Lincoln for President

"Fellow lawyers observed that desire for understanding had become almost a passion with Lincoln. He was never satisfied in handling a thought until, as he said, he had bounded it east, west, north, and south and could express it in the simplest clearest language. He had always had a bent for mathematics, and now as a mental discipline, he mastered the first six books of Euclid, conning their pages in the cheerless hotel rooms or on the lonely prairie as he lolled in his buggy while his horse plodded on unguided from town to town."

Benjamin P. Thomas, Abraham Lincoln, Knopf, 1952. Submitted by E. M. Klein, Whitewater, WI.

Washington for President

The science of figures, to a certain degree, is not only indispensably requisite in every walk of civilised life; but the investigation of mathematical truths accustoms the mind to method and correctness in reasoning, and employment peculiarly worthy of rational beings. In a clouded state of existence, where so many things appear precarious to the bewildered research, it is here that the rational faculties find a firm foundation to rest upon. From the high ground of mathematical and philosophical demonstrations, we are insensibly led to far nobler speculations and sublimer meditations.


Anyone You Know?

But he knew little out of his way and was not a pleasing companion, as like most great mathematicians I have met with, he expected unusual precision in everything said, or was forever denying or distinguishing upon trifles to the disturbance of all conversation. He soon left us.

Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography, Riverside Press, MA, 1958, p. 54; said about Thomas Godfrey