

GOD, GUTS, AND GALLANTRY

Questions Comparing and Contrasting the Major with Other Notable Americans

Participants who lack a copy of the book may obtain one at www.willjoslin.com.

Some of these questions may be answered on the strength of the book's contents, but for maximum learning effectiveness, I recommend preparatory study through book studies, a good encyclopedia, and /or Google Searches on the lives of the following figures: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and Clarence Darrow.

The Major has been favorably compared to other great Americans. His business partner George Norwood once said he was "the greatest man, without exception, that ever lived."ⁱ Clemson President E. W. Sikes said, "Another characteristic [of the Major] was his intellectuality. Intellectuality is the capacity to see through and around a subject. This applies to a man with ideas. It applies to men like Hamilton and Jefferson rather than to the great and good Washington."ⁱⁱ

1. Based on *God, Guts and Gallantry*, especially Chapter 6 and Appendix 5, how would you describe the Major's capabilities to think about racial progress, and to turn that thinking into constructive action?
2. How would you describe his ability to leverage seed breeding and industry for the greater benefit of others? Give examples.
3. How would you compare and contrast the Major's capacity to see through and around a subject with that of the following men:
 - Alexander Hamilton, one of our nation's foremost interpreters of the constitution
 - Thomas Jefferson, architect of the Declaration of Independence

Fred L. Wilcox, former Florence, South Carolina attorney and onetime president of the South Carolina Bar Association,ⁱⁱⁱ said:

There have been others who in different spheres of activity have possibly equaled him in some respects, and in the publicity given them have far exceeded him. Thomas

Jefferson, in many respects, had qualifications and tendencies similar within the sphere of his influences to those which we find to have been possessed by Major Coker. Thomas Jefferson was deeply interested in agriculture, recognizing the influence on society of its proper development. He was deeply interested in industry, although it was only in his later days that he appreciated its importance in the American community to the extent that Major Coker did, apparently from his earliest business experience.

Thomas Jefferson was profoundly interested in education and laid the foundation for some of our most outstanding institutions. Major Coker was equally interested in all of these, but while Jefferson at his death was a failure so far as his finances were concerned, Major Coker was prosperous to the end. Thomas Jefferson was bitterly criticized and cordially hated by many who differed with him. Major Coker seems to have had the good will and esteem of all who knew him."^{iv}

Before proceeding, group or class members need to make sure they have reviewed at least a summary of the life of Thomas Jefferson.

4. How would you compare and contrast Thomas Jefferson and Major Coker concerning:

- Historical notoriety
- Agricultural earning power
- Interest in and accomplishments in industry
- Accomplishments in education
- Building and leading a team who together contributed to society
- Being loved or hated
- Morality and moral example
- Political philosophy
- Religious beliefs
- Ultimate solvency

Author and Brandeis University professor David Hackett Fischer, in his book *Washington's Crossing*, defined George Washington's character as one of "integrity, self-discipline, courage, absolute honesty, resolve, and decision, but also forbearance, decency, and respect for others."^v Henry Lee, governor of Virginia and father of Robert E. Lee, described Washington as "first in war—first in peace—and first in the hearts of his countrymen."^{vi}

5. How would you compare the character of George Washington with that of Major Coker?
6. From Chapter 15, please reread the Major's attribute of "[Love for Nature and Beauty](#)." How would you compare the Major's fascination with birds and nature with that of John James Audubon (1811-1851)?
7. How would you compare and contrast Major Coker and his younger contemporary, attorney Clarence Darrow, in terms of:
 - Intelligence
 - Manners
 - Character
 - Religious beliefs
 - Philosophy of life
 - Encouragement of the human race

ⁱ Susan Coker Watson, quoting George Norwood in *Recollections of the Major* (Hartsville Museum: Hartsville, SC), 1997, p. 68.

ⁱⁱ E. W. Sikes, *Coker College Quarterly Bulletin, February 1937*, "Centennial Celebration of Major James Lide Coker," edited by Sylvester Green, p. 20.

ⁱⁱⁱ For information on Fred L. Wilcox, see the South Carolina Bar's site on "Past Presidents" at <https://www.sctbar.org/lawyers/directory/lawyers-desk-book/past-presidents/> (accessed December 29, 2019).

^{iv} Fred L. Wilcox, *Centennial Celebration*, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

^v David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, England, 2006), as quoted from Google Books Review at <https://books.google.com/books?id=Oreq1YztDcQC&pg=PA446&lpg=PA446&dq=integrity,+self-discipline,+courage,+absolute+honesty,+resolve,+and+decision,+but+also+forbearance,+decency,+and+respect+for+others+hackett&source=bl&ots=Tw1Zsmk9oa&sig=ACfU3U0JNsWteecnGweD3mUWwKWcNdv0WQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi69PGt5vbmAhVjrlkKHbuMB2UQ6AEwAXoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=integrity%2C%20self-discipline%2C%20courage%2C%20absolute%20honesty%2C%20resolve%2C%20and%20decision%2C%20but%20also%20forbearance%2C%20decency%2C%20and%20respect%20for%20others&f=false> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legacy_of_George_Washington.

^{vi} Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee of the Continental Army, as quoted by Hillary Hughes of George Washington University, 2020 article "George Washington's Mount Vernon," <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/first-in-war-first-in-peace-and-first-in-the-hearts-of-his-countrymen/>, accessed June 15, 2020.