

# **A More Perfect Union: The Early Republic**

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**Year 1**  
**History Unit 6**  
Sourcebook

## Lesson 1: President Washington's Legacy



*The official presidential portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart, 1797 (Wikimedia)*

**How did President Washington influence the American presidency?**

## **The Presidency of George Washington**

*The following text was adapted from the essay “George Washington and the Constitution” by historian Theodore Crackel and published by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

On March 4, 1789, the new Constitution became the law of the land, and on April 30, 1789, George Washington was sworn in as the nation’s first president . . . . Among all the precedents that were established in the new nation’s first eight years, the most important was the careful and thoughtful manner by which he acted on issues where the new Constitution was vague or silent.

The Constitution invested the executive power of the nation in the president, but did very little to define those specific powers. As president, Washington was Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy , . . . although only Congress could declare war. He could require the opinions, in writing, from principal officers in each of the executive departments, but it was up to Congress to create these departments, and up to the Senate to advise on and consent to the appointment of their heads . . . . He was required by the Constitution: “from time to time” to give Congress information about the “State of the Union;” recommend to their consideration such measures as he should judge necessary and expedient; receive foreign ambassadors and other public ministers; and take care that the federal laws were faithfully executed. A fuller definition of what constituted the executive power of the president was left to be worked out between Washington (and later presidents) and the Congress.

It was from the implications of what was written and, in some cases, not written in the Constitution that the role and power of the presidency was largely derived, and it was Washington’s actions that established, many of which still guide presidents today.

*Crackel, Theodore, George Washington and the Constitution.  
(The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)*

## Document A

### Excerpts from the First Inaugural Address

*On April 30, 1789, George Washington took the oath as the first president of the United States. However, he did not actually want to be president. Senator William Maclay of Pennsylvania noticed that Washington looked “agitated and embarrassed.” He looked less comfortable facing the lawmakers than he had ever looked facing enemy soldiers.*

Fellow citizens of the Senate and the House of Representatives:

... In the important revolution just accomplished, the peaceful deliberations and voluntary consent of so many distinct communities, from which the event has resulted, is unlike how most Governments have been established. We must have gratitude along with an humble anticipation of the future blessings. . . .

You, members of Congress, are talented and patriotic. In these honorable qualifications, I ask you to pledge, that as on one side, no local prejudices, or attachments; no separate views, nor party **animosities** [*negative feelings*], will misdirect the fair eye which ought to watch over this great collection of communities and interests: so, on another, that the foundations of our National policy will be laid in the pure principles of morality; and the ultimate importance of a free Government, . . . which can win the affections of its Citizens, and command the respect of the world.

I think about this prospect with every satisfaction which a strong love for my Country can inspire . . . Since we ought to believe that we cannot receive the smiles of Heaven if we disregard the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained: And since the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the Republican model of Government, are justly considered as deeply dependent on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.

Besides the ordinary decisions for you, it will remain with your judgment to decide when it is necessary to change the Constitution. Instead of undertaking particular recommendations on this subject, . . . I shall again give way to my entire confidence in your judgment and pursuit of the public good . . . .

When I was first honoured with a call into the Service of my Country, then on the eve of a difficult struggle for its liberties, the light in which I contemplated my duty required that I should reject a salary. I still believe this. And while I am in this position, this salary must be limited to such actual expenditures as the public good may be thought to require. Having thus imported to you my sentiments, as they have been awakened by the occasion which brings us together, I shall take my present leave; but not without resorting once more to the **benign parent of the human race** [*God*], begging that since he has been pleased to favour the American people with peace and the opportunity to create this new government, for the security of their Union, and the advancement of their happiness; so his divine blessing may be equally conspicuous in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise measures on which the success of this Government must depend

*Washington, George. First Inaugural Address. April 30, 1789. Courtesy of National Archives*

## Document B

### Excerpts from Farewell Address

*In 1796, President George Washington decided not to seek reelection for a third term. He wrote this farewell letter to the American people to explain why. Washington had already been president twice, and some people thought the country needed his leadership. But Washington worried that he would be like a king if he were president again.*

*The letter was printed in a Philadelphia newspaper, September 19, 1796. Here is part of Washington's letter.*

Friends and Citizens:

The period for a new election of a citizen to become president of the United States is near, and . . . it appears to me proper, especially to have a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now decline running for president again.

The unity of government is also now dear to you. It is justly so, for it is a main pillar of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to see that, from different causes, many will try to weaken in your minds the conviction [firm belief] of this truth . . . .

Here every portion of our country must carefully guard and preserve the union of the whole nation.

The North, in its trade with the South, produces great additional resources of sea and commercial **enterprise** [*business*] and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South, in the same trade, grows agriculture and expands its commerce and sea trade . . . . The East, in a similar trade with the West, already finds, and thanks to the continued improvement of interior communications by land and water, will more and more find a valuable market for the goods which it brings from abroad, or manufactures at home. The West gets from the East supplies needed to its growth and comfort . . . . While, then, every part of our country thus wants to preserve the union because all the parts combined find greater strength, greater resource, much greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations . . . . Therefore the union is a main protector of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

To preserve your Union, a government for the whole is necessary. No alliance, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute . . . .

The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all . . . .

All attacks on the execution of the laws with the real goal to direct, control, or counteract the action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of the union. They serve to organize division; to put, in the place of the will of the nation the will of a party, often a small but **artful** [*clever*] minority of the community . . . .

Even though sometimes political parties may appeal to popular interests, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become strong engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will take away the power of the people and to grab for themselves the control of government . . . .

The spirit of forming political parties, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind . . . . But, in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy . . . . This will ruin public liberty.

It is true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government . . . .

Promote then . . . institutions for the general spread of knowledge. Because the government depends on public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. Avoid expensive spending and falling in debt to avoid forcing future generations to bear the burden which we ourselves ought to bear . . . .

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; create peace and harmony with all. . . . To do so, nothing is more essential than avoiding permanent bad feelings against particular nations, and strong attachments for others; and that, in place of them, just and kind feelings towards all should be established. The nation which has hatred or fondness to a country is in some degree a slave to its bad feelings or to its affection, either of which can lead it astray from our duty and our interest. . . . Such an attachment of a small or weak towards a great and powerful nation dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

*Washington, George. Farewell Address. 1796. Courtesy of The Avalon Project, Lillian Goldman Library, Yale Law School.*

## Lesson 2: Political Parties



*Portrait of Thomas Jefferson by Rembrandt Peale, 1800 (left), and portrait of Alexander Hamilton by John Trumbull, 1806 (right) (Wikimedia)*

**Why did political parties emerge  
in the early United States?**

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**Homework****The Rise of Political Parties**

*Read the articles “Two Parties Emerge” and “The Election of 1800” on Independence Hall’s USHistory.org site.*



**Group 1: American Industry**  
**Document A**  
**Agrarian vs. Industrial Economies**

*The following text was adapted from an essay entitled “The New Nation,” published by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

The Federalists led by Alexander Hamilton hoped to accelerate industrial development, which might make the nation wealthier as a whole but would also produce greater extremes between the wealthy and the poor, the powerful and the powerless. The Republicans led by Thomas Jefferson, however, wanted to preserve the nation’s agricultural economy to establish a simple and equal class structure for white men.

*Taylor, Alan, The New Nation, 1783-1815. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)*

**Document B**  
**Thomas Jefferson: On Agriculture**

*Republican Party leader Thomas Jefferson wrote the following letter to Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Jay in 1785.*

**Cultivators of the earth** [*farmers*] are the most valuable citizens. They are the most **vigorous** [*hardworking*], the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and permanently dedicated to its liberty and interests. As long, therefore, as they can find employment [as farmers], I would not change them into mariners, **artisans** [*craftspeople*], or anything else.

*Courtesy of EDSITEment! Edsitement.neh.gov.*

**Document C**  
**Alexander Hamilton: “Report on Manufactures”**

*Federalist Party leader Alexander Hamilton wrote the “Report on Manufactures” in 1791. Below is an excerpt adapted from this report.*

Farm labor is **periodical** [*during certain times*] and occasional, depending on seasons, **liable** [*vulnerable*] to various and long time off; while the labor of manufacturing is constant and regular, lasting through the year . . . .

Manufacturing establishments not only cause a positive **augmentation** [*increase*] of the Produce and Revenue of the Society, but ... they make the production of society greater than it could possibly be without manufacturing. This is because of ... additional employment to classes of the community not ordinarily engaged in the business . . . . The promoting of emigration from foreign Countries . . . . Creation of a more certain and steady demand for the agricultural goods . . . .

The trade of a country which is both manufacturing and Agricultural will be more **lucrative** [*money-making*] and **prosperous** [*successful*], than of a Country, which is, only Agricultural . . . .

