the nation's formative years and one of the most courageous figures in American history - which is why he ranked first in John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning Profiles in Courage. A magisterial biography and a sweeping panorama of American history from the Washington to Lincoln eras, Unger's John Quincy Adams follows one of America's most important yet least known figures. Harlow Giles Unger, a former distinguished visiting fellow in American history at George Washington's Mount Vernon, is a veteran journalist, broadcaster, educator, and historian. He is the author of 20 books, including several biographies of America's Founding Fathers. He has also authored histories of the early Republic as well as numerous books on American education. He lives in New York.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Author Harlow Giles Unger's relatively brief, fast paced biography of the 6th President of the US is a very worthwhile read both for its content and brisk style. The book moves through 8-decades of American history spanning the beginning of the Revolutionary War to the beginning-of-the-end of

American slavery. The chapter containing the War of 1812 flows especially well and is highlighted by the author's shrewd summary remark that it was, "The war that the United States could have won without firing the first shot and ended before they had fired the last." The author shows great respect for his subject without crossing the line that causes a reader to suspect the author of the bias of having "fallen in love" with his subject. Mr. Unger takes the reader to the brink of resolution of the "Corrupt Bargain", but never decides for us whether or not John Q. offered the State Dept. as a reward for electoral delegates. The take-away from this book (at least for those with heretofore only passing familiarity with the 2nd Mr. Adams) is one of an enlightened new perspective; exchanging the image of a dour failed President for one of the most enlightened, urbane and intellectual presidents to occupy the White House. A failed president still... but there is far more to the man than his presidency, and far more to the failure of the presidency than the man. Even with the newfound perspective, the author doesn't dispute the more familiar historic cliché when he adds that, "John Quincy, on the other hand, was a bit of a grouch." (loc. 3034) John Q. Adams ended his career and life in the House of Representatives of the the U.S. distinguishing himself with fiery, eloquent oratory.

John Quincy seems to be a relatively unknown historical personage perhaps owing to his uninspired term as president or because he occupied the White House in a short interval between the Founding Fathers and the Jacksonians. This is a shame because he led a fascinating life and served the United States as long and as well as any public official in the history of the Republic. The oldest son of John Adams acted as secretary and interpreter for the first American ambassador to Russia at age 14. In his career, he was President, Senator, Secretary of State and ambassador to 6 European nations. Adams often demonstrated that his commitment to public service was more important than the title of his office. He was elected to the Massachusetts State Senate after being recalled from the Berlin Embassy and served for almost 20 years in the US Congress after leaving the White House. In all, John Quincy Adams served in government for two thirds of a century under 10 presidents (not including himself). He was appointed ambassador by Washington and ended his career working with in the House with Abe Lincoln. He served in Congress and the executive branch and turned down appointment to the Supreme Court. His 14,000 page diary covers a period from the Revolution to the eve of the Civil War. Harlow Giles Unger uses Adam's diary in writing this biography, referring to it as "the most complete personal, day-to-day record of events in the New World and the Old from the 1770s to the 1840s." More impressive than the title of Adams' positions in government are his accomplishments especially in expanding the United States and in opposing

slavery. He worked alone in the Federalist party to secure passage of the Louisiana Purchase and later organized the seizure/annexation of Florida for Monroe.

I have embarked on an intellectual/historical trek that involves reading every US Presidential biography. Thus far, I have read: Ron Chernow WASHINGTON: A LIFE David McCullough JOHN ADAMS Jon Meacham THOMAS JEFFERSON: THE ART OF POWER Duane Ostler JAMES MADISON: AMERICAN PROPHET. Harlow Giles Unger's THE LAST FOUNDING FATHER: JAMES MONROE AND A NATION'S CALL TO GREATNESS Harlow Giles Unger's JOHN QUINCY ADAMS. Currently, I have begun H.W. Brands' ANDREW JACKSON. Reading JACKSON is going to be much different than the other presidents. While studying Jackson in college, I developed a preconceived notion and a strong bias against him. Of all the authors among those listed above, Unger is clearly the BEST writer. He is a master of the written word and has the rare skill of making the characters within his biographies come out of the pages. This man has a treasured talent. I am writing this during the summer of 2016 immediately following the Republican and the Democratic conventions. Donald Trump will run against Hilary Clinton. I say this because it is a perfect time to read Harlow Giles Unger's JOHN QUINCY ADAMS. The electoral process between Adams and Jackson is nearly identical to what we are seeing between Trump and Clinton. The contempt and anger among supporters of Jackson levied against supporters of Adams was on the threshold of violence. As I watch the news in the election season, I am very much troubled by the violence I see during political rallies. The political establishment during JQ Adams .v Jackson was anguishing over the prospects of Jackson becoming president just as the political establishment is anguishing over Trump's prospects. The similarities do not end there.

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