

John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the Birth of Party Politics in America

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What the unit does

In this unit students will learn how the Federalist and Republican Parties, represented by John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were founded, what they believed, and their struggle for the hearts and minds of the American people. Students will also learn how, despite their very different views, members of these two parties shared an idealistic vision and belief in the future of the United States, that in the end transcended vicious party rivalries.

Purpose

The presidential elections of 2000 and 2004 have demonstrated that the electorate is fiercely divided. How can the country hope to survive if so many of its people disagree on so many issues? In truth the nation has always found itself divided on important issues of the day: trade, slavery, civil rights, Vietnam, abortion, etc. Despite these political divisions the United States has grown and prospered—how? The answer to this question is fundamental to students' understanding of American history. The people of the United States may disagree on some fundamental issues, but they find common ground in the country's founding ideals: republican government, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech. These commonly held beliefs have prevailed despite factional politics and a bloody Civil War, and have enabled the people to look past their differences to the promise of what America can be.

Studying the relationship of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson is an excellent way for students to understand this unifying dynamic in American political history. Adams and Jefferson worked together to help unite thirteen colonies and founded a nation based on commonly held beliefs. They then parted ways on fundamental political disagreements, and in later life were reunited by their commonly held beliefs.

Introduction

Much has been made of the two Americas that came out to vote in the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections. One America covers the southern and Midwestern portions of the country. It is religious, conservative and votes Republican. The other includes the Northeast and Pacific coasts. It is secular, liberal, and votes for the Democratic Party. The two Americas are so different in their political beliefs that the media has color-coded them as blue states and red states. After George W. Bush's narrow victory in 2004, some citizens of the blue states seriously contemplated moving to Canada and giving up United States citizenship. These events, viewed without historic perspective, are troublesome. How can a nation survive and prosper when vast sections of its populace hold diametrically opposed political views? Fortunately some knowledge of the past can answer this question. After all, the country was founded by men with very different ideas about what type of nation the United States should become, and the nation they forged survived and prospered despite these different visions.

The first American political parties, the Federalists and Republicans, were the embodiment of these different visions for the nation. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, as the first and second elected American presidents from declared parties, provide an excellent window into the birth of partisan politics in the United States. The two began

their political careers as friends and allies, but their different political visions eventually destroyed their relationship. Fortunately, after both men had retired from public life, they began a correspondence which lasted for years and rekindled their friendship, proving that though Americans had—and have—very different views of what sort a nation the United States should be, they have been able to work through these differences and build a strong and united country.

Lesson One

Red State. Blue State.

Objectives

Students will be able to explain:

- 1) What red states and blue states are.
- 2) The outcome of the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections.
- 3) How close the elections were.
- 4) Major current political divisions in America.

Materials

- 1) Red and blue crayons.
- 2) A blank map of the United States.
- 3) **1.1:** The article “Blue States Buzz over Secession” by Joseph Curl. *The Washington Times*.

Lesson Outline

- Explain to students what red states and blue states are.
- Display an overhead depicting red states and blue states.
- Hand out blank maps of the United States and blue and red crayons. Have students color in blue states and red states.
- Explain the outcome of the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections. Emphasize how close these elections were, and that the results demonstrate how politically divided the people of the United States are.
- Students will read the article “Blue States Buzz over Secession” and answer the following questions. 1) What are some of the reasons given for why some in the blue states would want to secede from the Union? 2) In what ways do people from different regions and political parties describe each other?

1.1

Excerpt from “Blue States Buzz over Secession,” by Joseph Curl *The Washington Times*, 9 November 2004

Secession, which didn't work very well when it was tried once before, is suddenly red hot in the blue states. In certain precincts, anyway. One popular map circulating on the Internet shows 19 blue states won by Sen. John Kerry—Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Maryland and the Northeastern states—conjoined with Canada to form the “United States of Canada.” The 31 red states carried by Mr. Bush are depicted as a separate nation dubbed “Jesusland.”

The idea isn't just a joke; one top Democrat says, “The segment of the country that pays for the federal government is now being governed by the people who don't pay for the federal government.”

“Some would say, ‘Oh poor Alabama. It's cut off from the wealth infusion that it gets from New York and California,’” said Lawrence O'Donnell, a veteran Democratic insider and now senior political analyst at MSNBC. “But the more this political condition goes on at the presidential level of the red and blue states, the more you're testing the inclination of the blue states to say, ‘So what?’”

Mr. O'Donnell raised the subject of secession on “The McLaughlin Group” during the weekend. “Ninety percent of the red states are welfare-client states of the federal government,” said Mr. O'Donnell, who was an aide to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, New York Democrat.

In a telephone interview, Mr. O'Donnell said the red states that went to Mr. Bush “collect more from the federal government than they send in. New York and California, Connecticut—the states that are blue are all the states that are paying for the bulk of everything this government does, from... Social Security to everything else, and the people in those states don't like what this government is doing.”

The Internet has exploded with talk of a blue-state confederacy, including one screed circulating by e-mail that features a map of a new country called “American Coastopia” and proposes lopping off the Northeast, the West Coast and the upper Midwest to form a new country, away from the “rednecks in Oklahoma” and the “homophobic knuckle-draggers in Wyoming.”

“We were all going to move to various other countries, but then we thought—why should WE move?” the anonymous message asks. “We hold our noses as we fly over you. We are sickened by the way you treat people that are different from you. The rest of the world despises America, and we don't want to be lumped in with you anymore.” The secession movement has already spawned commercial opportunism. One Web site is selling T-shirts that read “I seceded.”

No one at the White House would comment on calls for secession, but one top Republican official with ties to the Bush administration said the recent talk is not surprising, coming off an election in which the president received more than 59 million votes—the most in history.

“If we were that far out of the mainstream, maybe we’d be pushing the creation of our own country,” the official said. “Then we might have a chance of ever winning an election again.”

But Andy Nowicki, a libertarian blogger, said the blue states will never secede because “liberals don’t want to leave their enemies alone. Instead, as their track record shows, they want to take over the government in order to force their enemies to endure perpetual sensitivity training for being such racist, sexist, homophobic, ‘closed-minded’ boors, i.e., for disagreeing with them.”

The emergence of a solidly Republican South prompted longtime Democratic activist Bob Beckel to advocate Southern independence the morning after Election Day. “I think now that slavery is taken care of, I’m for letting the South form its own nation. Really, I think they ought to have their own confederacy,” Mr. Beckel said on the “Fox and Friends” program.

[...]

Lesson Two

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson work for a formal declaration of independence.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Explain that John Adams and Thomas Jefferson served together in the Continental Congress during the early stages of the Revolutionary War.
- 2) Describe the ways in which both men worked together to convince the 13 colonies to officially separate from Britain.

Materials

- 1) **2.1**: Biographical sketch of John Adams.
- 2) **2.2**: Biographical sketch of Thomas Jefferson.
- 3) **2.3**: Excerpts from “John Adams autobiography, part 1, ‘John Adams,’ through 1776 sheet 22 of 53, August 1775–April 1776.”
Excerpt from “John Adams autobiography, part 1, ‘John Adams,’ through 1776 sheet 24 of 53, April 1775–August 1776.”
- 4) *The Declaration of Independence*.

Lesson Outline

- Cover events leading up to the beginning of the American Revolution.
- Introduce John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.
- Hand out **2.1** and **2.2**. Have the students work in pairs. They will read **2.1** and **2.2** and make a list of things that John Adams and Thomas Jefferson did to secure a *Declaration of Independence* from Great Britain.
- Call on student pairs and ask them to go over their lists. Write on the board the ways in which Thomas Jefferson and John Adams worked towards the goal of officially declaring independence from the mother country.
- Read the *Declaration of Independence* with the class.

2.1

John Adams

John Adams was born in 1735 in Braintree, Massachusetts. Today, this part of Braintree is called Quincy. He graduated from Harvard in 1755 and began practicing law. Adams married Abigail Smith in 1764.

Adams involved himself in the struggle against Britain early, serving in the Continental Congress from 1774–1777. In 1776 he served with Thomas Jefferson on the committee to draft a declaration of independence from Great Britain.

In 1778 Adams was sent by the Continental Congress as minister to France, where he served with Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee. He sailed back to Massachusetts briefly in 1779 to draft the state constitution, and was sent back to France that same year.

Adams helped negotiate the peace with Britain in 1783 and served as America's first minister to Britain.

Adams returned home to serve as George Washington's Vice President and defeated Thomas Jefferson in the presidential election of 1796. He served one term and lost a reelection bid to Thomas Jefferson in 1800.