Many have the opinion that promoting manufactures may be the interest of one part of the Union, but it is contrary to that of another part. The northern and southern regions are sometimes represented as having **adverse** [*conflicting*] interests in this respect. Those [in the North] are called Manufacturing, these [in the South] Agricultural states . . . .

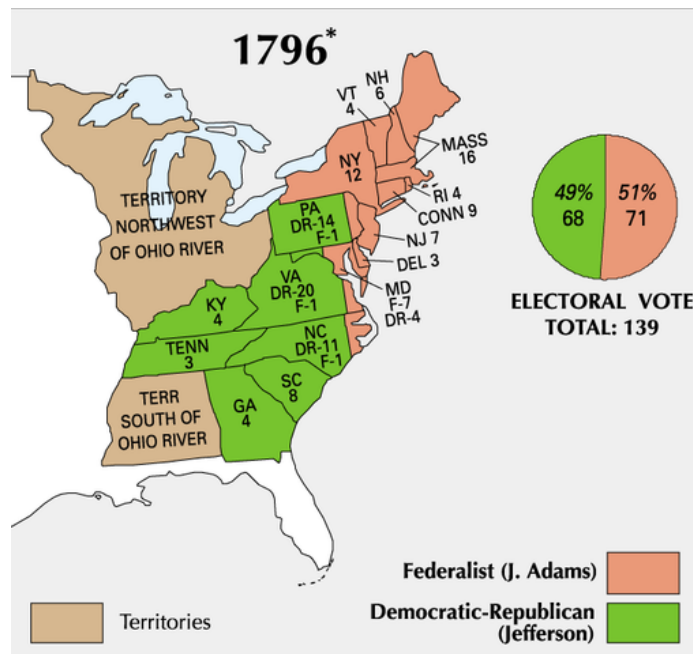
The idea of an opposition between these two interests is the common error . . . .

The diversity of Circumstances on which such **contrariety** [*opposition*] is usually **predicated** [*based*], allows for a directly **contrary** [*opposite*] conclusion. Mutual **wants** [*needs*] create one of the strongest links of political connection between North and South . . . .

*Hamilton, Alexander. Report on Manufactures. Courtesy of DigitalHistory.uh.edu.*

### Document D Electoral Map, Election of 1796

*In the late 18th century, the northern half of the United States had begun developing industries and manufacturing centers. Meanwhile, the South relied mostly on agriculture; large plantations dominated the deep Southern states, while small farmers populated the rest of the South.*



*The map above illustrates the electoral map from the election of 1796. (United States Geological Survey, Wikimedia)*

## Group 2: Constitutional Interpretation

### Document A

#### Alexander Hamilton: “Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank of the United States”

*The following text was adapted from Federalist Party leader Alexander Hamilton’s essay “Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank of the United States,” dated February 23, 1791, discussing the meaning of the “Necessary and Proper” clause.*

It is essential to the national government, that [Jefferson’s] incorrect understanding of the meaning of the word “necessary” should be exploded.

Necessary means **requisite** [*required*], useful, or **conductive** [*helpful*] to . . . . And this is how it is to be understood as used in the Constitution. It was the intent of the Convention, by that clause, to give a **liberal latitude** [*flexible ability*] to the exercise of the specified powers . . . . The government can make all laws necessary and proper for carrying into execution its powers . . . .

The powers contained in a constitution of government, especially those which concern the general administration of the affairs of a country, its finances, trade, defense, etc., should be understood **liberally** [*flexibly*] to promote the public good . . . .

*Hamilton, Alexander. Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank of the United States. February 23, 1791. Courtesy of TeachingAmericanHistory.org.*

### Document B

#### Thomas Jefferson: “Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank”

*The following text was adapted from Republican Party leader Thomas Jefferson’s essay “Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank,” written February 15, 1791.*

I consider the foundation of the Constitution as laid on this ground: That “all powers not delegated to the United States, by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States or to the people.” [Twelfth Amendment] To take a single step beyond these boundaries around the powers of Congress is to take possession of a **boundless** [*limitless*] field of power, no longer open to any definition.

If it were thought that the Constitution intended that for *convenience*, Congress should be authorized to break down the most ancient and fundamental laws of the several States . . . . Nothing but a necessity unfixable by any other means, can justify such a distortion of laws, which make up the foundation of our whole system of **jurisprudence** [*law*]. Will Congress be too **strait-laced** [*narrow-minded*] to carry the constitution into honest effect, unless they may pass over the foundation-laws of the State government for the slightest convenience of theirs?

*Jefferson, Thomas. Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank. Courtesy of TeachingAmericanHistory.org.*

**Group 3: Foreign Policy**  
**Document A**  
**Alexander Hamilton on the French Revolution**

*The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval in France that took place from 1789 to 1799. The revolution overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, experienced violent periods of political conflict, and finally ended in a dictatorship under Napoleon.*

*The following text was adapted from a letter written by Federalist Party leader Alexander Hamilton on April 7, 1798.*

In reviewing the disgusting **spectacle** [*show, scene*] of the French revolution, it is difficult to ignore the parts of it which try to disorder the human mind itself and to weaken the pillars that support civilized society. The attempt by these new rulers of a nation to destroy all religious opinion, and to corrupt a whole people to **Atheism** [*lack of belief in a God*], is just one example of the **depravity** [*wickedness*] and **infamy** [*disgrace*] of the immoral reformers of France. The proofs of this terrible intent are numerous and convincing.

*Hamilton, Alexander. The Works of Alexander Hamilton, Vol. 6. Courtesy of Online Library of Literacy, [oll.LibertyFund.org](http://oll.LibertyFund.org).*

**Document B**  
**Thomas Jefferson on the French Revolution**

*Republican Party leader Thomas Jefferson wrote the following letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, a French military officer who had helped the American colonists win the Revolutionary War.*

Behold you then, my dear friend, at the head of a great army, establishing the liberties of your country against a foreign enemy. May heaven favor your cause, and make you the channel thro' which [liberty] may pour its favors. While you are destroying the monster aristocracy, & pulling out the teeth & fangs of the monarchy, an opposite belief is discovered in some here. A group has shown itself among us, who declare they **espoused** [*accepted*] our new constitution, not as a good & sufficient thing itself, but only as a step to an English constitution . . . . You will wonder to be told that it is from the Eastward [New York] that these supporters of a king, lords & commons come.

*Jefferson, Thomas. Courtesy of The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

## Document C Jay's Treaty

*"The Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, Between His Britannic Majesty; and the United States of America," commonly known as "Jay's Treaty," was a 1795 treaty between the United States and Great Britain. The treaty was designed by Federalist Alexander Hamilton, supported by President George Washington, and negotiated by Chief Justice John Jay, a Federalist.*

His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America, by a treaty of **amity** [goodwill], commerce and navigation, want to end their difference to produce mutual satisfaction and good understanding; and also to regulate the commerce and navigation between their respective countries, territories and people, in a way that is beneficial and satisfactory for all.

*Courtesy of American History: From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond, let.rug.nl.*

## Document D Alexander Hamilton on Great Britain

*The excerpt below was adapted from a letter Federalist Party leader Alexander Hamilton wrote to George Washington in April 1794.*

Cutting off interaction with Great Britain ... deprives us of ... a supply [of goods] necessary to us in peace and more necessary to us if we are to go to war. It gives a sudden and violent blow to our revenue which cannot easily be repaired from other sources. It will give so great an interruption to commerce as may very possibly interfere with the payment of the **duties** [taxes] which have **accrued** [built up] and bring the Treasury to an absolute stoppage of payment...

*Hamilton, Alexander. April 1794. Courtesy of EDSITEment!, edsitement.neh.gov.*

## Document E James Madison on Great Britain

*Republican James Madison wrote the editorial "Foreign Influence" for the Aurora General Advertiser, a Philadelphia newspaper. Below is an excerpt from this editorial.*

The conclusion with me, is, that Great Britain, above all other nations, ought to be dreaded and watched, as most likely to gain an **undue** [undeserved] and **pernicious** [harmful] influence in our country . . . . The United States are the greatest and best market for her manufactures. To keep out the products of other nations, and to limit the creation of products of our own, is the grand **object** [goal] of Great Britain. To conclude: Great Britain feels every motive that a foreign power can feel to **pinch** [limit] our growth, and undermine our government; and enjoys greater means of influence for these purposes than ever were possessed by one nation towards another. On Great Britain then our eye at least will be constantly fixt.

*Madison, James. Foreign Influence. Courtesy of EDSITEment!, edsitement.neh.gov.*

**Group 4: Political Economy**  
**Document A**  
**Federalists on the National Bank**

*The following excerpt was adapted from Federalist Party leader Alexander Hamilton's arguments defending the constitutionality of the national bank.*

Banks play a usual part in the administration of national finances and are the most effective tool for collecting taxes and managing loans. A government trying to maintain its **sovereignty** [*independence, governance*], to manage its money, its debt, its credit, its defense, its trade, its relationships with foreign nations, should not be forbidden to make use of this tool, as an extension of its own natural powers.

