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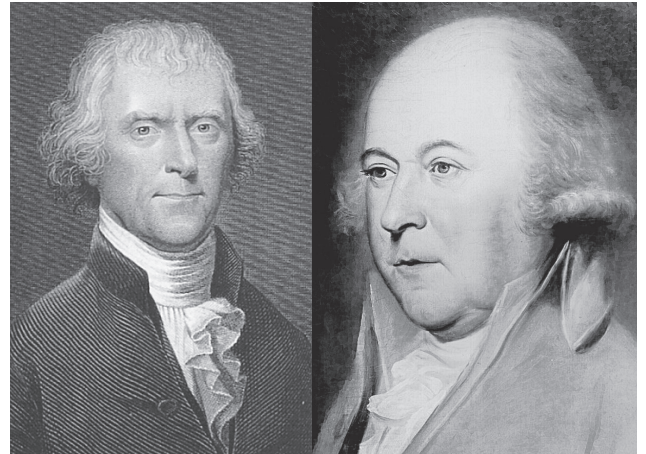
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Hyperboles in History

**How has hyperbole been used throughout history?
Read this article to learn about hyperboles in literature and politics.**

Hyperbole is a literary device that uses extreme exaggeration to make a point. For thousands of years, people have used hyperboles to be dramatic as they entertain or persuade others. You can find examples of hyperbole in popular songs, books, and even political speeches.

Some of the most entertaining examples of hyperbole can be found in popular literature. In the opening of the American folktale “Babe the Blue Ox,” the lead character Paul Bunyan says, *“Well now, one winter it was so cold that all the geese flew backward and all the fish moved south and even the snow turned blue. Late at night, it got so frigid that all spoken words froze solid before they could be heard. People had to wait until sunup to find out what folks were talking about the night before.”* In this example, hyperbole is used to help the reader imagine a vivid scene.



Thomas Jefferson and John Adams

Politicians often use hyperbole to make dramatic statements with the purpose of persuading others. In 1800, when John Adams and Thomas Jefferson ran against each other for president, they used hyperbole to degrade one another as they tried to convince people to vote for them. Supporters of Thomas Jefferson said that Adams had a *“hideous character, which has neither the force and firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman.”* Meanwhile, a speaker for John Adams claimed that if Jefferson won, *“Murder and robbery will be openly taught and practiced, the air will be rent with the cries of the distressed, and the soil will be soaked with blood.”* In this instance, hyperbole was used to persuade voters that each presidential candidate was a danger to society.

Throughout history, people have debated the value and the danger of using hyperbole. Thousands of years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle said that *“hyperboles are for young men to use. They show vehemence of character, and this is why angry people use them more than other people.”* He believed that hyperbole was juvenile and untasteful. However, the Roman rhetorician Quintilian disagreed. He said that a hyperbole isn’t a deceitful lie for angry people, but instead *“an elegant surpassing of the truth”* that could be useful and effective.

**What do you think: Do you agree with Aristotle or Quintilian?
Write a paragraph using examples to support your opinion.**