John Adams died on his farm in Quincy, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1826.

2.2

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was born in Shadwell, Virginia, in 1743. He was educated at William and Mary College graduating in 1762. Jefferson studied law and was admitted to the Virginia Bar in 1767. He was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769. In 1772 he married Martha Wayles Skelton.

Jefferson served in the Continental Congress from 1775–1776. He served with John Adams on the committee to write a declaration of independence from Great Britain and wrote the first draft.

Jefferson was Governor of Virginia from 1779–1781. His wife Martha died in 1782 and he became minister to France in 1784, a post he held until 1789.

George Washington picked Jefferson to be his Secretary of State in 1790. Jefferson gave up the job in 1793 and ran for president in 1796 losing to John Adams. Jefferson served as Adams's vice president and defeated him in the election of 1800.

Thomas Jefferson was president of the United States from 1801–1809, after which he spent a long retirement at his home Monticello where he died on July 4, 1826.

2.3

Excerpts from the Diary and Autobiography of John Adams

Excerpted from “John Adams autobiography, part 1, ‘John Adams,’ through 1776 Sheet 22 of 53, August 1775 - April 1776.” [electronic edition] *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

At the appointed time, We returned to Philadelphia and Congress were reassembled. Mr. Richard Penn had sailed for England, and carried the Petition, from which Mr. Dickenson and his party expected Relief. I expected none, and was wholly occupied in measures to support the Army and the Expedition into Canada. Every important Step was opposed, and carried by bare Majorities, which obliged me to be almost constantly engaged in debate: but I was not content with all that was done, and almost every day, I had something to say about Advizing the States to institute Governments, to express my total despair of any good from the Petition or any of those ~~measures~~ Things which were called conciliatory measures. I constantly insisted that all such measures, instead of having any tendency to produce a Reconciliation, would only be considered as proofs of our Timidity and want of Confidence in the Ground We stood on, and would only encourage our Ennemies to greater Exertions against Us. That We should be driven to the Necessity of Declaring ourselves independent States, and that We ought now to be employed in preparing a Plan of Conferation for the Colonies, and Treaties to be proposed to foreign Powers particularly to France and Spain, that all these Measures ought to be maturely considered, and carefully prepared, together with a declaration of Independence. That these three Measures, Independence, Confederation and Negotiations with foreign Powers, particularly France, ought to go hand in hand, and be adopted all together. That foreign Powers ~~illegible would~~ could not be expected to acknowledge Us, till We had acknowledged ourselves and taken our Station, among them as a sovereign Power, and Independent Nation. [...]

Excerpted from “John Adams autobiography, part 1, ‘John Adams,’ through 1776 Sheet 24 of 53, April – August 1776.” [electronic edition] *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

Not long after this the three greatest Measures of all, were carried. Three Committees were appointed, One for preparing a Declaration of Independence, another for reporting a Plan of a Treaty to be proposed to France, and a third to digest a System of Articles of Confederation to be proposed to the States.—I was appointed on the Committee of Independence, and on that for preparing the form of a Treaty with France [...]. The Committee of Independence, were Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman and Robert R. Livingston. Mr. Jefferson had been now about a Year a Member of Congress, but had attended his Duty in the House but a very small part of the time and when there had never spoken in public: and during the whole Time I satt with him in Congress, I never heard him utter three Sentences together. The most of a

speech he ever made in my hearing was a gross insult on Religion, in one or two Sentences, for which I gave him immediately the Reprehension, which he richly merited. It will naturally be enquired, how it happened that he was appointed on a Committee of such importance. There were more reasons than one. Mr. Jefferson had the Reputation of a masterly Pen. He had been chosen a Delegate in Virginia, in consequence of a very handsome public Paper which he had written for the House of Burgesses, which had given him the Character of a fine Writer. Another reason was that Mr. Richard Henry Lee was not beloved by the most of his Colleagues from Virginia and Mr. Jefferson was sett up to rival and supplant him. This could be done only by the Pen, for Mr. Jefferson could stand no competition with him or any one else in Elocution and public debate. [...] The Committee had several meetings, in which were proposed the Articles of which the Declaration was to consist, and minutes made of them. The Committee then appointed Mr. Jefferson and me, to draw them up in form, and cloath them in a proper Dress. The Sub Committee met, and considered the Minutes, making such Observations on them as then occurred: when Mr. Jefferson desired me to take them to my Lodgings and make the Draught. This I declined and gave several reasons for declining. 1. That he was a Virginian and I a Massachusettensian. 2. that he was a southern Man and I a northern one. 3. That I had been so obnoxious for my early and constant Zeal in promoting the Measure, that any draught of mine, would undergo a more severe Scrutiny and Criticism in Congress, than one of his composition. 4thly and lastly and that would be reason enough if there were no other, I had a great Opinion of the Elegance of his pen and none at all of my own. I therefore insisted that no hesitation should be made on his part. He accordingly took the Minutes and in a day or two produced to me his Draught. Whether I made or suggested any corrections I remember not. The Report was made to the Committee of five, by them examined, but whether altered or corrected in any thing I cannot recollect. But in substance at least it was reported to Congress where, after a severe Criticism, and striking out several of the most oratorical Paragraphs it was adopted on the fourth of July 1776, and published to the World.

Lesson Three

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson become friends and work together to win the peace.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Explain what John Adams and Thomas Jefferson thought of each other after drafting *The Declaration of Independence*.
- 2) Explain why John Adams was sent overseas by the Continental Congress.
- 3) Describe that Thomas Jefferson was sent to France to work with Adams to establish treaties of commerce with European nations in order to boost America's fledgling economy.
- 4) Explain that while in Europe John and Abigail Adams became good friends with Thomas Jefferson.

Materials

- 1) **3.1:** Abigail Adams biographical sketch.
- 2) **3.2:** John Adams and Thomas Jefferson letters from 1777.
- 3) **3.3:** John Adams, Abigail Adams, Thomas Jefferson letters from Europe 1785–1787.

Lesson Outline

- Give the class background on Abigail Adams from **3.1**.
- Hand out 1777 letters from **3.2**. Read them as a class. Ask students how Jefferson and Adams viewed each other after having worked together to draft *The Declaration of Independence*. Have students cite evidence of Jefferson and Adams's growing friendship from the letters. Ask the students to give examples of how Adams and Jefferson were working together to help the new nation win the war.
- Divide class up into six groups. Give each group letters from **3.3**.
- Ask students to find evidence of what Adams and Jefferson's mission was in Europe.
- Ask students to find evidence of how the relationship between John and Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson was evolving. When the groups are done reading the letters and taking down the information, call on each group and have them present their findings. (Students will find that the Adamses and Jefferson are becoming very close. This will make the breakup of this relationship later, over partisan politics, seem all the more tragic.)

3.1

Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams was born on November 11, 1744. She had no formal education, but was a prolific reader and writer. She married John Adams in 1764. Because of her husband's frequent absences it fell to Abigail to run the family farm, raise the children and care for her and her husband's large extended family. She also cared for many sick and indigent people in the community. Abigail did all of this while keeping up an extensive correspondence with John, giving him first-hand information of the fighting around Boston during the early stages of the American Revolution, and providing him key political insight and advice.

At the end of the Revolutionary War, Abigail joined her husband in France and later moved with him to London. During John Adams's tenure as vice president and president, Abigail divided her time between the Adams family farm in Quincy and the seat of government in Philadelphia, New York, and finally Washington DC.

Abigail Adams died in 1818.