The existence of a national bank does not **infringe** [*violate or trespass on*] the ability of any state, or even any individual, to establish their own bank. Each state may still build as many banks as it pleases; every individual may still carry on their banking business to any extent he pleases.

In times of war, and in so many other instances, a national bank is essential to the country. The need for common defense of the nation makes this obvious.

*Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

**Document B**  
**Democratic-Republicans on the National Bank**

*The following text was adapted from Democratic-Republican Party leader Thomas Jefferson's essay "Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank," written February 15, 1791.*

It has been urged that a bank will give greater **facility** [*ease*] or convenience in the collection of taxes. Suppose this were true: yet, the Constitution allows only the means which are "*necessary*," not those which are merely "*convenient*," for carrying out the stated powers of the federal government.

If this flexibility is allowed for this phrase and to any non-stated power, it will go to everyone! Anything can be argued a *convenience* in some way . . . . This would swallow up all the delegated powers and reduce the whole system to one power. This is precisely why the Constitution restrained these powers to the *necessary* means only.

*Jefferson, Thomas. Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank. February 15, 1791. Courtesy of TeachingAmericanHistory.org.*

**Document C**  
**Hamilton: "Cabinet Battle #1"**

*Watch "Cabinet Battle #1" from the Broadway play Hamilton on YouTube while following along with the lyrics.*



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## Homework

### The Louisiana Purchase

Read the articles “The Louisiana Purchase” and “Lewis and Clark” on the History Channel website.

## Document A

### France and the Louisiana Territory

The following excerpt was adapted from a letter written by Alexander Hamilton, October 24, 1800, before Thomas Jefferson defeated John Adams for the presidency.

When I first came to Congress, I discovered a Party [the Democratic-Republicans] ready to trust the future of the United States to the management of France! While I, too, felt good will towards France, whose cooperation had been extremely useful during the Revolution, I was committed to the real independence of our country. I was struck with disgust at the start of a Party motivated by agreement with a foreign power. I decided at once to resist their bias in our affairs.

The following timeline organizes key events regarding the Louisiana Purchase.

**1801:** Spain returned Louisiana to France. As a result, Federalists grew concerned over the increased French presence on the continent and asked Jefferson to take action. In response, Jefferson sent the U.S. minister to France to make an offer to buy New Orleans. The French did not accept the offer.

**Winter 1803:** In January, President Jefferson tried again to convince France to sell New Orleans, sending James Monroe to join the U.S. minister in France to convince Napoleon on the sale.

**Spring 1803:** Finally, in April, Napoleon agreed to sell all of the Louisiana territory, not just New Orleans, to the United States. Distracted by war with Great Britain and fearful after a violent and successful slave revolt in Haiti, Napoleon lost interest in controlling the North American continent. The United States purchased Louisiana for \$15 million and doubled its national territory.

**Fall 1803:** In October, the Senate approved the Louisiana Purchase. All those who opposed the treaty in the Senate were Federalists.

*Hamilton, Alexander. Letter from Alexander Hamilton Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams. October 24, 1800. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.*

## Document B

### Hamilton’s Letter to the *New York Evening Post*

The following letter was written by Alexander Hamilton and published as an editorial for the *New York Evening Post* in July 1803.

The purchase of New Orleans is essential to the peace and prosperity of our Western territories and opens a free and valuable market to our commercial states.

This purchase will probably make it seem like Mr. Jefferson is brilliant. Any man, however, who has any amount of intelligence will easily see that the purchase is the result of lucky coincidences and unexpected circumstances and not the result of any wise or thoughtful actions on the part of Jefferson’s administration.



But the vast region west of the Mississippi is a wilderness with numerous tribes of Indians. And when we consider the current territory of the United States, before this purchase, and that not even one-sixteenth has yet been settled by our people, the possibility that this new purchase will be a place of actual settlements seems unlikely.

If our own citizens do eventually settle this new land, it would weaken our country and our central government. Relocating settlers two or three thousand miles away from our existing capital might lead them to leave our distant Union. On the whole, we can honestly say that this purchase is, at best, extremely problematic.

*Hamilton, Alexander. From the New York Evening Post. July 1803. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.*

### **Document C** **Senator King's Letter to Senator Pickering**

*Federalist Senator Rufus King of New York wrote this letter to fellow Federalist Senator Timothy Pickering of Massachusetts on November 4, 1803.*

According to the Constitution, Congress has the power to admit new states to the union. But can the President sign treaties forcing Congress to do so? I suspect this is an overreach of executive power.

According to the Louisiana Treaty, the territory must be formed into states and admitted into the Union. Will Congress be allowed to set any rules for their admission?

Since slavery is legal and exists in Louisiana, and the treaty states that we must protect the property of the inhabitants, won't we be forced to admit the new states as slave states?

If we must, doing so will worsen the problem of unequal representation between the slave and free states in the Congress.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Free states, or those states that had abolished slavery, were also most likely to vote for the Federalist Party in national elections, especially in New England.*

*King, Rufus. November 4, 1803. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.*

**Document D**  
**Senator Pickering's Response to Senator King**

*Senator Timothy Pickering wrote the response below to Senator Rufus King's letter on March 4, 1804. Senator Pickering, also a Federalist, was one of seven Senators—all Federalists—who voted against the treaty allowing the Louisiana Purchase.*

I am disgusted with the men who now rule us. The coward at the head [referring to President Jefferson] is like a French revolutionary. While he talks about humanity, he enjoys the utter destruction of his own political opponents.

We have witnessed his general wickedness for too long—his cruel removals of loyal and qualified government officers, and replacing honesty in government with **corruption** [*dishonest or illegal behavior by leaders in power*] and immorality.

*Pickering, Timothy. March 4, 1804. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.*

## Lesson 6: The Impact of the War of 1812



The Battle of New Orleans by Edward Percy Moran, 1910 (Wikimedia)

**How did the War of 1812 affect  
American politics and society?**

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## Homework

### The War of 1812

*The following text is adapted from historian Alan Taylor's essay "The New Nation," published by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

To help pay down the young nation's national debt, the Jefferson administration relied on a great surge in American overseas trade, raising money from **tariffs** [*taxes on traded goods*]. Between 1793 and 1805, trade increased as American merchant ships used their neutral status to take trade away from the two great European powers, France and Britain, who were once again at war. American seaports and shipyards boomed. American shipping tripled, and the value of trade soared from \$43 million in 1790 to \$246 million in 1807.

The booming American trade appalled the British, for it rescued the French economy from a British blockade. Additionally, as the world's greatest naval power, the British resented the rise of the United States as a threat on the seas. So in 1805, the British began to seize, or capture, American ships that carried goods from France or to any of the French colonies. British navy captains aggressively enforced the new hard line because they received a share of the money raised by selling confiscated ships and their cargo. The British captains also seized sailors from the American ships, a practice known as *impressment*. The British insisted that the sailors were runaway Britons, while the Americans protested that they were American citizens. Between 1803 and 1812, the British impressed over 6,000 sailors who claimed to be Americans.

The United States could do little to resist the British seizures of American merchant ships and sailors because it lacked a large navy of expensive ships. In June 1807, a British warship attacked and captured an American warship to impress some of its sailors. Still, Jefferson avoided a war with the British. Instead, he settled for an **embargo** [*trade block*], ordering all American merchant ships to stay in port. Jefferson reasoned that the British needed American trade more than the United States needed to trade with them. As an industrializing country with many workers and hungry citizens, Britain depended on trade with the United States.

But Jefferson was mistaken. The British managed to get enough food elsewhere and to find new markets for their own goods in Latin America. They were delighted to see the United States stop the very shipping that the British resented as unwanted competition. The embargo hurt Americans far more than the British. It threw sailors and laborers out of work, bankrupted many merchants, and left farmers with crops that they could no longer sell. The economic pain revived the weak Federalist Party in the northeast, the region hardest hit by the embargo. The Federalist comeback scared the Republicans in that region. They pressured their colleagues in Congress and in the administration to abandon the embargo. Congress did so in March of 1809, just as Jefferson left the presidency—and its troubles—to his successor, James Madison.

The failure of the embargo left many Republicans feeling humiliated at their inability to protect American ships and sailors. A group of Jeffersonian congressmen known as War Hawks insisted that there was no alternative but to declare war on Great Britain. How was the United States to wage war on a superpower like Great Britain? The United States only had 17 warships, compared with 1,000 in the Royal Navy.

The War Hawks favored attacking the British colonies in nearby Canada by marching overland from the United States. This could be done cheaply, without, they believed, the cost of building a large navy or army. The War Hawks boasted that civilian-soldiers would be enough to conquer Canada. After all, the population of the United States exceeded Canada's by a ratio of 25 to 1. Caught up in this enthusiasm, Jefferson insisted that the conquest of Canada was "a mere matter of marching." In June 1812, Congress and President Madison declared war on Great Britain.

