

# Jefferson and Political Parties

## General

### Grade Level

High School

### Author Info

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### Type of Lesson

Document Analysis

### Duration

3-4 Class Periods

### Interdisciplinary Connections

The reading and analysis of primary source documents provides students with an opportunity to develop interdisciplinary skills that would also be applicable in an English/Language Arts classroom.

## Objectives

### Overview

Many Americans feel as though our current political system is in an unprecedented era of partisan division. The reality is, however, that partisan division has always been a major element in our government. The purpose of this lesson is to examine Jefferson's role in political divisions during the early years of the Republic. By examining multiple primary source documents related to five different political topics that Jefferson was connected to, students will be provided with a window into Jefferson's political world.

## Prior Knowledge

This lesson is designed to provide insight and perspective into key political events and the role individual partisanship and bickering played in their development. It is not designed to provide complete historical context to every one of these topics. In order to truly benefit from the materials provided here, students should be familiar with the key political issues during the Presidencies of Washington, Adams, and Jefferson. These events include Hamilton's financial plan, Jay's Treaty, the Election of 1796, The Alien and Sedition Acts, and the election of 1800. An assigned reading of the appropriate chapters in a typical US History textbook should provide appropriate context.

## State Standards

Massachusetts

USI.22

*Summarize the major policies and political developments that took place during the presidencies of George Washington (1789-1797), John Adams (1797-1801), and Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809).*

*A. The origins of the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties in the 1790s.*

*B. The conflicting ideas of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton*

*C. The Alien and Sedition Acts*

USG2.7

*Identify and explain historical and contemporary efforts to narrow discrepancies between foundational ideas and values of American democracy and realities of American political and civic life.*

USG2.8

*Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues concerning foundational ideas or values in tension or conflict.*

USG3.7

*Trace the evolution of political parties in the American governmental system, and analyze their functions in elections and government at national and state levels of the federal system.*

## Objectives/Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to understand, explain, and evaluate the role key individuals, including Thomas Jefferson, played in the development of political parties in the United States.

- Students will be able to identify the positions of the first two political parties in America with regards to a number of different topics.
- Students will develop their skills with primary source analysis, being able to identify tone, perspective, and bias.

## Procedures

### 1. 30 minutes

#### **Activity 1: General discussion about political parties in America.**

For the first part of this class discussion, teachers should lead students in a conversation about America's political system today. Specifically, ask students to identify the two major political parties as well as some of the general beliefs that each of these parties hold. The teacher can choose to lead this conversation informally, or can create a list of political beliefs for each party on the board as well as diagram the political spectrum.

The second part of the class discussion should revolve around political culture. Specifically, the instructor should ask the students whether politicians today treat one another with respect and appear to appreciate and tolerate differences in opinion. Examples of events from recent political campaigns would be very appropriate here, and teachers should endeavor to discuss current political leaders from each political party, as well as political topics and debates that are currently in the news.

### 2. 20-30 min (or approx 2 hours if students read all packets)

#### **Activity 2: Reading and analysis of documents**

Explain to students that political disagreement has been a part of our government since its inception. Therefore, students will be analyzing primary source documents as a way to create a window into America's political past. Specifically, students will be grouped, and each group will be given a series of documents on a specific political topic from the 1790s-early 1800s related to Thomas Jefferson.

Students should be divided into five groups. Each group should be given ONE of the document packets (*available as pdf downloads in this lesson plan's materials section*). Each of the packets relates to a specific topic.

Packet A: Deals with general thoughts on government as well as Jefferson's reaction to a new pamphlet written by Thomas Paine.

Packet B: Deals with disagreements between Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton during George Washington's administration.

Packet C: Deals with disagreements regarding Jay's Treaty.

Packet D: Deals with Jefferson's reaction to the situation surrounding the election of 1796.

Packet E: Deals with correspondence between Jefferson and Abigail Adams regarding political disagreements between Presidents Adams and Jefferson.

Each packet has a brief introduction to provide context. It then has document specific questions and then overarching questions. Individually, students should read and then within the margins, mark up, ask questions, and connect to things that they have previously learned. They should then answer each of the questions on separate paper.

3. *15-20 minutes*

**Activity 3: Discuss packet with group**

Once each of the group members has completed this task, they should convene as a group to share and discuss their answers. Students should be encouraged to ask questions of one another and make sure they understand each of the documents, because they will each be responsible for explaining the documents to some of their peers.

4. *25-30 minutes*

**Activity 4: Mix groups and share**

Student groups should be mixed so that the new groups have one representative from each document packet/topic. Each group member should summarize each of the documents that they were responsible for.

As a group, students should fill out the graphic organizer that highlights differences between the Republican and Federalist parties that are discussed in the document packets (*available as a pdf in this lesson plan's materials section*).

5. *30-40 minutes*

**Activity 5: Access to rest of packets (potentially for homework)**

30-40 minutes: As a potential homework assignment, students could be given access to the remainder of the document packets. They could spend time familiarizing themselves with the documents in preparation for a class discussion and/or document based essay question.

6. *30 minutes*

**Activity 6: Class discussion on issues**

Once students have completed their document analysis and group assignments, the teacher should lead a class discussion in which there is an attempt to draw compare and contrast current political culture and the political culture of the early republic. *Refer to the Discussion Questions resource (available as a pdf) in this lesson plan's materials section.*

7. 45 minutes (or assign as take home essay)

### **Activity 7: Document Based Essay**

After the class discussion has been completed, the teacher should assign a document based essay. This essay can be assigned as an in class essay or a take home essay. Students should be able to refer to the document packets when crafting their arguments. *Refer to the assessment worksheet (available as a pdf) in this lesson plan's materials section.* This worksheet also has suggestions for further learning activities.

## **Materials**

### **Materials Needed**

[Packet A – Government, Jefferson, and Paine](#)

[Packet B – Jefferson/Hamilton Disputes](#)

[Packet C – Jay's Treaty](#)

[Packet D – Election of 1796](#)

[Packet E – Jefferson and Abigail Adams](#)

[Graphic Organizer](#)

[Discussion Prompts](#)

[DBQ Questions](#)

[DBQ Rubric](#)

## **Assessment**

Formative Assessment:

Student questioning and participation in class discussion should provide an avenue for formative

assessment. The teacher can also choose to collect responses to the individual questions in the document packet in order to check for understanding. Finally, student presentations to their groups will provide an opportunity to determine if mastery of the material has been achieved.

Summative Assessment:

A document based essay question (see procedures and handout with proposed questions) provides the summative assessment for this lesson.

## **Accommodations**

### **Accommodations – Students with Special Needs**

To accommodate the needs of a diverse set of learners this lesson can be modified in a variety of ways:

- The instructor can choose to limit the number of documents each student is responsible for.
- The teacher could consider giving only one set of documents to the entire class rather than making students responsible for presenting packets to one another.
- The teacher could choose to model how to analyze some of the documents using an overhead projector.
- The teacher could reduce the length of selected documents to make the assignment more manageable.
- Dictionaries can be provided for use while students are reading.

### **Accommodations – Advanced Learners**

For more advanced students, teachers should consider the following:

- Reduce or remove the guiding questions that are provided for each document.
- Make students responsible for reading and analyzing multiple document packets.
- Have the reading and analysis component completed for homework and spend more time on in class discussion.
- Require the groups responsible for each packet to lead a class discussion.
- Increase the requirements of the DBQ essay and encourage students to conduct additional primary and secondary source research.