3.2

Jefferson and Adams Correspondence

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, May 16, 1777
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 4–5

Williamsburgh May 16. 1777

DEAR SIR

Matters in our part of the continent are too much in quiet to send you news from hence. Our battalions for the Continental Service were some time ago filled as rendered the recommendation of a draught from the militia hardly requisite, [...]. I am Dear Sir
Your friend and servt:

TH: JEFFERSON

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 26, 1777
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 5–6

Philadelphia May 26. 1777

MY DEAR SIR

I had this Morning, the Pleasure of your Favour of the Sixteenth inst, by the Post; and rejoice to learn that your Battallions, were so far fill'd, as to render a Draught from the Militia, unnecessary. It is a dangerous Measure, and only to be adopted in great Extremities, even by popular Governments. [...] We want your Industry and Abilities here extreamly. Financiers, We want more than Soldiers. The worst Enemy, We have now is Poverty, real Poverty in the Shape of exuberant Wealth. Pray come and help Us, to raise the Value of our Money, and lower the Prices of Things. Without this, We cannot carry on the War. With it, We can make it a Diversion. [...] I am, Sir your Friend and most obedient Servant,

JOHN ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 21, 1777
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 7–8

Albemarle in Virginia. Aug. 21. 1777

DEAR SIR

Your favor of May 26. came safely to hand. I wish it were in my power to suggest any remedy for the evil you complain of. Tho' did any occur, I should propose it to you with great diffidence after knowing you had thought on the subject yourself. There is indeed a *fact* which may not have come to your knolege, out of which perhaps some little good may be drawn. [...] I speak of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. The little states of Italy you know have had long peace and shew no disposition to interrupt that peace shortly. The Grand Duke being somewhat avaritious in his nature has availed himself of the opportunity of collecting and hoarding what money he has been able to gather. I am informed from good authority [...] that about three years ago he had ten millions of crowns lying dead in his coffers. Of this it is thought possible as much might be borrowed as would amount to a million of pounds lawful money. At any rate the attempt might be worth making. [...] Your friend and serv.,

TH: JEFFERSON

3.3

John, Abigail Adams, Thomas Jefferson Correspondence in Europe

Introduction

In 1784, Thomas Jefferson was sent on a diplomatic mission to France where he joined John Adams who had already been overseas for five years. Adams had been recently joined by Abigail and their daughter. The family made their home just outside Paris in Auteuil. Jefferson was a frequent visitor. He and John worked closely on forming commercial treaties with the various nations of Europe, and he soon formed a close professional and personal bond with John and Abigail. Nine months after Jefferson's arrival in France, the Adamses were posted to London, where John Adams became the first American minister to the Court of Saint James.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 23, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, page 22

Dessin's Calais May 23. 1785. Monday.

DEAR SIR

We are just arrived, covered with Dust, and we have hired our Boat , to go over tomorrow at ten. No green Peas, no Sallad, no Vegetables to be had upon the Road, and the Sky is still as clear dry and cold as ever. The Flocks of Sheep and herds of Cattle, through the Country, Stalk about the Fields like Drovers of Walking Skeletons. The Sheep are pastured chiefly I think in the plowed grounds, upon the Fibres as I suppose of the Roots of Grass turn'd up by the Plow.

[...] I hope that these rainless, heatless Heavens will convince them that it is abundantly for their good that We should bring and carry freely, our Flour, Wheat, Corn, Rice, Flesh, and Fish for their Soulagement. Yours affectionately,

J. ADAMS

The Ladies Compliments of course.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, May 25, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 22–23

Paris May 25. 1785

DEAR SIR

Your letter of the 22d. from Montreuil sur mer is put into my hands this moment [...]. The departure of your family has left me in the dumps. My afternoons hang heavily on me. I go sometimes to Passy and Mont Parnasse. When they are gone too I shall be ready for the dark and narrow house of Ossian. [...] I have now given you all the news of Paris as far as I know it and after recommending myself to the friendly recollection of the ladies I conclude with assurances of the esteem with which I have the honour to be dear Sir Your affectionate friend and servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

P.S. Send me your address au plutot.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 6, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 28–31

London Bath Hotel Westminster June 6. 1785

DEAR SIR

Mr. Adams has already written you that we arrived in London upon the 27 of May. We journey'd slowly and sometimes silently. I think I have somewhere met with the observation that nobody ever leaves paris but with a degree of tristeness. I own I was loth to leave my garden because I did not expect to find its place supplied. I was still more loth on account of the increasing pleasure, and intimacy which a longer acquaintance with a respected Friend promised, to leave behind me the only person with whom my Companion could associate with perfect freedom, and unreserve: and whose place he had no reason to expect supplied in the Land to which he is destined.

[...] The figure which this city makes in respect to Equipages is vastly superior to Paris, and gives one the Idea of superior wealth and grandeur. I have seen few carriages in paris and no horses superiour to what are used here for Hackneys¹. [...]

I went last week to hear the musick in Westminster Abbey. The Messiah was performd. It was sublime beyond description. I most sincerely wisht for your presence as your favorite passion would have received the highest gratification. I should have

¹ Old time taxicabs.

sometimes fancied myself amongst a higher order of Beings; if it had not been for a very troublesome female, who was unfortunately seated behind me; and whose volubility not all the powers of Musick could still.

[...] Having heard you upon some occasions express a desire to hear from your Friends, even the Minutia respecting their Situation, I have ventured to class myself in that number and to subscribe myself, Sir, your Friend and Humble Servant,

A. Adams

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, June 21, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 33–36

Paris June 21. 1785

DEAR MADAM

I have received duly the honor of your letter, and am now to return you thanks for your condescension in having taken the first step for settling a correspondence which I so much desired; for I now consider it as *settled* and proceed accordingly. I have always found it best to remove obstacles first. I will do so therefore in the present case by telling you that I consider your boasts of the splendour of your city and of it's superb hackney coaches as a flout, and declaring that I would not give the polite, self-denying, feeling, hospitable, goodhumoured people of this country and their amability in every point of view, (tho' it must be confessed our streets are somewhat dirty, and our fiacres rather indifferent) for ten such races of rich, proud, hectoring, swearing, squibbing, carnivorous animals as those among whom you are; and that I do love this *people* with all my heart, and think that with a better religion and a better form of government and their present governors their condition and country would be most enviable. I pray you to observe that I have used the term *people* and that this is a noun of the masculine as well as feminine gender. I must add too that we are about reforming our fiacres, and that I expect soon an Ordonance that all their drivers shall wear breeches unless any difficulty should arise whether this is a subject for the police or for the general legislation of the country, to take care of. [...] I have the honour to be with the most perfect esteem Dr. Madam Your most obedient and most humble servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 7, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 38–39

Paris July 7. 1785

DEAR SIR

This will accompany a joint letter inclosing the draught of a treaty, and my private letter of June 22, which has waited so long for a private conveyance. We daily expect from the Baron Thulemeyer the French column for our treaty with his sovereign. In the mean while two copies are preparing with the English column which Doctr. Franklin wishes to sign before his departure, which will be within four or five days. The French, when received, will be inserted in the blank column of each copy. As the measure of signing at separate times and places is new, we think it necessary to omit no other circumstance of ceremony which can be observed. That of sending it by a person of confidence and invested with a character relative to the object, who shall attest our signature here, yours in London and Baron Thulemeyer's at the Hague, and who shall make the actual exchanges, we think will contribute to supply the departure from the usual form in other instances. [...] I shall be happy to receive your corrections of these ideas as I have found in the course of our joint services that I think right when I think with you. I am with sincere affection Dear Sir Your friend and servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 24, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 43–44
*Footnote 35 reads, "Italicized passages were written in code."

Grosvenor Square July 24th. 1785

DEAR SIR

I have a letter from the Baron De Thulemeier of the 19th. and a Copy of his Letter to you of the same date. I hope now in a few Day's to take Mr. Short by the hand in Grosvenor Square and to put my hand to the treaty. I think no time should be lost. We will join Mr. Dumas with Mr. Short in exchange if you please.

[...]

The Britons Alliens Duty is a very burthensome Thing, and they may carry it hereafter as far upon Tobacco, Rice Indigo and twenty other Things, as they do now upon oil. To obviate this, I think of substituting the words "natural born Citizens of the United States," and "natural born subjects of Great Britain," instead of "the most favoured Nation." You remember We first proposed to offer this to all Nations, but upon my objecting that the English would make their ships French or Sweedish or Dutch etc. to

avail themselves of it, without agreeing to it, on their Part, we altered it to the footing of "Gentis Amicissimae ["of the most-favored nation"]." But if the English will now agree to it, we shall secure ourselves against many odious Duties, and no ill Consequence can arise. It is true the French Dutch Sweeds and Prussians will of Course claim the Advantage, but as they must in return allow Us the same Advantage, so much the better. Let me know if any Objection occurs to you.

There is a Bill before Parliament to prevent smuggling Tobacco, in which the restrictions are very rigorous, but cannot be effected. Two thirds of the Tobacco consumed in this Kingdom, I am told is Smuggled. How can it be otherwise, when the impost is five times the original Value of the Commodity. If one Pound in five escapes nothing is lost. If two in five, a great profit is made.