Waging war with a militia proved even more of a disaster than the embargo had been. Because so many militiamen ran away to avoid combat, the British and their American Indian allies repeatedly defeated the American invaders. Ironically, the little American Navy did much better, defeating several British warships in battles on the high seas. These unexpected naval victories boosted American morale and frustrated the British, but a few small naval victories did little to stop the massive British navy.

The war took a further turn for the worse in 1814, when the British and their European allies crushed Napoleon's France, freeing up thousands of British troops to now fight across the ocean in the United States. During the summer and fall of 1814, British forces went on the offensive, invading the United States from multiple directions. They captured Maine and briefly invaded and burned the national capital, Washington, D.C.—a great humiliation for the Madison administration. But, in general, American forces fought better defending their own country than they had as invaders of Canada. In September, the Americans fended off British attacks on Baltimore, Maryland; and Plattsburgh, New York.

Tired of war, British diplomats offered the Americans generous terms in a peace treaty concluded at Ghent in Europe in December. The British agreed to withdraw from the lands they had occupied in eastern Maine, northern Michigan, and western New York. The treaty said nothing about the maritime issues that had led to war. Even so, Americans agreed that their national survival against Great Britain was a victory itself.

In early February, the story of glorious victory got a boost with the arrival, on the East Coast, of dramatic news that American troops had won a sensational victory near New Orleans. On January 8, General Andrew Jackson's army had defeated the British in just 30 minutes. In mid-February, news of the great victory along with news of the ratification of the Ghent peace treaty led Americans to agree that they had forced the British to abandon the war.

*Taylor, Alan, The New Nation, 1783-1815. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History)*

### **The Star-Spangled Banner (Transcript)**

*When the British attacked Baltimore, Maryland, during the War of 1812, their powerful army and navy seemed likely to defeat the city and take over the harbor. Instead, Baltimore's Fort McHenry stood strong and defiantly successful. Francis Scott Key watched the battle and, taken with pride, wrote the poem "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 1814. His poem embodied the newfound spirit of pride during the Era of Good Feelings. Fittingly, the poem went on to become the U.S. National Anthem.*

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight  
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,  
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep  
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,  
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,  
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?  
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,  
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream,  
'Tis the star-spangled banner—O long may it wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,  
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion  
A home and a Country should leave us no more?  
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.  
No refuge could save the hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand  
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation!  
Blest with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n rescued land  
Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto—"In God is our trust,"  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

*Courtesy of The National Museum of American History, [americanhistory.si.edu](http://americanhistory.si.edu).*



**Document A**  
**The Decline of the Federalist Party**

During the War of 1812, the Federalist Party, which supported a strong relationship with Great Britain, greatly opposed the war. From December 1814 to January 1815, Federalist Party members met at the Hartford Convention to discuss their dissatisfaction with the war, plans to limit the power of southern and western states (most Federalists lived in the Northeast), and even to **secede** [leave the union] from the United States. However, shortly after the convention, news of the Battle of New Orleans swept the nation, and national pride over victory in the war discredited the Federalist Party. By the time the war was over, the Federalist Party ceased to exist. The cartoon below, “The Hartford Convention, or Leap no Leap,” was made by William Charles in 1814.



In the center, on a shore, kneels Timothy Pickering, a Federalist leader, saying, “I, Strongly and most fervently pray for the success of this great leap which will change my vulgar name into that of my Lord of Essex. God save the King.” Above him, a man, representing Massachusetts, pulls two others (Rhode Island and Connecticut) toward the edge. Rhode Island: “Poor little I, what will become of me? this leap is of a frightful size—I sink into **despondency** [despair].” Connecticut: “I cannot Brother Mass; let me pray and fast some time longer—little Rhode will jump the first.” Massachusetts: “What a dangerous leap!!! but we must jump Brother Conn.” Across the water, on the right, sits King George III. He calls, “O’tis my Yankey boys! jump in my fine fellows; plenty molasses and Codfish; plenty of goods to Smuggle; Honours, titles and Nobility into the bargain.” On the left, below the cliff, is a medallion inscribed with the names of Perry, McDonough, Hull, and other heroes of the War of 1812 and decorated with a ribbon that reads, “This is the produce of the land they wish to abandon.” (Library of Congress)

## **Document B**

### **The Era of Good Feelings**

*Following the War of 1812, Americans were united in their pride over their military victory. After being elected the fifth president of the United States in 1816, James Monroe went on a goodwill tour. Huge crowds greeted him so warmly that a newspaper proclaimed an “Era of Good Feelings” was sweeping the nation. Monroe’s eight years as president are still known by this name today. To many Americans, it seemed that a new period of national unity had dawned.*

*Thomas Nichols, an American writer, recalled his childhood during the Era of Good Feelings and the spirit of American pride and patriotism among many Americans in his book *Forty Years of American Life*, published in 1864.*

No American can be made to understand why he should not be eligible for presentation to queen or emperor. He is the political equal to the President . . . Every American who visits Washington calls to see the President, shakes hands with him, and asks him how he does, and how his family is.

The military spirit and the spirit of patriotism, in my early days, were universal. We had no doubt that ours was the freest, most enlightened, and happiest country in the world; and, in spite of the jealousy of tyrants, we felt sure that all the rest of mankind would soon be of the same opinion, and only too glad to follow our example.

*Adapted from Teachers’ Curriculum Institute: History Alive!  
The United States Through Industrialism, pgs. 236; 246–251*

## **Document C**

### **The Monroe Doctrine**

*The swelling of nationalist spirit was not only reflected among the people, but in the federal government as well. President Monroe made a speech to Congress announcing a policy that became known as the Monroe Doctrine. The message was delivered on December 2, 1823.*

The Russian Government hopes to negotiate the respective rights and interests of Russia and the United States on the northwest coast of North America. A similar proposal has been made by Great Britain . . . These conversations lead us to assert that, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, must not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers . . .

We are committed to the defense of our nation, which has been achieved by the loss of so much blood and treasure, and matured by the wisdom of their most enlightened citizens. We owe it, therefore, to the good relations existing between the United States and those European powers, to declare, that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their government to any portion of this hemisphere, as dangerous to our peace and safety . . .

It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of North or South America, without endangering our peace and happiness . . . It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in the hope that other powers will pursue the same course.

*Courtesy of Library of Congress.*



## Document D

### Henry Clay's American System

*Leading a more unified public, the federal government began to take a more active role in building a national economy. One of the leading supporters of such measures in Congress was Henry Clay of Kentucky. Clay believed that America's future lay in capitalism, an economic system in which individuals and companies produce and sell goods for a profit, and that the federal government had a role to play in encouraging economic growth. This passage is from Clay's Senate speech "In Defense of the American System," February 1832. Clay's American System called for higher **tariffs** [taxes on foreign imports so that American products are cheaper in comparison] to protect American industry, a **central bank** [a bank operated and owned by the federal government] to control the money supply, and government support for public projects, such as canals, roads, and railroads.*

[Now, eight years after the tariff of 1824], we behold cultivation extended, the arts flourishing, the face of the country improved, our people fully and profitably employed . . . our cities expanded, and whole villages springing up ; . . . our exports and imports increased and increasing; our **tonnage** [amount of cargo on a ship], foreign and coastwise, swelling and fully occupied . . . . This transformation of the condition of the country from gloom and distress to brightness and prosperity, has been mainly the work of American legislation, **fostering** [encourage or promote the development of] American industry, instead of allowing it to be controlled by foreign legislation.

*Clay, Henry. In Defense of the American System. February 1832. Courtesy of Stanford History Education Group.*

## Document E

### Chief Justice John Marshall

*Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall, appointed by John Adams in 1801, further supported the movement to strengthen the power of the federal government. In the case Marbury v. Madison in 1803, he established the concept of "judicial review," giving the Supreme Court the power to strike down laws deemed unconstitutional and shaping the role of the court. Now, following the War of 1812, Marshall continued to establish essential interpretations of the Constitution that would strengthen the power of the federal government. Furthermore, his decisions supported Clay's American Plan and the growth of a capitalist society. In McCulloch v. Maryland in 1819, the court agreed that Congress had the constitutional authority to create a national bank that was free from state regulations. In the excerpt from Marshall's opinion below, he defines the meaning of the Constitution's "Necessary and Proper Clause."*

Let the **ends** [goals] be legitimate, let it be within the scope of the constitution, and all means which are appropriate, which are plainly adopted to that end, which are not prohibited, but consist with the letter and spirit of the constitution, are constitutional.

