

Document Packet 'B'

Instructions: Read the background and context, followed by the four documents, then answer the questions that follow.

Background and Context:

In the early 1790s, the debate over the role of the national government under the new constitution was in its infancy. Within George Washington's cabinet, disagreement over policy quickly developed.

Questions

Document 1:

- 1) Who does Alexander Hamilton identify as his chief political adversaries?
- 2) What is the chief issue upon which there was disagreement?
- 3) Why is he so surprised that Madison appears to disagree with him?
- 4) Respond to and analyze what Hamilton has to say about Jefferson at the very end of this letter. What do you think he means?

Document 2:

- 1) What does Jefferson have to say about Hamilton in the first half of this letter?
- 2) What, according to Jefferson, has Hamilton accused him of?
- 3) Who do you think Fenno and Freneau are? Do you think they might be important? Why or why not?
- 4) Do you find Jefferson believable? Why or why not?

Overall Questions:

- 1) What do these documents teach us about political culture at the time?
- 2) What do these documents teach us about the personalities of Hamilton and Jefferson?

Document B1:

Alexander Hamilton to Edward Carrington

My Dear Sir

Philadelphia May 26th, 1792

Believing that I possess a share of your personal friendship and confidence and yielding to that which I feel towards you—persuaded also that our political creed is the same on two essential points, 1st the necessity of Union to the respectability and happiness of this Country and 2 the necessity of an efficient general government to maintain that Union—I have concluded to unbosom myself to you on the present state of political parties and views.....

...It was not 'till the last session that I became unequivocally convinced of the following truth—“That Mr. Madison cooperating with Mr. Jefferson is at the head of a faction decidedly hostile to me and my administration, and actuated by views in my judgment subversive of the principles of good government and dangerous to the union, peace and happiness of the Country.”

These are strong expressions; they may pain your friendship for one or both of the Gentlemen whom I have named. I have not lightly resolved to hazard them. They are the result of a Serious alarm in my mind for the public welfare, and of a full conviction that what I have alledged is a truth, and a truth, which ought to be told and well attended to, by all the friends of Union and efficient National Government....This conviction in my mind is the result of a long train of circumstances; many of them minute. To attempt to detail them all would fill a volume. I shall therefore confine myself to the mention of a few.

First—As to the point of opposition to me and my administration.

Mr. Jefferson with very little reserve manifests his dislike of the funding system generally; calling in question the expediency of funding a debt at all.In various conversations with foreigners as well as citizens, he has thrown censure on my principles of government and on my measures of administration. He has predicted that the people would not long tolerate my proceedings & that I should not long maintain my ground. Some of those, whom he immediately and notoriously moves, have even whispered suspicions of the rectitude of my motives and conduct. In the question concerning the Bank he not only delivered an opinion in writing against its constitutionality &

expediency; but he did it in a stile and manner which I felt as partaking of asperity and ill humour towards me....

.....With regard to Mr. Madison—the matter stands thus. I have not heard, but in the one instance to which I have alluded, of his having held language unfriendly to me in private conversation. But in his public conduct there has been a more uniform & persevering opposition than I have been able to resolve into a sincere difference of opinion. I cannot persuade myself that Mr. Madison and I, whose politics had formerly so much the same point of departure, should now diverge so widely in our opinions of the measures which are proper to be pursued. The opinion I once entertained of the candour and simplicity and fairness of Mr. Madisons character has, I acknowledge, given way to a decided opinion that it is one of a peculiarly artificial and complicated kind...

...In almost all the questions great & small which have arisen, since the first session of Congress, Mr. Jefferson & Mr. Madison have been found among those who were disposed to narrow the Federal authority. The question of a National Bank is one example. The question of bounties to the Fisheries is another. Mr. Madison resisted it on the ground of constitutionality, 'till it was evident, by the intermediate questions taken, that the bill would pass & he then under the wretched subterfuge of a change of a single word "bounty" for "allowance" went over to the Majority & voted for the bill. In the Militia bill & in a variety of minor cases he has leaned to abridging the exercise of foederal authority, & leaving as much as possible to the States & he has lost no opportunity of sounding the alarm with great affected solemnity at encroachments meditated on the rights of the States, & of holding up the bugbear of a faction in the Government having designs unfriendly to Liberty.

This kind of conduct has appeared to me the more extraordinary on the part of Mr. Madison as I know for a certainty it was a primary article in his Creed that the real danger in our system was the subversion of the National authority by the preponderancy of the State Governments. All his measures have proceeded on an opposite supposition....