The Duty is 16d. pr. pound and tobacco sells for three pence. Yet all applications for lowering the Duty are rejected. Yours most affectionately,

JOHN ADAMS

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, August 4, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 48–49

Grosvenor Square Augt. 4. 1785

MY DEAR SIR

[...] Pray send me the Arret² against English Manufactures and every other new Arret, which may any Way affect the United States. It is confidently given out here that our Vessells are not admitted into the French W. Indias. Has there been any new Arret, since that of August 1784? Can you discover the Cause, of the great Balance of Exchange in favour of England, from Spain, Holland, etc. as well as America? And whether this Appearance of Prosperity will continue? I think that at the Peace, the British Merchants sent their Factors abroad with immense quantities of their Manufactures, the whole Stock they had on hand. These Factors have sold as they could, and brought Remittances especially Bills of Exchange as they could, i.e. very dear, so that the loss on the Exchange is that of the British Merchant, and consequently that this appearance is not so much in favour of England. Spain I expect will follow the Example of France in prohibiting Brit. Manufactures, [...]

I am my dear Sir, with Sincere Esteem your Friend,

JOHN ADAMS

² A French governmental order to stop something. In this case the importation of English goods.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 10, 1785
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 52–53

Paris Aug. 10. 1785.

DEAR SIR

Your favor of the 4th inst. came to hand yesterday. I now inclose you the two Arrets against the importation of foreign manufactures into this kingdom. The cause of the balance against this country in favor of England as well as it's amount is not agreed on. No doubt the rage for English manufactures must be the principal cause. The speculators in Exchange say also that those of the circumjacent countries who have a balance in their favor against France remit that balance to England from France. If so it is possible that the English may count this balance twice: that is, in summing their exports to one of those states, and their imports from it, they count the difference once in their favour: then a second time when they sum the remittances of cash they receive from France. There has been no arret relative to our commerce since that of Aug. 1784. and all the late advices from the French West Indies are that they have now in their ports always three times as many vessels as there ever were before, and that the increase is principally from our States. [...] Compliments to the ladies and am Dr. Sir Your friend and servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 23, 1786
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 145–146

London july 23. 1786

DEAR SIR

[...] I suppose you must have heard the report respecting Col. Smith—that he has taken my daughter from me, a contrivance between him and the Bishop of St. Asaph. It is true he tendered me a son as an equivalent and it was no bad offer. But I had three Sons before, and but one daughter. Now I have been thinking of an exchange with you Sir. Suppose you give me Miss Jefferson, and in some [fu] ture day take a Son in lieu of her. I am for strengthening [the] federal union.

[...] Be assured you confer a favour upon your Humble Servant,

A ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, August 9, 1786
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 148–149

Paris Aug. 9. 1786.

DEAR MADAM

It is an age since I have had the honor of a letter from you, and an age and a half since I presumed to address one to you. I think my last was dated in the reign of king Amri, but under which of his successors you wrote, I cannot recollect. Ochosias, Joachar, Manahem or some such hard name. At length it is resumed: I am honoured with your favor of July 23. and am at this moment writing an answer to it. [...] This proposition about the exchange of a son for my daughter puzzles me. I should be very glad to have your son, but I cannot part with my daughter. Thus you see I have such a habit of gaining in trade with you that I always expect it. [...] The bottom of my page tells me it is time for me to end with assurances of the affectionate esteem with which I have the honor to be, dear Madam, your most obedient and most humble servant,

TH: JEFFERSON

Note: Jefferson's daughter Polly sailed from Virginia in 1787 to be with her father. The ship docked in England and Abigail Adams took care of Polly until Jefferson could arrange her transportation to Paris.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 26, 1787
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, page 178

London June 26 1787

DEAR SIR

I have to congratulate you upon the safe arrival of your Little Daughter [Polly] whom I have only a few moments ago received. She is in fine Health and a Lovely little Girl I am sure from her countenance, but at present every thing is strange to her, and she was very loth to try New Friends for old. She was so much attachd to the Captain and he to her, that it was with no small regret that I separated her from him, but I dare say I shall reconcile her in a day or two. I tell her that I did not see her sister cry once. She replies that her sister was older and ought to do better, besides she had her pappu with her. I shew her your picture. She says she cannot know it, how should she when she should not know you.

[...] Miss Polly sends her duty to you and Love to her Sister and says she will try to be good and not cry. So she has wiped her eyes and layd down to sleep. Believe me dear Sir affectionately yours etc etc,

A Adams

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 6, 1787
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 183–184

London july 6 1787

MY DEAR SIR

If I had thought you would so soon have sent for your dear little Girl, I should have been tempted to have kept her arrival here, from you a secret. I am really loth to part with her, and she last evening upon Petit's³ arrival, was thrown into all her former distresses, and bursting into Tears, told me it would be as hard to leave me as it was her Aunt Epps. She has been so often deceived that she will not quit me a moment least she should be carried away. Nor can I scarcely prevail upon her to see Petit. Tho she says she does not remember you, yet she has been taught to consider you with affection and fondness, and depended upon your comeing for her. She told me this morning, that as she had left all her Friends in virginia to come over the ocean to see you, she did think you would have taken the pains to have come here for her, and not have sent a man whom she cannot understand. I express her own words. I expostulated with her upon the long journey you had been, and the difficulty you had to come and upon the care kindness and attention of Petit, whom I so well knew. But she cannot hear me. She is a child of the quickest sensibility, and the maturest understanding, that I have ever met with for her years. She had been 5 weeks at sea, and with men only, so that on the first day of her arrival, she was as rough as a little sailor, and then she been decoyed from the ship, which made her very angry, and no one having any Authority over her; I was apprehensive I should meet with some trouble. But where there are such materials to work upon as I have found her, there is no danger. She listend to my admonitions, and attended to my advice and in two days, was restored to the amiable lovely Child which her Aunt had formed her. In short she is the favorite of every creature in the House, [...]

I am dear sir with Sentiments of Esteem Your Friend and Humble Servant,

A ADAMS

³ Jefferson's servent, sent to pick Polly up and bring her back to France.

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, July 16, 1787
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, page 188

Paris July 16. 1787

DEAR MADAM

I had the happiness of receiving yesterday my daughter in perfect health. Among the first things she informed me of was her promise to you, that after she should have been here a little while she would go back to pay you a visit of four or five days. She had taken nothing into her calculation but the feelings of her own heart which beat warmly with gratitude to you. She had fared very well on the road, having got into favor with gentlemen and ladies so as to be sometimes on the knee of one sometimes of another. She had totally forgotten her sister, but thought, on seeing me, that she recollected something of me. [...] eternal thanks yourself with every sentiment of esteem and regard from Dear Madam your most obedient and most humble servt,

TH: JEFFERSON

Lesson Four

The Formation of Political Parties

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Explain what a political party is.
- 2) State what the Federalist Party stood for.
- 3) State what the Republican Party stood for.
- 4) Describe the differences in what each party believed.

Materials

- 1) **4.1:** Short descriptions of the Federalist and Republican Parties.
- 2) **4.2:** Examples of Republican and Federalist Party rhetoric.
- 3) **4.3:** Letters of John and Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson that demonstrate their different political views.

Lesson Outline

- Explain to students what political parties are.
- Explain to students the differences between the Federalist and Republican Parties.
- Have students read **4.1** and chart the differences in opinion of each party on the following subjects: Government, Constitution, France, and Britain.
- Read with class the essays and letters in **4.2**. Have the class match passages to their chart on the Federalist and Republican Parties.

4.1

The Republican Party

The Republican Party was started by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in response to the Federalist Party, run by Alexander Hamilton, whose views dominated the Washington Administration. Both Jefferson and Madison strongly disagreed with Hamilton and fashioned the Republicans as a counterweight to Federalist policies.

Republicans believed that American democracy should be inclusive. They believed that government would work best when the masses were involved, albeit white male masses. Women and blacks were to have no political power. They thought that the powers laid out to the central government in the Constitution should be strictly adhered to. This would limit the power of the central government, give more power to the states and thus to the people.

The Republican Party supported the French Revolution. They believed that a free, fair-minded republican form of government would be born out of the chaos and bloodshed of the Reign of Terror.

Economically, the Republicans felt that the business of Americans should be agriculture. They did not want a manufacturing based economy like Great Britain.

Republicans distrusted Great Britain. They feared that if the United States formed too close a bond to the mother country Britain would again dominate her former colonies.

The Federalist Party

Alexander Hamilton was the leader of the Federalist Party. Though George Washington had no party affiliation, he was strongly influenced by Hamilton's views. Though Adams was himself a Federalist, and was elected president under this party's banner, he and Hamilton would come to distrust and loath each other.

Federalists believed that democracy should be limited. They had a distrust of the common man, and felt that too much power put into the hands of the people would lead to mob rule. Federalists thought that the Constitution should be interpreted loosely. This would give the central government more flexibility to do what was in the nation's economic interest. An example of this would be the foundation of the Bank of the United States.