*Marshall, John. McCullough v. Maryland. Courtesy of Thirteen.org.*

## Lessons 7–9: Founding Figures



*The preamble to the Constitution (Wikimedia)*

**How did individual Americans influence government and society in the early United States?**

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**Homework****Who Are “We the People”?**

*Read pages 178 and 179 in the textbook History Alive! The United States Through Industrialism (Teacher’ Curriculum Institute, 2002).*

## **Founding Fathers**

### **Option 1: Aaron Burr**

*Read the biography of Aaron Burr on Biography.com.*

## **Document A**

### **Aaron Burr Conspiracy**

*Below are two accounts recalling Burr's conspiracy plan to take control of the Louisiana Territory. The first is from Anthony Merry, the British minister to the United States, with whom Burr discussed his plans in 1805. The second is from military Colonel Morgan, who reported the conversation with Burr to Thomas Jefferson.*

#### **Anthony Merry**

I am encouraged to report the substance of some secret communications which [Burr] has tried to make to me since he has been out of office . . . .

Mr. Burr has mentioned to me that the inhabitants of Louisiana [the lands recently purchased from France] seem determined to become independent of the United States, and they have only been delayed by the difficulty of obtaining a promise of protection and assistance from some foreign power . . . . It is clear that Mr. Burr wants to make such a connection [with Great Britain] . . . . He pointed out the great advantage which [Great Britain] would gain from helping the inhabitants of Louisiana . . . .

Mr. Burr observed it would be too dangerous and too early to tell me at present all the details of the plan he had formed . . . . In regard to military aid, he said, two or three large warships and the same number of smaller vessels would be stationed at the mouth of the Mississippi River to prevent a blockade from the U.S. navy and to keep open the communications with the sea; and in respect to money, he wanted a loan of about one hundred thousand pounds [the British currency] which would, he thought, be enough for the immediate purposes of the plan.

#### **Colonel Morgan**

After dinner I spoke of our fine country [the new Louisiana territory]. I observed that when I first went there, there was not a single family between the Allegheny mountains and the Ohio River; and that now we should move congress further west to represent these new settlements . . . .

"No, never," said Colonel Burr, "for in less than five years, you will be totally divided from the Atlantic states." Burr entered into some arguments to prove why it would and must be so . . . . He said that our taxes were very heavy and asked why we should pay them to the Atlantic parts of the country.

I began to think that all was not right. He said that with two hundred men, he could drive congress, with the president at its head, into the Potomac River [in Washington, D.C.] ... and he said with five hundred men, he could take New York.

*Merry, Anthony and Morgan, Thomas. Courtesy of Burr Conspiracy Trial (1807), Famous-Trials.com.*

**Document B**  
**Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr**

*Below, Alexander Hamilton explains his feelings toward Aaron Burr.*

Mr. Jefferson, though too revolutionary in his notions, is a lover of liberty and will want orderly Government—

Mr. Burr loves nothing but himself—thinks of nothing but his own pride—and will be content with nothing short of permanent power in his own hands.

No agreement that he should make with any motivation except [Burr's own]. Ambition could be relied upon—How then should we be able to rely upon any agreement with him?

Mr. Jefferson, I suspect, will not dare much. Mr. Burr will dare everything in the confident hope of affecting everything.

*Hamilton, Alexander. Courtesy of The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

## Option 2: Benjamin Franklin

Read the article “Benjamin Franklin” on the History Channel website.

### Document A

#### Benjamin Franklin on the Constitution

The text below is adapted from Benjamin Franklin’s final speech in the Constitutional Convention, retrieved from the notes of James Madison.

Mr. President:

I confess that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution, but Sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it: For having lived long, I have often had ... to change Opinions on important Subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be wrong. It is therefore that the older I grow the more able I am to doubt my own Judgment, and to pay more attention to the Judgment of others.

In these beliefs, Sir, I agree to this Constitution, with all its Faults; because I think a General Government is necessary for us ... and I believe further that this is likely to be well administered for many Years, and can only end in **Despotism** [*tyranny*] as other Forms have done before it, if the People become so corrupted as to need Despotic Government, being incapable of any other.

I doubt too whether any other Convention would be able to make a better Constitution: For when you assemble a Number of Men of great wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those Men all their Prejudices, their Passions, their Errors of Opinion, their local Interests, and their selfish Views. From such an Assembly can a perfect Production be expected?

It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this Constitution approaching so near to Perfection as it does; and I think it will astonish our Enemies, who are waiting with Confidence to hear that we fail . . . . Thus I **consent** [*approve*], Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure that it is not the best.

On the whole, Sir, I cannot help expressing a Wish, that every Member of the Convention, who may still have Objections to it, would with me question this doubt in order to make known our [unity as a nation], and put his Name to this Constitution.

*Franklin, Benjamin. Courtesy of PBS.org.*

### Option 3: John Marshall

Read the article “John Marshall” on the History Channel website.

#### Document A

##### John Marshall: On the Federal Constitution

*John Marshall delivered the following speech on June 10, 1788 in the Virginia Convention.*

The object of the discussion now before us is whether democracy or **despotism** [*tyranny*] be most eligible. I am sure that those who framed the system submitted to our investigation, and those who now support it, intend the establishment and security of democracy.

The supporters of the Constitution claim that they support liberty and the rights of mankind. They say that they consider it as the best means of protecting liberty . . . . Those who oppose it have called it similar to monarchy. However we [the supporters of the Constitution] prefer this system to any monarchy because we are convinced that it has a greater tendency to secure our liberty and promote our happiness. We admire it because we think it a well-regulated democracy: it is recommended to the good people of this country: they are, through us, to declare whether it will be a plan of government to establish and secure their freedom . . . .

There are in this State, and in every State in the Union, many who are decided enemies of the Union. Reflect on the conduct of such men. What will they do? They will bring amendments which are local in their nature and which they know will not be accepted. What security have we that other States will not do the same? We are told that many in the States were violently opposed to it. They are more mindful of local interests . . . . Disunion will be their object . . . .

Let us try [this new Constitution] and keep our hands free to change it when necessary. If it be necessary to change government, let us change that government which has been found to be defective. The difficulty we find in amending the [Articles of] confederation will not be found in amending this Constitution . . . .

I think the virtue and talents of the members of the general government will tend to the security instead of the destruction of our liberty.

*Marshall, John. June 10, 1788. Courtesy of Bartleby.com.*

## Option 4: Patrick Henry

Read the article “Patrick Henry” on the History Channel website.

### Document A

#### Patrick Henry: Virginia Ratifying Convention

*On June 5, 1788, Patrick Henry attended the Virginia Ratifying Convention and spoke passionately against the new Constitution. Henry was a leader against the Constitution and fought strongly for a bill of rights. Below is an excerpt from Henry’s speech.*

I am not free from suspicion: I am doubtful [of the new Constitution]. I rose yesterday to ask a question that came to mind . . . . Have the [framers] said, We, the states? Have they made a proposal of an agreement between states?

If they had, this [new government] would be a confederation. It is otherwise most clearly a national government. The question turns, sir, on that expression, We, the *people*, instead of the *states*, of America. It takes little effort to show that the principles of this system are extremely dangerous . . . .

It is not a democracy, in which the people hold all their rights securely. Had these principles been followed, we should not have been brought to this alarming transition, from a confederacy to a national government . . . .

In this [federal government], our rights and privileges are endangered, and the power of the states will be given up: and cannot we plainly see that this is actually the case? The rights of conscience, trial by jury, liberty of the press, all your immunities and franchises, all claims to human rights and privileges, are put in danger, if not lost, by this change, so loudly talked of by some.

Is this tame surrender of rights worthy of freemen? Is it worthy of that strong courage that ought to characterize republicans?

It is said eight states have adopted this plan [the Constitution]. I declare that if twelve states and a half had adopted it, I would, with strong firmness, and in spite of an incorrect world, reject it.

You are not to ask how your trade may be increased, nor how you are to become a great and powerful people, but how your liberties can be secured; for liberty ought to be the direct purpose of your government.

*Henry, Patrick. June 5 1788. Courtesy of TeachingAmericanHistory.org.*



## Option 5: Sam Adams

Read the article "Sam Adams" on the History Channel website.

### Document A

#### Sam Adams: Letter to Richard Henry Lee

*In 1787, Sam Adams wrote the following letter to Richard Henry Lee, a fellow statesman and Anti-Federalist.*

MY DEAR SIR:

... The Session of our General Court ... prevented me from considering the new Constitution so closely as was necessary for me before I should make an Opinion . . . .

I meet with a National Government, instead of a Federal Union of Sovereign States. I do not understand why [the delegates] preferred to the former [national government] over the latter [union of sovereign states]. If the several States in the Union are to become one entire Nation, under one Legislature ... the Idea of Sovereignty in these States must be lost. Indeed I think that those powerful states ought to be erased from the Mind; for ... they would be highly dangerous, and destructive of the Peace, Union, and Safety of the Nation.