If I were disposed to promote Monarchy & overthrow State Governments, I would mount the hobby horse of popularity—I would cry out usurpation—danger to liberty &c. &c—I would endeavour to prostrate the National Government—raise a ferment—and then "ride in the Whirlwind and direct the Storm." That there are men acting with

Jefferson & Madison who have this in view I verily believe. I could lay my finger on some of them. That Madison does not mean it I also verily believe, and I rather believe the same of Jefferson; but I read him upon the whole thus—"A man of profound ambition & violent passions."

Letter Available in: *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge (Federal Edition) (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904). In 12 vols. Vol. 9

Document B2:

To George Washington

Dear Sir

Monticello Sep. 9. 1792

...I now take the liberty of proceeding to that part of your letter wherein you notice the internal dissentions which have taken place within our government, and their disagreeable effect on it's movements. That such dissentions have taken place is certain, and even among those who are nearest to you in the administration. To no one have they given deeper concern than myself; to no one equal mortification at being myself a part of them. Tho' I take to myself no more than my share of the general observations of your letter, yet I am so desirous ever that you should know the whole truth, and believe no more than the truth, that I am glad to seize every occasion of developing to you whatever I do or think relative to the government; and shall therefore ask permission to be more lengthy now than the occasion particularly calls for, or would otherwise perhaps justify....

...When I embarked in the government, it was with a determination to intermeddle not at all with the legislature, and as little as possible with my co-departments. The first and only instance of variance from the former part of my resolution, I was duped into by the Secretary of the treasury, and made a tool for forwarding his schemes, not then sufficiently understood by me; and of all the errors of my political life, this has occasioned me the deepest regret....

.... If it has been supposed that I have ever intrigued among the members of the legislature to defeat the plans of the Secretary of the Treasury, it is contrary to all truth. As I never had the desire to influence the members, so neither had I any other means than my friendships, which I valued too highly to risk by usurpations on their freedom of judgment, and the conscientious pursuit of their own sense of duty. That I have utterly, in my private conversations, disapproved of the system of the Secretary of the treasury, I acknowledge and avow: and this was not merely a speculative difference. His system flowed from principles adverse to liberty, and was calculated to undermine and demolish the republic, by creating an influence of his department over the members of the legislature.....

.... To this justification of opinions, expressed in the way of conversation, against the views of Colo. Hamilton, I beg leave to add some notice of his late charges against me in Fenno's gazette: for neither the stile, matter, nor venom of the pieces alluded to can leave a doubt of their author. Spelling my name and character at full length to the public, while he conceals his own under the signature of 'an American' he charges me 1. with having written letters from Europe to my friends to oppose the present constitution while depending. 2. with a desire of not paying the public debt. 3. with setting up a paper to decry and slander the government....

.... 1. The first charge is most false. No man in the U.S., I suppose, approved of every tittle in the constitution: no one, I believe approved more of it than I did: and more of it was certainly disapproved by my accuser than by me, and of it's parts most vitally republican....

.... 2. The second charge is equally untrue. My whole correspondence while in France, and every word, letter, and act on the subject since my return, prove that no man is more ardently intent to see the public debt soon and sacredly paid off than I am. This exactly marks the difference between Colo. Hamilton's views and mine, that I would wish the debt paid tomorrow; he wishes it never to be paid, but always to be a thing wherewith to corrupt and manage the legislature. 3. I have never enquired what number of sons, relations and friends of Senators, representatives, printers or other useful partisans Colo. Hamilton has provided for among the hundred clerks of his department, the thousand excisemen, customhouse officers, loan officers &c. &c. &c. appointed by him, or at his nod, and spread over the Union; nor could ever have imagined that the man who has the shuffling of millions backwards and forwards from paper into money and money into paper, from Europe to America, and America to Europe, the dealing out of Treasury-secrets among his friends in what time and measure he pleases, and who never slips an occasion of making friends with his means, that such an one I say would have brought forward a charge against me for having appointed the poet Freneau translating clerk to my office, with a salary of 250. dollars a year. That fact stands thus. While the government was at New York I was applied to on behalf of Freneau to know if there was any place within my department to which he could be appointed. I answered there were but four clerkships, all of which I found full, and continued without any change. When we removed to Philadelphia, Mr. Pintard the translating clerk, did not chuse to remove with us. His office then became vacant. I was again applied to there for Freneau, and had no hesitation to promise the clerkship for

him. I cannot recollect whether it was at the same time, or afterwards, that I was told he had a thought of setting up a newspaper there.....

TH: Jefferson

Letter Available In: The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 8. Andrew Lipscomb, ed. 1908.