The French Revolution worried Federalists. They believed that it was a prime example of mob rule and were very concerned that elements of the Republican Party wanted to import the chaos and killing of the Jacobin movement to the United States.

Economically, the Federalists believed that the business of America should be manufacturing. This was the path to wealth and power for a nation. Factories had made Britain rich and the Federalists believed that their example should be emulated.

Unlike Republicans, the Federalists thought that good relations with Great Britain were of paramount importance to the economic well-being of America.

4.2

Federalist and Republican Partisan Attacks

The Prospect Before Us
by
James Thomson Callender

Introduction

Callender was a pro-Republican journalist whom Jefferson supported and encouraged to write attacks against Federalist leaders. The excerpts below are an attack on President John Adams. Excerpt 1 refers to the President's supposed support of former Tories in New Jersey. Excerpt 2 refers to Adams's ill temper and support of Britain over France. Excerpt 1 is taken from *The Prospect Before Us*, volume I, page 28. Excerpt 2 is taken from James Morton Smith, "Sedition in the Old Dominion: James T. Callender and The Prospect Before Us," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 20, No.2, (May, 1954) p. 161.

Excerpt 1. "By their *worst enemies*, the militia referred to the tories of the late revolution. Of these a few have become serious republicans; but the great body persist in their old principles. They love English supremacy, they hate American independence, as heartily as ever. They are to a man, attached to Mr. Adams, because they know that his principles are monarchical, and that he is the inflexible friend of England."

Excerpt 2. The reign of Mr. Adams has been one continued tempest of malignant passions. As President, he has never opened his lips, or lifted his pen without threatening and scolding; the grand object of his administration has been to exasperate the rage of contending parties to calumniate and destroy every man who differs from his opinions.... Adams and Washington have since been shaping a series of these paper jobbers into judges and ambassadors, as their whole courage lies in want of shame; these poltroons, without risking a manly and intelligent defence of their own measures, raise an affected yelp against the corruption of the French Directory, as if any corruption would be more venal, more notorious, more execrated than their own. The object of Mr. Adams was to recommend a French war, professedly for the sake of supporting American commerce, but in reality for the sake of yoking us into an alliance with the British tyrant.

The following is an excerpt from a book titled Porcupine's Works... by the pro-Federalist author William Cobbett attacking Thomas Jefferson. The incident Cobbett refers to happened when Jefferson was Governor of Virginia. It is, of course, an exaggerated account of what really occurred.

Among the other merits of Mr. Jefferson, as stated by Hampden, we find "his attachment to the CIVIL and RELIGIOUS rights of his fellow citizens, ..."

"It appears, however, that Mr. Jefferson has generally sacrificed the civil rights of his countrymen to his own personal safety. We are told, in a public address, by Mr. Charles Simms, of Virginia, who must have been well acquainted with the circumstance, "that Mr. Jefferson, when *governor* of Virginia, *abandoned the trust* with which he was charged, at the moment of an invasion by the enemy, by which great confusion, *loss, and distress, accrued to the state*, in the destruction of public records and vouchers for public expenditures.

"Now here was a period of public danger, when Mr. Jefferson's attachment to the civil rights of his countrymen might have shone very conspicuously, by facing and averting the danger; here would have been a fine opportunity for him to have displayed his public spirit in bravely *rallying* round the standard of liberty and civil rights [...] yet when real danger appeared, the *governor of the ancient dominion* dwindled into the *poor, timid philosopher*, and instead of rallying his brave countrymen, he fled for safety from a few light horsemen, and shamefully abandoned his trust!!"

4.3

The Adamses and Thomas Jefferson show their different political colors.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, January 29, 1787
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 168–169

London Janry. 29th. 1787

MY DEAR SIR

[...]

With regard to the Tumults in my Native state⁴ which you inquire about, I wish I could say that report had exaggerated them. It is too true Sir that they have been carried to so allarming a Height as to stop the Courts of justice in several Counties. Ignorant, wrestless desperadoes, without conscience or principles, have led a deluded multitude to follow their standard, under the pretence of grievences which have no existence but in their imaginations. Some of them were crying out for a paper currency, some for equal distribution of property, some were for annihilating all debts, others complaining that the Senate was a useless Branch of Government, that the Court of common pleas was unnecessary, and that the sitting of the General Court in Boston was a grievence. By this list you will see the materials which compose this rebellion, and the necessity there is of the wisest and most vigorus measure to quell and suppress it. Instead of that laudible spirit which you approve, which makes a people watchful over their Liberties and alert in the defence of them, these mobish insurgents are for sapping the foundation, and distroying the whole fabrick at once. [...]

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, February 22, 1787
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 172–173

Paris Feb. 22. 1787

DEAR MADAM

I am to acknolege the honor of your letter of Jan. 29. and the papers you were so good as to send me. They were the latest I had seen or have yet seen. They left off too in a critical moment; just at the point where the Malcontents make their submission on condition of pardon, and before the answer of government was known. I hope they pardoned them. The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it to be always kept alive. It will often be excercised when wrong, but better so than not to be exercised at all. I like a little rebellion now and then. [...] I am with sincere esteem Dear Madam your affectionate humble servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

⁴ Shays's Rebellion.

Lesson Five

Partisan politics destroys the friendship of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

Objectives

Students will be able to explain how:

- 1) John Adams's and Thomas Jefferson's different political beliefs caused them to join separate parties.
- 2) Adams and Jefferson began to distrust each other.

Materials

- 1) **5.1:** Letters of John Adams and Abigail Adams that demonstrate distrust of Jefferson.
- 2) **5.2:** Letters of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson that show the disintegration of their friendship.

Lesson Outline

- Cover John Adams's vice presidency, his victory over Jefferson in the election of 1796 and his defeat by Jefferson in 1800.
- Divide the class into four groups. Give each group two letters. Have groups read letters, discuss what the letters are saying and record this information in their notebooks. When groups have completed this task have them report their findings to the class.
- Use group findings to piece together the falling out of the Adamses and Jefferson and the birth of party politics in America.

5.1

John and Abigail Adams's letters during the elections of 1796 and 1800.

Introduction

Jefferson and Adams became political rivals in 1796 when the two ran for president on their respective party tickets. Adams beat Jefferson in 1796 and Jefferson became his vice president. In 1800, Jefferson ran again and defeated Adams. What was a very close political bond and friendship slowly fell apart.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, 27 November 1796

Excerpted from Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 27 November 1796 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society.

<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

Quincy Novbr. 27 1796 Sunday Eve

My Dearest Friend

Winter has caught you on the Road I presume for a colder day than this we seldom have in Janry. You will want to hear how the Farming goes on. The Letters inclosed which I received last evening have put it all out of my Head, and almost put out my Eyes to read. No other than the printed duplicate has come to Hand. I send you both Yours and mine, both of which are important at this time when the plots are unfolding. They are a clue to all the whole System of Electionering under foreign influence which in a greater or less degree pervades every State in the union. They will afford but Sorry comfort to You whether destined to publick or private Life. If to private, "O! Save my Country Heaven" if we are to receive a President⁵ from the French Nation. What is to be our Fate? [...]

[...] We are told here that under the Jefferson ticket the voters distinguished themselves by wearing the National [illegible] cockade⁶. Can they have become so openly and bold? [...]

My best my sincerely affectionate Regards to the President and Mrs. Washington. If any people on earth are to be envyd they are the ones. Not for what they have been in power and Authority but for their transit.

Once more adieu ever ever Yours,
A ADAMS

⁵ Jefferson.

⁶Symbol of the French Revolutionaries.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, December 14, 1798
Excerpted from Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 14 December 1798 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society.
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

Dec. 14. [17]98

My Dearest Friend

Rejoice with me, that I have this Day finished my Ceremonies with the two Houses. Their Answers to the Speech have been civil and I have given them civil Replies.

[...]

The dangerous Vice is not arrived. If I was ever absent so long when I was the dangerous Vice they did not Spare to confuse me. But nothing is now Said.

Gen. Washington is gone to Mount Vernon to day. Gen. Pinckney goes to Charleston next Week. We are not afraid of an Invasion from France this Winter. Adieu.

J.A.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, December 31, 1798
Excerpted from Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 December 1798 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society.
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

Quincy Decbr. 31 17[9]8

My dearest Friend

[...] It is thought the VP. stays away from very bad motives. I am told he is considered here as the Head of the opposition, to Government both in the old dominion and Kentucky. He ~~has~~ is certainly acting a part, that he will find hard to justify.

[...]

The weather is fine to day. Can you get time to walk, or to Ride?