And can this National Legislature be strong enough to make Laws for the free Government of one People, living in Climates so remote and whose customs are and probably always will be so different?

Is it to be expected that General Laws can be adapted to the Feelings of the more Eastern and the more Southern Parts of so extensive a Nation? It appears to me difficult. There may then follow Discontent, Mistrust, dislike of Government, and frequent rebellions, which will require Armies to suppress them . . . .

Or if Laws could be made, adapted to the local Habits, Feelings, Views, and Interests of those distant Parts [of the country], would they not cause Jealousies [in other states] and lead to Wars and fighting.

But should we continue distinct sovereign States, united for the Purposes of mutual Safety and Happiness ... the People would govern themselves more easily, the Laws of each State would be well adapted to its own customs, and the Liberties of the United States would be more secure than they can be ... under the proposed new Constitution . . . .

The beginnings of an Aristocracy began to spring even before the end of our Struggle for the natural rights and independence [against the British], beginnings that lie at the roots of Governments . . . . The few haughty Families, think They must govern. The Body of the People tamely consent and submit to be their Slaves.

*Adams, Samuel. 1787. Courtesy of Samuel-Adams-Heritage.com.*

## Citizen-Activists and Founding Figures Option 1: Benjamin Banneker

Read the biography of Benjamin Banneker on *Biography.com*.

### Document A Banneker's Letter to Thomas Jefferson

*Benjamin Banneker wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson on August 19, 1791, challenging his views on race. As an accomplished African American, Banneker wanted to prove that African Americans were just as capable as white Americans of achieving great things. Below is an excerpt from Banneker's letter.*

SIR,

I am fully aware of the greatness of that freedom, which I take with you on the present occasion; a liberty which seemed to me hardly allowed, when I reflected on your **distinguished and dignified** [*honorable*] position, and the general prejudice in the world against those of my complexion [African Americans].

Sir, I hope ... that you are a man far less inflexible than many others . . . . Now Sir, if this is true, I ask that you will embrace every opportunity to get rid of those many absurd and false ideas and opinions about us . . . . I hope that you too believe that one universal God has been given to us all; and that he has ... given us all the same emotions and ... the same abilities; and that however different we may be in society or religion, however diversified in situation or color, we are all of the same family, and stand in the same relation to him . . . .

Sir, allow me to remind you of that time, during the tyranny of the British crown ... that reduced you [white men] to a state of servitude: look back ... on the variety of dangers to which you were exposed [by the British] . . . . You cannot but acknowledge, that the present freedom and **tranquility** [*calm*] which you enjoy ... is the blessing of Heaven.

This, Sir, was a time when you clearly saw the injustice of a state of slavery . . . . "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Here was a time when you believed ideas of the great violation of liberty, and the freedom to which you [white men] were entitled by nature; but, Sir, how sad is it to reflect ... that you should at the same time counteract this, in enslaving by fraud and violence so many African Americans, under awful captivity and cruel oppression, that you should at the same time be found guilty of that most criminal act which you **detested** [*hated*] when forced upon you . . . .

And now, Sir, I shall conclude with the most profound respect, Your most obedient humble servant,

BENJAMIN BANNEKER.

*Banneker, Benjamin. August 19, 1791. Courtesy of PBS.org.*

**Document B**  
**Jefferson's Response to Banneker**

*Jefferson responded to Banneker a few weeks later on August 30, 1791, acknowledging his argument. Below is an excerpt from his letter.*

SIR,

I thank you, sincerely, for your letter of the 19th, and for the Almanac it contained.

Nobody wishes more than I do to see such evidence as you show that our black fellows have talents equal to those of the other colors of men; and that the current lack of these talents is because of the awful condition of their existence in America.

I can add with truth, that nobody wishes more strongly to start a good system for raising the condition, both of their body and mind, to what it should be . . . .

I have taken the liberty of sending your Almanac to Monsieur de Condozett, Secretary of the Academy of Sciences at Paris, and Member of the Philanthropic Society, because I considered it as a document that proved the merits of your fellow African Americans, [proving] against the doubts which have been thought of them.

I am with great esteem, Sir, Your most obedient Humble Servant,

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

*Jefferson, Thomas. August 30, 1791. Courtesy of PBS.org.*

## Option 2: Mum Bett/Elizabeth Freeman

Read the biography of Mum Bett (Elizabeth Freeman) on Biography.com.

### Document A

#### Elizabeth Freeman (Mum Bett): A Free Woman

*Because Elizabeth Freeman (Mum Bett) spent much of her life as a slave, little written documentation of her own ideas exists. Below is a copy of her will, created October 8, 1829; slaves could not make wills, thus writing a will was a statement of her freedom. Accompanying the will are two descriptions of her: the inscription on her gravestone, and an excerpt written by Catharine Sedgwick, the daughter of Freeman's lawyer, Thomas Sedgwick.*

#### Will

I Elizabeth Freeman of Stockbridge Massachusetts do make and publish this my last will and testament as follows—1st after the payment of my past debts I hereby give to Charles Sedgwick Esq. of Lenox all my real Estate in trust and for the uses and purposes following. It is my will and intention that one undivided half of said real Estate should be held by the said Charles for the sole use and benefit of my daughter Elizabeth and her heirs and the other half for the use and benefit of my Great Grandchildren Amos Josiah Van Schaack & Lydia Maria Ann Van Schaack and their heirs ... Secondly I give my household furniture and other personal property as follows—To my Daughter Elizabeth I give the following articles: Three gowns—1 black Silk—1 [other black silk] got from Philadelphia—1 [other black silk gown]—my largest silk shawl—a large home made birds eye petticoat—a short gown that was my mothers a white shawl with flowers—2 linen pocket handkerchiefs—one marked B.

#### Gravestone

ELIZABETH FREEMAN, Known by the name of Mum Bett, Died December 28, 1829. Her supposed age was 85 years. She was born a slave, and remained a slave for nearly 30 years: she could neither read nor write, yet in her own **sphere** [*area of control*] she had no superior nor equal: she neither wasted time or property: she never violated a trust, nor failed to perform a duty. In every situation of **domestic trial** [*housework*], she was the most efficient helper and the tenderest friend. GOOD MOTHER, FAREWELL

#### Catharine Sedgwick

Mum-Bett's character was composed of few but strong elements. Action was the law of her nature, and **conscious** [*aware*] of superiority to all around her she felt **servitude** [*being a servant*] intolerable. It was not the work—work was play to her. Her power of execution was marvellous. Nor was it awe of her kind master, or fear of her **despotic** [*tyrannical*] mistress, but it was the irresistible longing for liberty. I have heard her say: "Any time, any time while I was a slave, if one minute's freedom had been offered to me, and I had been told I must die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it—just to stand one minute on God's [earth] a free woman—I would."

*A Song Full of Hope. Making Freedom: African Americans in U.S. History. Courtesy of Heinemann.com.*

### Option 3: Mercy Otis Warren

Read the essay “Mercy Otis Warren: American Revolution Propagandist” by historian Jone Johnson Lewis on the ThoughtCo.com website.

#### Document A

##### Mercy Otis Warren: Observations on the New Constitution

Mercy Otis Warren joined the Anti-Federalists and wrote Observations on the New Constitution under the **pseudonym** [fake name] “a Columbian Patriot.” For some time, many people thought her essay was written by Elbridge Gerry, as it was rare at the time for women to contribute so actively in American politics. Below is an excerpt from Warren’s essay.

Filled with the strongest enthusiasm for the interest of this country, the peace and union of the American States, and the freedom and happiness of a people who have sacrificed for liberty in war and violence ... I cannot silently witness this insult [the new Constitution] without calling on them, before they lose their liberties . . . .

All writers on government agree ... that man is born free with certain rights that cannot be taken away—that government is created for the protection, safety, and happiness of the people, and not for the profit, honor, or private interest of any man, family, or class of men. That the origin of all power is in the people . . . . And if certain selected bodies of men ... decide against the wishes of the people, the people have the right to reject these decisions ... Yet many people are blindly supporting the opinions of those who want to limit these rights; and who are trying through manipulation to betray the people of the United States, into acceptance of a complicated system of government [the Constitution] . . . .

My complaints in the Constitution are the following:

There is no security in the Constitution either for the rights of **conscience** [individual beliefs] or the liberty of the Press . . . .

There are no well defined limits of the Judiciary Powers . . . .

The Executive and the Legislative are so dangerously blended as to give cause for alarm . . . .

That a Standing-Army is necessary for the dignity and safety of America, yet freedom is taken away when the **Despot** [tyrant] may draw out his armies to **suppress** [stop] the **murmurs** [whispers] of a few . . . .

Although the Constitution promises to guarantee a Republican form of government to every State in the Union ... there are no resources left for the support of the States. Every source of revenue [of the federal government] is in the hands of Congress . . . .

