

Source Documents

1. Review and discuss these sources documents. They are from different times and different people. They are intended to show a variety of aspects of Jefferson's Presidency
 2. Review the questions in each section about the documents
 3. Consider the Origin, Purpose, Value and Limitations of these documents
 4. Next consider how these documents can help you answer the written assignment that you will complete at the end of this unit
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1. The Impact of the Election of 1800

Inauguration address - The transcript of Thomas Jefferson's First Inaugural Speech can be found at the webpage of the Avalon Project of Yale Law School (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jefinau1.asp)

- What do you think is the main aim of this speech?
 - Why does Jefferson refer to Washington indirectly and not to Adams?
 - What does this speech tell his audience about his aims for his Presidency?
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2. The Constitution and the Louisiana Purchase

Extract from letter from Thomas Jefferson to John Dickinson on the Constitution and the Louisiana Purchase August 9th 1803

'The acquisition of New Orleans would of itself have been a great thing.....but that of Louisiana is inappreciable,because,giving us the sole dominion of the Mississippi, it excludes those bickerings with foreign powers, which we know of a certainty would have put us at war with France immediately: and it secures to us the course of a peaceable nation.

....But there is a difficulty in the acquisition which presents a handle to the malcontents among us, though they have not discovered it. Our confederation is certainly confined to the limits established by revolution. The general government has no powers but such as the constitution has given it; and it has given it a power of holding foreign territory, & still less incorporating it into the Union. An amendment of the Constitution seems necessary for this. In the meantime we must ratify & pay our money, as we have treated, for a thing beyond the constitution, and rely on the nation to sanction an act done for its great good, without its previous authority.....

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Extract from page 261 and 262, Volume VIII 'The writings of Thomas Jefferson' Edited by Paul Ford, Published by G.P.Putnam's Sons 1898

1. Jefferson considers the Louisiana Purchase to be outside the terms of the Constitution. What does the fact of the completion of the purchase and the fact that the Constitution is not amended concerning the purchase suggest to you about Jefferson as a politician?

3 Approach to and style of government

Jeffersonwaited...in order to establish new social code; and that there might be no misunderstanding, he drafted with his own hand the rules which were to control Executive society, rules intended to correct a tendency toward monarchical habits introduced by President Washington

In 1801 on coming into power Jefferson announced that he would admit not the smallest distinction that might separate him from the mass of his fellow citizens. He dispensed with the habit of setting apart certain days and hours fro receiving visits of business or curiosity, announcing that he would on any day and at any hour receive in a friendly and hospitable manner those who should call upon him.

History of the United States during the administration of Thomas Jefferson - Henry Adams at page 363, published by Albert and Charles Boni 1930

1. How important are appearances and image for leaders?
 2. Why do you think it was so important for Jefferson to break with the traditions and ceremonies of Washington and Adams? What does it tell you about his attitude to the role of the President and the Republic?
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4. Domestic Challenges - The Embargo Act

Extract from a 'Circular letter from the Secretary of War to the Governors' 17th January 1809 (drafted by Thomas Jefferson)

'Sir,

The Pressure of the embargo, though sensibly felt by every description of our fellow citizens, has yet been cheerfully borne by most of them, under the conviction that it was a temporary evil, and a necessary one to save us from greater and more permanent evils.....But it would have been more cheerfully borne, but for the knowledge that, while honest men were religiously observing it, the unprincipled along our sea coast and frontiers were fraudulently evading it; and that in some parts they had even dared to break through it openly, by an armed force too powerful to be opposed by the collector and his assistants. To end this insubordination to the laws, the Legislature has authorized the

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President to empower proper persons to employ militia, for preventing or suppressing armed or riotous assemblages of persons resisting custom-house officers in the exercise of their duties, or opposing or violating the embargo laws.....

Extract from page 237, Volume IX 'The writings of Thomas Jefferson' Edited by Paul Ford, Published by G.P.Putnam's Sons 1898

1. Why was armed force need to support the Embargo Act?
 2. How does the Embargo Act link to events abroad?
 3. Is the use of Militia in peacetime something you are surprised about?
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5. Foreign Policy - War and Alliances

An extract from a letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison - 27 August 1805

'I think you have misconceived the nature of the treaty I thought we should propose to England. I have no idea of committing ourselves immediately or independently of our further will to the war. The treaty should be provisional only, to come into force on the event of our being engaged in war with either France or Spain during the present war in Europe. In that event we should make common cause, and England should stipulate not to make peace without our obtaining the objects for which we go to war to wit, the acknowledgment by Spain of the rightful boundaries of Louisianaand 2, indemnification for spoils, for which purpose we should be allowed to make reprisals on the Floridas and retain them as indemnification. Our co-operation in the war(if we should actually enter into it) would be sufficient consideration for Great Britain to engage for it's object; and it being generally known to France and Spain that we had entered into treaty with England, would probably ensure us a peaceable and immediate settlement of both points.'

Extract from page 376, Volume VIII 'The writings of Thomas Jefferson' Edited by Paul Ford, Published by G.P.Putnam's Sons 1898.

1. What is the overriding purpose of Jefferson's Foreign Policy?
2. Does Jefferson want to go to war?