I am with the tenderest affection.

ever yours
A ADAMS

John Adams to Abigail Adams, November 15, 1800
Excerpted from Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 15 November 1800 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society.
<http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

Washington Nov. 15. 1800

My dearest Friend

[...] I am of opinion however that he⁷ would prefer Mr. J. [Jefferson] to me. And so would Some others. Some of these are desirous of Confusion, and a dissolution of the Confederacy. Some in hopes of getting a new Constitution more to their minds, Some I fear in hopes of dividing the Continent, and Sitting up two or three Confederacies, and Some perhaps in hopes of making an Army necessary.

The opposite Party too are divided into many Sects, as the World will see, if they succeed in their Choice. Their Man⁸ will not be found to be the Man of all their People: No nor a Majority of them. He is not thorough going enough. He is not daring and desperate enough. In short one half the Nation has analyzed itself, within 18 months, past and the other will analyze itself in 18 months more. By that time this Nation if it has any Eyes, will see itself in a Glass. I hope it will not have reason to be too much disgusted with its own Countenance.

But I wander. Yours with an Affection that will never end or be diminished but with the Life of

JA

⁷ Alexander Hamilton

⁸ Jefferson

5.2

The disintegration of a friendship

In 1791, Jefferson sent some notes of encouragement to a printer who planned to publish Thomas Paine's essay the Rights of Man. In these notes he commented on the fact that he felt Paine's work to be a good defense against an article Adams had written defending the British form of government. Jefferson had no idea his comments would be published with Paine's essay and made public, but they were, and were viewed by many to be a direct attack against John Adams.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 17, 1791
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 245–247

P[h]iladelphia July 17. 1791

DEAR SIR

I have a dozen times taken up my pen to write to you and as often laid it down again, suspended between opposing considerations. I determine however to write from a conviction that truth, between candid minds, can never do harm.

[...] That you and I differ in our ideas of the best form of government is well known to us both: but we have differed as friends should do, respecting the purity of each other's motives, and confining our difference of opinion to private conversation. And I can declare with truth in the presence of the almighty that nothing was further from my intention or expectation than to have had either my own or your name brought before the public on this occasion.

[...] Be so good as to present my respectful compliments to Mrs. Adams and to accept assurances of the sentiments of sincere esteem and respect with which I am Dear Sir Your friend and servant.

TH: JEFFERSON

Braintree July 29. 1791

DEAR SIR

Yesterday, at Boston, I received your friendly Letter of July 17th. with great pleasure. I give full credit to your relation of the manner in which your note was written and prefixed to the Philadelphia edition of Mr. Paines pamphlet on the rights of Man: but the misconduct of the person, who committed this breach of your confidence, by making it publik, whatever were his intentions, has sown the Seeds of more evils, than he can ever atone for. The Pamphlet, with your name, to so striking a recommendation to it, was not only industriously propogated in New York and Boston; but, that the recommendation might be known to every one, was reprinted with great care in the Newspapers, and was generally considered as a direct and open personal attack upon me, by countenancing the false interpretation of my Writings as favouring the Introduction of hereditary Monarchy and Aristocracy into this Country. The Question every where was, What Heresies are intended by the Secretary of State⁹? [...]

You observe “”That You and I differ in our Ideas of the best form of Government is well known to us both.” But, my dear Sir, you will give me leave to say, that I do not know this. I know not what your Idea is of the best form of Government. You and I have never had a serious conversation together that I can recollect concerning the nature of Government. The very transient hints that have ever passed between Us have been jocular and superficial, without ever coming to any explanation. If You suppose that I have or ever had a design or desire, of attempting to introduce a Government of King, Lords and Commons [...] you are wholly mistaken. [...]

I must own to you that the daring Traits of Ambition and Intrigue, and those unbridled Rivalries which have already appeared, are the most melancholly and alarming Symptoms that I have ever seen in this Country: and if they are to be encouraged to proceed in their Course, the sooner I am relieved from Competition the happier I shall be.

[...] Dear Sir Your most obedient and most humble Servant

JOHN ADAMS

⁹ Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, December 28, 1796
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 262–263

Monticello Dec. 28. 1796

DEAR SIR

The public and the public papers have been much occupied lately in placing us in a point of opposition to each other. I trust with confidence that less of it has been felt by ourselves personally. [...] Since the day too on which you signed the treaty of Paris our horizon was never so overcast. I devoutly wish you may be able to shun for us this war by which our agriculture, commerce and credit will be destroyed. If you are, the glory will be all your own; and that your administration may be filled with glory and happiness to yourself and advantage to us in the sincere wish of one who tho', in the course of our voyage thro' life, various little incidents have happened or been contrived to separate us, retains still for you the solid esteem of the moments when we were working for our independence, and sentiments of respect and affectionate attachment.

TH: JEFFERSON

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, February 20, 1801
The Adams-Jefferson Letters, page 263

Washington Feb. 20. 1801

SIR

In order to save you the trouble and Expence of purchasing Horses and Carriages, which will not be necessary, I have to inform you that I shall leave in the stables of the United States seven Horses and two Carriages with Harness and Property of the United States. These may not be suitable for you: but they will certainly save you a considerable Expence as they belong to the studd of the President's Household. I have the honor to be with great respect Sir your most obedient and humble servant,

JOHN ADAMS

Lesson Six

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson reconcile.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- 1) Explain how John Adams and Thomas Jefferson became friends again.
- 2) Show how Adams's and Jefferson's common beliefs illustrate the commonly held beliefs of the American people, and have served as the glue that has allowed the United States to survive and prevail, despite the varying beliefs that sometimes threaten to tear the nation apart.

Materials

- 1) **6.1:** The 1804 letters between Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson which attempt unsuccessfully to clear the air.
- 2) **6.2:** The renewed correspondence between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

Lesson Outline

- Cover for the class John Adams's last minute judicial appointments at the end of his administration.
- Cover for the class the "Revolution of 1800." Show how it was not really a revolution, and that Jefferson kept a lot of the policies twelve years of Federalist rule had put in place.
- Read with the class **6.1**. Ask the students: 1) What are Jefferson's complaints against John Adams? 2) What does Abigail say in defense of her husband? What criticism does Abigail have for Jefferson?
- Break the class into five groups. Have groups read letters from **6.2**. The groups will write down what their letters say. Call on each group. Groups will report the contents of their letters to the class.
- Use what the student groups report to paint for the class a picture of the common bond Jefferson and Adams shared in their basic belief in America that transcended their political differences.

6.1

The 1804 letters between Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

Introduction

In 1804, Thomas Jefferson's twenty-five year old daughter Polly died. Abigail had taken care of Polly for a time in London when she was a little girl (see Lesson Three 3.3.). Despite the ill feelings between the Adamses and Jefferson, Abigail was moved by emotion to write a letter of condolence. What followed were several letters back and forth where Jefferson made an attempt to explain his political actions, and patch up his relationship with John and Abigail.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 20, 1804
The Adams-Jefferson Letters, pages 268–269

Quincy May 20th 1804

SIR

Had you been no other than the private inhabitant of Monticello, I should e'er this time have address you, with that sympathy, which a recent event has awakened in my Bosom. But reasons of various kinds withheld my pen, until the powerfull feelings of my heart, have burst through the restraint, and called upon me to shed the tear of sorrow over the departed remains, of your beloved and deserving daughter, an event which I most sincerely mourn.

The attachment which I formed for her, when you committed her to my care: upon her arrival in a foreign Land: has remained with me to this hour, and the recent account of her death, which I read in a late paper, brought fresh to my remembrance the strong sensibility she discovered, tho but a child of nine years of age at having been separated from her Friends, and country, and brought, as she expressed it, "to a strange land amongst strangers." The tender scene of her seperation from me, rose to my recollection, when she clung around my neck and wet my Bosom with her tears, saying, "O! now I have learnt to Love you, why will they tear me from you."

It has been some time since that I conceived of any event in this Life, which could call forth, feelings of mutual sympathy. But I know how closely entwined around a parents heart, are these chords which bind the filial to the parental Bosom, and when snapped asunder, how agonizing the pangs of seperation¹⁰.

¹⁰ John and Abigail's son Charles Adams died in 1800.

I have tasted the bitter cup, and bow with reverence, and humility before the greater dispenser of it, without whose permission, and over ruling providence, not a sparrow falls to the ground. That you may derive comfort and consolation in this day of your sorrow and affliction, from that only source calculated to heal the wounded heart—a firm belief in the Being: perfections and attributes of God, is the sincere and ardent wish of her, who once took pleasure in subscribing Herself your Friend

ABIGAIL ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, June 13, 1804
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 269–271

Washington June 13.04.