As the new members of Congress can determine their own salaries, the money for this purpose may be excessive, and the spending of public moneys will probably rise past all calculation . . . .

There is nothing to prevent [elected] office resting in the same hands for life; which through bribery, will probably be done, excluding the best men from their share in the offices of government . . . .

One Representative to thirty thousand inhabitants is a very inadequate representation . . . .

There is no provision by a bill of rights to guard against the dangers of power in too many instances to be named . . . .

The difficulty of exercising the equal and fair powers of government by a single legislature over such a large territory . . . .

*Warren, Mercy Otis. Observations on the new Constitution. Courtesy of Evans Early American Imprint Collection, Quod.lib.umich.edu.*

## First Ladies

### Option 1: Abigail Adams

Read the article “Abigail Adams” on the History Channel website.

## Document A

### Abigail Adams: Letter to John Adams

Abigail Adams wrote a letter on May 9, 1776, to her husband, and essentially all of Congress, pointing out the hypocrisy of the new government. Though John Adams did not take his wife’s advice on this matter, there is evidence he considered the issue, as he forwarded her concerns on to other members of Congress to consider. Below is an excerpt from this letter.

How many are the **solitary** [*lonely*] hours I spend, thinking upon the past, and anticipating the future, while you, overwhelmed with the cares of our State, have but few moments you can devote to any individual. All domestic pleasures and enjoyments are absorbed in the great and important duty you owe your Country . . . Thus do I **suppress** [*stop*] every wish, and silence every **Murmur** [*whisper*], agreeing to a painful Separation from [you,] the companion of my youth, and the Friend of my Heart.

... A Government of more Stability is much needed in this colony, and they are ready to receive it from the Hands of the Congress . . . .

I cannot say that I think you very generous to the Ladies, for while you are proclaiming peace and goodwill to Men, Freeing all Nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over Wives.

But you must remember that [unlimited] power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken—**notwithstanding** [*regardless*] all your wise Laws and Principles, we [American women] have it in our power not only to free ourselves but to **subdue** [*defeat*] our Masters [men], and without violence throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet.

“Charm by accepting, by submitting sway  
Yet have our Humour most when we obey.”

*Adams, Abigail. May 9, 1776. Courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society, MassHist.org.*

## Document B

### Abigail Adams’s Political Influence

Read the article, “Abigail Smith Adams (1744-1818)”, edited by Debra Michals, on the National Women’s History Museum website.

## Option 2: Dolley Madison: First Lady and Queen

*The following text was adapted from the essay “Dolley Madison: First Lady and Queen” by historian Catherine Allgor for the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

Whatever else you can say about Dolley Payne Todd Madison (1768–1849), she was famous. She was so well known and well regarded in her lifetime that, at her death in 1849, both houses of Congress adjourned, along with the Supreme Court, to join President Zachary Taylor, escorting her coffin in the largest funeral Washington, D.C., had ever seen. Dolley’s fame continued and grew after her death, as her image and name were used to sell everything from ice cream, snack cakes, and dishes to cigars and corsets. Historians of the early republic generally acknowledge that during James Madison’s presidency, Dolley Madison laid the foundation for the role of what would become the unofficial office of “first lady.”

For modern Americans, though, the issue of her fame is puzzling. Why was she the most famous woman, maybe the most famous American, in the world? Looking at the historical sources only seems to deepen the mystery. Dolley Madison is best known for redecorating the White House; for being a hostess, giving great parties to which all were welcome; and for possessing a kind and generous personality. Such qualities and capacities seem, well, nice, but how are they important?

Contextualizing Dolley’s career, however, supplies the answer to that puzzle. In short, Dolley was famous for precisely the same reason that other politicians had respect—she was powerful. And the source of her power lay in her sociability. What is missing is understanding the connection between female roles and political power. In fact, each of these three arenas of accomplishment—the redecorating, the parties, and use of her personality—represents her political work.

Let’s start with the “redecorating” of the executive mansion. Dolley’s efforts have been seen as a traditionally feminine act, an exercise in personal taste featuring that most female of activities—shopping. Recent scholarship has shown, however, that this kind of house renovation belongs more in the tradition of castle-building and construction than modern ideas of home as a private space. The construction of such private homes for public power was largely the job of men, such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who presided over homes at Mount Vernon and Monticello, respectively. That James Madison turned this project over to Dolley is a demonstration of his trust in her expertise. Such houses, if well done, can have tremendous psychological power, and indeed, Dolley’s creation of the president’s house soon acquired a nickname—“the White House”—and became a symbol of the capital city.

But what Dolley did at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue was less a redecoration than a restructuring. Dolley did not focus energy or money on the private chambers, but instead restructured the space into several public rooms: a parlor where Dolley received visitors, a dining room for her dinner parties, and a large, gorgeous reception room—the Oval Room. Before her renovation project, there was no one space in a public building or a private home in the whole area that could accommodate all the members of the federal government, let alone their families.

Dolley needed that kind of space because she intended to bring all of these people together under the Madison roof. She began her presidential entertaining almost immediately after James’s inauguration and set a record for the number of parties, calls, and other social activities. To understand how Dolley’s parties worked, we have to understand that for politics to happen, two spheres of activity are needed. The official sphere is the one we know well, that of the product of politics—the declaration, the legislation, and the press release. The unofficial sphere is what many call “behind the scenes,” where the processes of **politicking** [*engaging in political activity*], **lobbying** [*trying to convince those in power to support your interests*], and persuading go on. Unofficial spheres develop at social occasions and at homes, events, and spaces that are in women’s control. So—especially in an era before political equality—the unofficial sphere was a place for women to politick.



Dolley Madison's most important unofficial spheres were the weekly drawing rooms, which quickly became known as "Mrs. Madison's Wednesday nights." Dolley's events were open to all, friends and enemies alike, and people of all classes—official families, local gentry, visitors from across the country and the globe, and members of the diplomatic corps. Lured by the food, the music, and the dazzling setting, so many people attended these occasions that they became known as "squeezes."

Out of the glare of the official spotlight and in the flickering candlelight of the drawing room, people politicked in many ways, including asking for support for legislation, floating proposals, seeking financial support, and gathering and dispensing information. For the most part, people reacted positively to the drawing rooms; it is telling that those who did not still went. These events were essential to Washington business. Perhaps most importantly, under Dolley's watchful eye, the official men and their families began to learn to work together to build a ruling class and the tools for bipartisanship. These tools would come in handy for what the United States would eventually become: a two-party democracy, a nation-state with a strong presidency.

Everyone went to the drawing rooms, everyone described them in letters to the folks back home, and they always talked about Dolley. It is important to regard all these descriptions as something beyond colorful "celebrity mentions"—they were a form of political analysis. Right from the start, Dolley personified the Madison administration; she was the "charismatic figure." Charismatic figures are larger-than-life personas who are able to convey psychological and emotional messages. The lack of an established structure in the federal government meant that the new Americans focused on personalities for affirmation and reassurance. Right after the Revolution, they used George Washington; during the contentious early republic, Dolley took his place. Dolley used her own self to create an American queen around whom people could rally, a figure who radiated calm goodness. Her "Queen" dressed royally, or at least as most Americans imagined royalty would dress. Her gorgeous dress, lavish entertainments, and sense of ease transmitted messages of legitimacy, stability, and authority to new Americans and Europeans alike.

While people praised Dolley for her ensembles and her entertainments, they regarded most highly what they called her "good heart." She may have been a queen, but she was also, as one senator put it, "a queen of hearts." Dolley was famous for being an extraordinary spirit, generous and kind. She made people feel special, and everyone marveled at Dolley's ability to never forget a name and a face. These qualities of empathy, warmth, and courteous consideration were Dolley's own, but she and James turned her personality into a tool of policy. She did not just open the White House doors to all and step to the side. Dolley was always on the move at her drawing rooms, using her charm to defuse tension and discourage fights that might crop up.

All of Dolley's efforts to unify the capital city and federal government only intensified when the United States declared war on Great Britain in 1812. Wartime Washington was a bustling place, and Dolley held more parties than ever at the White House, which was emerging as a power center for the nation. While she had always **personified** [*represented*] the Madison administration, now Dolley seemed to personify American patriotism. Dolley strove to transmit messages of reassurance, and, when it was clear that the capital city was to be invaded, she tried to hold the town together. Finally forced to flee, Dolley preserved the portrait of George Washington that had hung in her dining room, knowing what it would mean to the American public if it were captured. Perhaps the greatest proof of her efforts came in the wake of Washington's darkest day. Dolley had made the capital such an important symbol to Americans that when the British burned the White House and the government buildings in August 1814, the American people were outraged. They pulled together to support the unpopular war, and legislation calling for relocation of the capital failed to pass Congress.