DEAR MADAM

The affectionate sentiments which you have the goodness to express in your letter of May 20. towards my dear departed daughter, have awakened in me sensibilities natural to the occasion, and recalled your kindness to her which I shall ever remember with gratitude and friendship. I can assure you with truth they had made an indelible impression on her mind, and that, to the last, on our meetings after long separations, whether I had heard lately of you, and how you did, were among the earliest of her enquiries. In giving you this assurance I perform a sacred duty for her, and at the same time am thankful for the occasion furnished me of expressing my regret that the circumstances should have arisen which have seemed to draw a line of separation between us. [...] Mr. Adams's friendship and mine began at an earlier date. It accompanied us thro' long and important scenes. The different conclusions we had drawn from our political reading and reflections were not permitted to lessen mutual esteem, each party being conscious they were the result of an honest conviction in the other. Like differences of opinion existing among our fellow citizens attached them to the one or the other of us, and produced a rivalry in their minds which did not exist in ours. [...] I can say with truth that one act of Mr. Adams's life, and one only, ever gave me a moment's personal displeasure. I did consider his last appointments to office¹¹ as personally unkind. They were from among my most ardent political enemies, from whom no faithful cooperation could ever be expected, and laid me under the embarrassment of acting thro' men whose views were to defeat mine; or to encounter the odium of putting others in their places. [...] If my respect for him did not permit me to ascribe the whole blame to the influence of others, it left something for friendship to forgive, and after brooding over it for some little time, and not always resisting the expression of it, I forgave it cordially, and returned to the same state of esteem and respect for him which had so long subsisted. [...] That you may both be favored with health, tranquility and long life, is the prayer of one who tenders you the assurances of his highest consideration and esteem.

TH: JEFFERSON

¹¹ Adams's last minute judicial appointments.

Quincy July 1st 1804

SIR

Your Letter of June 13th came duly to hand; if it had contained no other sentiments and opinions than those which my Letter of condolence could have excited, and which are expressed in the first page of your reply, our correspondence would have terminated here: but you have been pleased to enter upon some subjects which call for a reply: and as you observe that you have wished for an opportunity to express your sentiments, I have given to them every weight they claim.

[...]

I have never felt any enmity towards you Sir for being elected president of the United States. But the instruments made use of, and the means which were practised to effect a change, have my utter abhorrence and detestation, for they were the blackest calumny, and foulest falsehoods. I had witnessed enough of the anxiety, and solicitude, the envy jealousy and reproach attendant upon the office as well as the high responsibility of the Station, to be perfectly willing to see a transfer of it. And I can truly say, that at the time of Election, I considered your pretensions much superior to his [Mr. Burr's], to whom an equal vote was given. Your experience I venture to affirm has convinced you that it is not a station to be envy'd. [...] I rely upon the Friendship you still profess for me, and (I am conscious I have done nothing to forfeit it), to excuse the freedom of this discussion to which you have led with an unreserve, which has taken off the Shackles I should otherways have found myself embarrassed with.—And now Sir I will freely disclose to you what has severed the bonds of former Friendship, and placed you in a light very different from what I once viewed you in.

One of the first acts of your administration was to liberate a wretch¹² who was suffering the just punishment of the Law due to his crimes for writing and publishing the basest libel, the lowest and vilest Slander, which malice could invent, or calumny exhibit against the Character and reputation of your predecessor, of him for whom you profess the highest esteem and Friendship, and whom you certainly knew incapable of such complicated baseness. The remission of Callenders fine was a public approbation of his conduct. [...]

Until I read Callenders seventh Letter containing your compliments to him as a writer and your reward of 50 dollars, I could not be made to believe, that such measures could have been resorted to: to stab the fair fame and upright intentions of one, who to use your own Language “was acting from an honest conviction in his own mind that he was right.” This Sir I considered as a personal injury. This was the Sword that cut asunder

¹² Republican essayist James Thomson Callender who had written a scathing attack on John Adams (see Lesson Four, 4.2) and had been jailed and fined under the Alien and Sedition Act. When Jefferson was elected president he pardoned Callender and remitted his fine.

the Gordian knot, which could not be untied by all the efforts of party Spirit, by rivalry by Jealousy or any other malignant fiend.

[...] Often have I wished to have seen a different course pursued by you. I bear no malice I cherish no enmity. I would not retaliate if I could-nay more in the true spirit of christian Charity, I would forgive, as I hope to be forgiven. And with that disposition of mind and heart, I subscribe the Name of

ABIGAIL ADAMS

6.2

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson set party rivalry aside and make up.

Introduction

President Jefferson's tenure in office lasted until 1809 when he left public life for good and retired to Monticello. He and John Adams had not communicated with each other in eight years. Five years before, Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson had aired their differences but had failed to reestablish the friendly relationship the two had enjoyed for many years. Would the political baggage keep Adams and Jefferson apart for the rest of their lives? A close friend of both men, Dr. Benjamin Rush, sincerely hoped it would not, and in 1809 he began his own conspiracy to bring the two heroes of the Revolution back together. He was aided in this effort by Edward Coles, secretary to President Madison and neighbor of Jefferson, who had visited Adams while on a tour of New England. Adams had told Coles in passing conversation that, "I always loved Jefferson" and "still love him." This sentiment was relayed to Jefferson and it pleased him. He had thought Abigail's response to his correspondence five years prior had proven that the Adams family wanted nothing to do with him. Adams's statement of good feelings convinced Jefferson that reconciliation was possible. So when he received his old friend's letter of January 1, 1812 he was eager to respond. This started a correspondence that lasted until the two men died in 1826. The old wounds had healed and the two patriots looked to the past with nostalgia and to the future of America with great hope.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, January 1, 1812
The Adams-Jefferson Letters, page 290

Quincy January 1st. 1812.

DEAR SIR

As you are a friend to American Manufactures under proper restrictions, especially Manufactures of the domestic kind, I take the Liberty of sending you by the Post a Packett containing two Pieces of Homespun¹³ lately produced in this quarter by One who was honoured in his youth with some of your Attention and much of your kindness.

All of my Family whom you formerly knew are well. My Daughter Smith is here and has successfully gone through a perilous and painful Operation, which detains her here this Winter, from her Husband and her Family at Chenango: where one of the most gallant and skilful Officers of our Revolution is probably destined to spend the rest of his days, not in the Field of Glory, but in the hard Labours of Husbandry.

¹³ A published copy, in two volumes, of a series of lectures John Quincy Adams gave at Harvard.

I wish you Sir many happy New Years and that you may enter the next and many succeeding Years with as animating Prospects for the Public as those at present before Us. I am Sir with a long and sincere Esteem your Friend and Servant

JOHN ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, January 21, 1812
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 290–292

Monticello Jan. 21. 1812

DEAR SIR

I thank you before hand (for they are not yet arrived) for the specimens of homespun you have been so kind as to forward me by post. I doubt not their excellence, knowing how far you are advanced in these things in your quarter. [...]

A letter from you calls up recollections very dear to my mind. It carries me back to the times when, beset with difficulties and dangers, we were fellow laborers in the same cause, struggling for what is most valuable to man, his right of self-government. Laboring always at the same oar, with some wave ever ahead threatening to overwhelm us and yet passing harmless under our bark, we knew not how, we rode through the storm with heart and hand, and made a happy port. Still we did not expect to be without rubs and difficulties; and we have had them. First the detention of the Western posts, [...] outlawing our commerce with France, and the British enforcement of the outlawry. [...]

But whither is senile garrulity leading me? Into politics, of which I have taken final leave. I think little of them, and say less. I have given up newspapers in exchange for Tacitus and Thucydides, for Newton and Euclid; and I find myself much the happier. Sometimes indeed I look back to former occurrences, in remembrance of our old friends and fellow laborers, who have fallen before us. Of the signers of the Declaration of Independence I see now living not more than half a dozen on your side of the Potomak, and, on this side, myself alone. You and I have been wonderfully spared, [...]. I have heard with pleasure that you also retain good health, and a greater power of exercise in walking than I do. But I would rather have heard this from yourself, and that, writing a letter, like mine, full of egotisms, and of details of your health, your habits, occupations and enjoyments, [...]. No circumstances have lessened the interest I feel in these particulars respecting yourself; none have suspended for one moment my sincere esteem for you; and I now salute you with unchanged affections and respect.