Looking back at Dolley's career, we can see why historians call her "the first 'first lady.'" She began the tradition of the presidential spouse's relationship with the White House. Dolley's use of the unofficial sphere of politics modeled the power of society for future first ladies. Finally, Dolley's success

as the charismatic figure has offered other political women the chance to be the face of a husband's administration.

The men of her day might not have been able to envision bipartisanship, but Dolley could. For the men, politics was an all-or-nothing, zero-sum activity, where they regularly fought and murdered each other over ideologies. That Dolley could envision a politics of cooperation and power sharing marks her as the most modern politician of her time. This model is her lasting gift to the nation.

*"America's First Ladies": History Now 35 (Spring 2013)*

### Option 3: Martha Washington

Read the article “Martha Washington” on the History Channel website.

#### Document A Letter to Martha

The following excerpt is adapted from a letter written to Martha Washington from George Washington.

My Dearest,

I am now set down to write to you on a subject which fills me with much concern—and this concern is greatly Increased when I **reflect on** [*think about*] the uneasiness I know it will give you. It has been determined in Congress, that the whole Army **raised** [*assembled*] for the defense of the American Cause shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take Command of it . . . .

It has been a kind of destiny that has thrown me upon this Service, and I shall hope that my undertaking of it is designed to answer some good purpose . . . .

My unhappiness will flow from the uneasiness I know you will feel at being left alone—I therefore beg of you to **summon** [*gather*] your whole strength and courage, and pass your time as agreeably as possible—nothing will give me so much sincere satisfaction as to hear this, and to hear it from your own Pen . . . .

Because Life is always uncertain, common **prudence** [*sense*] dictates to every Man that he must settle his **temporal** [*earthly*] Concerns while it is in his power, I have given Colo. Pendleton directions to Draft a Will for me, which I now Inclose. The Provision made for you, in case of my death, will, I hope, be agreeable. I have Included the Money for which I sold my own Land (to Doctor Mercer) in the **Sum** [*amount*] given you, as also all other Debts . . . .

I shall add nothing more at present as I have several Letters to write, but to desire you will remember me to Milly & all Friends, and to assure you that I am with most unfeigned regard, My dear Patcy Yr Affecte.

George Washington

*Courtesy of National Archives.*

## First Presidents

### Option 1: James Madison

Read the article “James Madison” on the History Channel website.

## Document A

### James Madison: Speech on the Amendments to the Constitution

*Not everyone was satisfied with the Constitution; they feared that it did not promise enough liberty to the people. In response, Madison helped draft the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution. Below is an excerpt from Madison’s speech in 1789 about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.*

It cannot be a secret to the gentlemen in this house that despite the ratification of the Constitution by a majority, still there is a great number of our citizens who are dissatisfied with it . . . .

I do believe that the constitution may be amended; if all power can be abused, then we should guard against this abuse in a more secure way. We have in this way something to gain, and nothing to lose; and in this case it is necessary to proceed with caution; while we want to revise the Constitution, we must ... make that revision a moderate one.

I do not want to reconsider the entire Constitution or the principles and the substance of the powers given; because, if such a door was opened, it would go too far and endanger government: But I do wish to see a door opened to consider those provisions for the security of rights . . . .

There have been objections of various kinds made against the Constitution ... but I believe that the great mass of the people who opposed it, disliked it because it did not contain effective **provisions** [*protections*] against threats to particular rights . . . .

The first of these amendments [that I propose] are what may be called a bill of rights; I admit that I never considered this provision so essential to the federal constitution that this constitution cannot be ratified without it ... at the same time, I always believed, that in a certain form and to a certain extent, such a provision was neither bad nor useless.

I am aware that a great number of the most respectable men and champions for republican liberty have thought such a provision not only unnecessary, but even improper ... I believe some have gone so far as to think [a Bill of Rights] even dangerous . . . . The people of many states have thought it necessary to raise barriers against power in all forms and departments of government, and I am inclined to believe, if once bills of rights are established in all the states as well as the federal constitution, we shall find that ... on the whole, they will be important . . . .

In our government it is, perhaps, less necessary to guard against the abuse in the executive department than any other; because it is not the stronger branch of the system, but the weaker: It therefore must be made against the legislative, for it is the most powerful, and most likely to be abused, because it is under the least control . . . .

But I do believe that in a government like this of the United States, the great danger lies in the abuse of the community than in the legislative body . . . . The danger lies in the body of the people, operating by the majority against the minority . . . .

I conclude from this view of the subject, that it will be proper in itself for the **tranquility** [*calm*] of the public mind, and the stability of the government, that we should offer something to be incorporated in the system of government as a declaration of the rights of the people.

*Madison, James. 1789. Courtesy of TeachingAmericanHistory.org.*

## Option 2: Presidential Profile: James Monroe

Read the article “Presidential Profile: James Monroe” on the Newsela website.

### Document B The Monroe Doctrine

*The following speech was given by President James Monroe to the United States Congress December 2, 1823.*

The Russian Government hopes to negotiate the respective rights and interests of Russia and the United States on the northwest coast of North America. A similar proposal has been made by Great Britain . . . . These conversations lead us to assert that, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, must not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers . . . .

Of events in the European quarter of the globe, with which we have so much interaction, and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested spectators. The citizens of the United States care deeply about the liberty and happiness of their fellow men on that side of the Atlantic. In the wars of the European powers, in matters relating to themselves, we have never taken any part, nor will we. It is only when our rights are invaded, or seriously threatened . . . . With the movements in this hemisphere, we are, of necessity, more immediately connected . . . . The political system of the allied powers is essentially different, in this respect, from that of America . . . . We are committed to the defense of our nation, which has been achieved by the loss of so much blood and treasure, and matured by the wisdom of their most enlightened citizens. We owe it, therefore, to the good relations existing between the United States and those European powers, to declare, that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their government to any portion of this hemisphere, as dangerous to our peace and safety . . . .

It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of North or South America, without endangering our peace and happiness . . . . It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in the hope that other powers will pursue the same course.

*Monroe, James. President’s Annual Message to Congress, “The Monroe Doctrine”. December 2, 1823. Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

### Option 3: John Adams

Read the article “Presidential Profile: John Adams” on the Newsela website.

#### Document A The Alien and Sedition Acts

*In the late 1790s, tensions rose between the United States and France. Many Federalists feared the close relationship between Democratic-Republicans with France. In response, in 1798, President Adams issued the Alien and Sedition Acts, four laws that were directed against Democratic-Republicans.*

##### **An Act Concerning Aliens**

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That it shall be lawful for the President of the United States at any time during the continuance of this act, to order all such **aliens** [*non-citizens*] as he shall judge dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States, or shall have reasonable grounds to suspect are concerned in any treasonable or secret plans against the government, to depart out of the territory of the United States . . . .

##### **An Act Respecting Alien Enemies**

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That whenever there shall be a declared war between the United States and any foreign nation or government, or any invasion shall be perpetrated, attempted, or threatened against the territory of the United States, by any foreign nation or government , . . . all male adult people from the hostile nation who are not U.S. citizens may be punished, restrained, secured, and removed, as alien enemies . . . .

##### **An Act for the Punishment of Certain Crimes Against the United States**

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That if any persons shall unlawfully conspire together, with intent to oppose any measures of the government of the United States . . . . or to impede the operation of any law of the United States , . . . and if any persons, shall advise or attempt to start any riot or unlawful assembly ... they shall be deemed guilty of a high crime . . . .

Section 2. And be it further enacted, That if any person shall write, print, utter or publish, or shall cause to be written, printed, uttered or published, or shall knowingly and willingly assist or aid in writing, printing, uttering or publishing any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States ... with intent to defame the government ... or to aid or encourage any hostile plans of any foreign nation against United States, such person shall be punished.

*Courtesy of OurDocuments.gov.*

#### **Option 4: Thomas Jefferson**

Read the article “Presidential Profile: Thomas Jefferson” on the Newsela website.

#### **Document A**

##### **Thomas Jefferson Drafts a Law on Religious Freedom**

*Thomas Jefferson wrote the law below in 1779, during the Revolutionary War. It was passed by Virginia’s state government seven years later, in 1786. The law declared that the Church of England would no longer be Virginia’s one official faith. It granted freedom of religion to people of all faiths, including Catholics, Jews, and Protestants. Jefferson’s law was an important forerunner of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. When Congress passed that amendment, it gave all Americans the right to follow any religion.*

I. Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it ... make men hypocritical and mean, and are not the plan of God . . . .

II. Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be forced to support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be forced, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to announce, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that their religious beliefs shall not decrease, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

III. And though we know that this assembly elected by the people has no power to restrain the acts of future assemblies, yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall be passed to repeal this act in the future, or to limit it, such as would be an infringement [violation] of natural right.

*Jefferson, Thomas. Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. January 16, 1786. Courtesy of Virginia Museum of History and Culture.*