TH: JEFFERSON

Note: Early on in the correspondence Adams attempted to draw Jefferson into a debate over the policies of his administration.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, May 1, 1812
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 300–301

Quincy May 1. 1812

DEAR SIR

Yesterday, I received from the Post Office, under an envelope inscribed with your hand, but without any letter, a very learned and ingenious Pamphlet, prepared by you for the Use of your Counsel, in the case of Edward Livingston against you. [...]

[...] I have run over this Pamphlet with great pleasure but must read it with more Attention. I have uniformly treated the Charges of Corruption, which I have read in Newspapers and Pamphlets and heard from the Pulpit against you and Mr. Madison with contempt and Indignation. [...] In the Measures of Administration I have neither agreed with you or Mr. Madison. Whether you or I were right Posterity must judge. I have never approved of Non Importations, Non Intercourses, or Embargoes for more than Six Weeks. I never have approved and never can approve of the Repeal of the Taxes, the Repeal of the Judiciary System, or the Neglect of the Navy. You and Mr. Madison had as good a right to your Opinions as I had to mine, and I must acknowledge the Nation was with you. But neither your Authority nor that of the Nation has convinced me. Nor, I am bold to pronounce will convince Posterity. [...]

I am still as I ever have been and ever shall be with great Esteem and regard your Friend and Se[r]vant

JOHN ADAMS

Note: Jefferson's subsequent letter ignored these criticisms and Adams gave up trying to air old grievances, and the two kept up a regular and lively correspondence. In July of 1813 Abigail broke her long silence by adding the following note at the end of her husband's letter.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 15, 1813
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 357–358

Quincy July 15th 1813

[...]

I shall come to the Subject of Religion, by and by. Your Friend

JOHN ADAMS

I have been looking for some time for a space in my good Husbands Letters to add the regards of an old Friend, which are still cherished and preserved through all the charges and v[ic]issitudes which have taken place since we first became acquainted, and will I trust remain as long as

A ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, August 22, 1813
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 366–367

Monticello Aug. 22.13

DEAR MADAM

A kind note at the foot of Mr. Adams's letter of July 15. reminds me of the duty of saluting you with friendship and respect; a duty long suspended by the unremitting labors of public engagement, and which ought to have been sooner revived, since I am become proprietor of my own time. And yet so it is, that in no course of life have I been ever more closely pressed by business than in the present. Much of this proceeds from my own affairs; much from the calls of others; leaving little time for indulgence in my greatest of all amusements, reading. [...] However I will now take time to ask you how you do, how you have done? and to express the interest I take in whatever affects your happiness. I have been concerned to learn that, at one time you suffered much and long from rheumatism, and I can sympathise with you the more feelingly, as I have had more of it myself latterly than at any former period; and can form a truer idea of what it is in it's higher degrees. [...]

[...] Under all circumstances of health or sickness, of blessing or affliction, I tender you assurances of my sincere affection and respect; and my prayers that the hand of time and of providence may press lightly on you, till your own wishes shall withdraw you from all mortal feeling.

TH: JEFFERSON

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, November 13, 1815
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 456–458

Quincy Nov. 13 1815

DEAR SIR

The fund[a]mental Article of my political Creed is, that Despotism, or unlimited Sovereignty, or absolute Power is the same in a Majority of a popular Assembly, an Aristocratical Counsel, an Oligarchical Junto and a single Emperor. Equally arbitrary cruel bloody and in every respect diabolical.

Accordingly arbitrary Power, wherever it has resided, has never failed to destroy all the records Memorials and Histories of former times which it did not like and to corrupt and interpolate such as it was cunning enough to preserve or to tolerate. We cannot therefore say with much confidence, what Knowledge or what Virtues may have prevailed in some former Ages in some quarters of the World.

Nevertheless, according to the few lights that remain to Us, We may say that the Eighteenth Century, notwithstanding all its Errors and Vices has been, of all that are past, the most honourable to human Nature. [...]

[...] I am as usual Yours

JOHN ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, January 11, 1816
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 458–461

Monticello Jan. 11. 16.

DEAR SIR

[...]

I agree with you in all it's eulogies on the 18th century. It certainly witnessed the sciences and arts, manners and morals, advanced to a higher degree than the world had ever before seen. [...] That the same light from our West¹⁴ seems to have spread and illuminated the very engines employed to extinguish it. It has given them a glimmering of their rights and their power. The idea of representative government has taken root and growth among them. Their masters feel it, and are saving themselves by timely offers of this modification of their own powers. Belgium, Prussia, Poland, Lombardy etc. are now

¹⁴ Democracy.

offered a representative organization: illusive probably at first, but it will grow into power in the end. [...] Permit me to place here my affectionate respects to Mrs. Adams, and to add for yourself the assurances of cordial friendship and esteem.

TH: JEFFERSON

Note: During the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention of 1820–1821 Adams tried unsuccessfully to attach an amendment to the Massachusetts state constitution. The amendment would have guaranteed religious freedom, a right both he and Jefferson felt was a founding principle of the country, and was supposed to have been guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, January 22, 1821
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Papers*, pages 569–570

Monticello Jan. 22. 21

I was quite rejoiced, dear Sir, to see that you had health and spirits enough to take part in the late convention of your state for revising it's constitution, and to bear your share in it's debates and labors. The amendments of which we have as yet heard prove the advance of liberalism in the intervening period; and encourage a hope that the human mind will some day get back to the freedom it enjoyed 2000 years ago. This country, which has given to the world the example of physical liberty, owes to it that of moral emancipation also. For, as yet, it is but nominal with us. The inquisition of public opinion overwhelms in practice the freedom asserted by the laws in theory.

[...]

You see, my dear Sir, how easily we prescribe for others a cure for their difficulties, while we cannot cure our own. We must leave both, I believe, to heaven, and wrap ourselves up in the mantle of resignation, and of that friendship of which I tender to you the most sincere assurances.

TH: JEFFERSON

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, January 23, 1825
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 607–608

Quincy 23rd. January 1825

MY DEAR SIR

We think ourselves possessed or at least we boast that we are so of Liberty of conscience on all subjects and of the right of free inquiry and private judgment, in all cases and yet how far are we from these exalted privileges in fact. There exists I believe throughout the whole Christian world a law which makes it blasphemy to deny or to doubt the divine inspiration of all the books from the old and new Testaments from Genesis to Revelations. [...] in England itself it is punished by boring through the tongue with a red hot poker: in America it is not much better, even in our Massachusetts which I believe upon the whole is as temperate and moderate in religious zeal as most of the States. A law was made in the latter end of the last century repealing the cruel punishments of the former laws but substituting fine and imprisonment upon all those blasphemers upon any book of the old Testament or new. [...] I think such laws a great embarrassment, great obstructions to the improvement of the human mind. [...] I wish they were repealed. The substance and essence of Christianity as I understand it is eternal and unchangeable and will bear examination forever but it has been mixed with extraneous ingredients, which I think will not bear examination and they ought to be separated.

Adieu
JOHN ADAMS

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, March 25, 1826
The Adams-Jefferson Letters, pages 613–614

Monticello Mar. 25. 26.

DEAR SIR

My grandson Th: Jefferson Randolph, being on a visit to Boston, would think he had seen nothing were he to leave it without having seen you. Altho' I truly sympathise with you in the trouble these interruptions give, yet I must ask for him permission to pay to you his personal respects. Like other young people, he wishes to be able, in the winter nights of old age, to recount to those around him what he has heard and learnt of the Heroic age preceding his birth, and which of the Argonauts particularly he was in time to have seen. It was the lot of our early years to witness nothing but the dull monotony of colonial subservience, and of our riper ones to breast the labors and perils of working out of it. There are the Halcyon calms succeeding the storm which our Argosy had so stoutly weathered. Gratify his ambition then by receiving his best bow, and my solicitude for your health by enabling him to bring me a favorable account of it. Mine is but indifferent, but not so my friendship and respect for you.

TH: JEFFERSON

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, April 17, 1826
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, page 614

Quincy April 17th. 1826

MY DEAR SIR

Your letter of March 25th. has been a cordial to me, and the more consoling as it was brought by your Grandsons, Mr. Randolph and Mr. Coolidge. Everybody connected with you is snatched up, so that I cannot get any of them to dine with me—they are always engaged. How happens it that you Virginians are all sons of Anak¹⁵? We New Englanders are but Pygmies by the side of Mr. Randolph. I was very much gratified with Mr. Randolph, and his conversation. Your letter is one of the most beautiful and delightful I have ever received.

[...] My love to all your family, and best wishes for your health

JOHN ADAMS.

Note: These were the last letters Jefferson and Adams sent to each other. They both died on July 4, 1826.

¹⁵ A biblical reference. What Adams means is that Virginians are all tall.

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