READING NOTES 11

Read Section 11.5. To make a character collage for Jefferson, record notes for each subhead. Then, in the small box, draw an icon representing an important point in your notes.

11.5 Thomas Jefferson

Personal Background

View of Human Nature

Ideal Economy

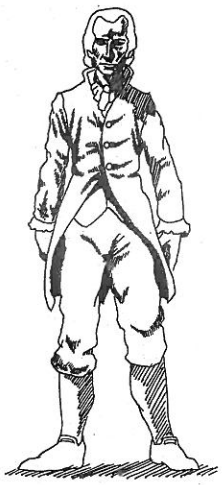
Best Form of Government

Relations with Britain and France

READING NOTES 11

Read Section 11.4. To make a character collage for Hamilton, record notes for each subhead. Then, in the small box, draw an icon representing an important point in your notes.

11.4 Alexander Hamilton



Personal Background

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11.3 Washington as President

The most critical problem facing the new government was money. The national treasury was empty. Congress had the power to raise funds through taxes. But its members argued endlessly about what to tax and by how much. In 1791, Congress finally agreed to place an excise tax on whiskey and other "luxury" goods, such as carriages. An *excise tax* is a tax on the production or sale of a product.

The Whiskey Rebellion

Settlers living west of the Appalachian Mountains howled in protest. Western farmers found it too costly to haul their grain across the mountains to sell in eastern cities. Instead, they distilled their bulky wheat into whiskey, which could be shipped more cheaply. Many farmers complained that the tax made their whisky too expensive, and refused to pay it.

To end these protests, Congress lowered the excise tax in 1793. Most farmers began to pay up, but not the tax rebels of western Pennsylvania. These "Whiskey Boys" tarred and feathered tax collectors who tried to enforce the law.

Hamilton and Washington saw the Whiskey Rebellion as a threat to the authority of the national government. At Hamilton's urging, Washington led 13,000 state militia troops across the mountains to crush the rebels. Faced with overwhelming force, the rebellion melted away.

Jefferson thought that the idea of sending an army to catch a few tax rebels was foolish. Even worse, he believed, Hamilton was prepared to violate people's liberties by using armed force to put down opposition to government policies.

The French Revolution Meanwhile, the nation was caught up in a debate over events in France. In 1789, the French people rebelled against their king. The leaders of the French Revolution dreamed of building a nation based on "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," or brotherhood. Three years later, France became a republic and declared "a war of all peoples against all kings."

Many Americans were thrilled by the French Revolution. This was especially true of Jefferson and his followers, who began calling themselves Democratic-Republicans, or simply Republicans. The Republicans saw the French Revolution as part of a great crusade for democracy.

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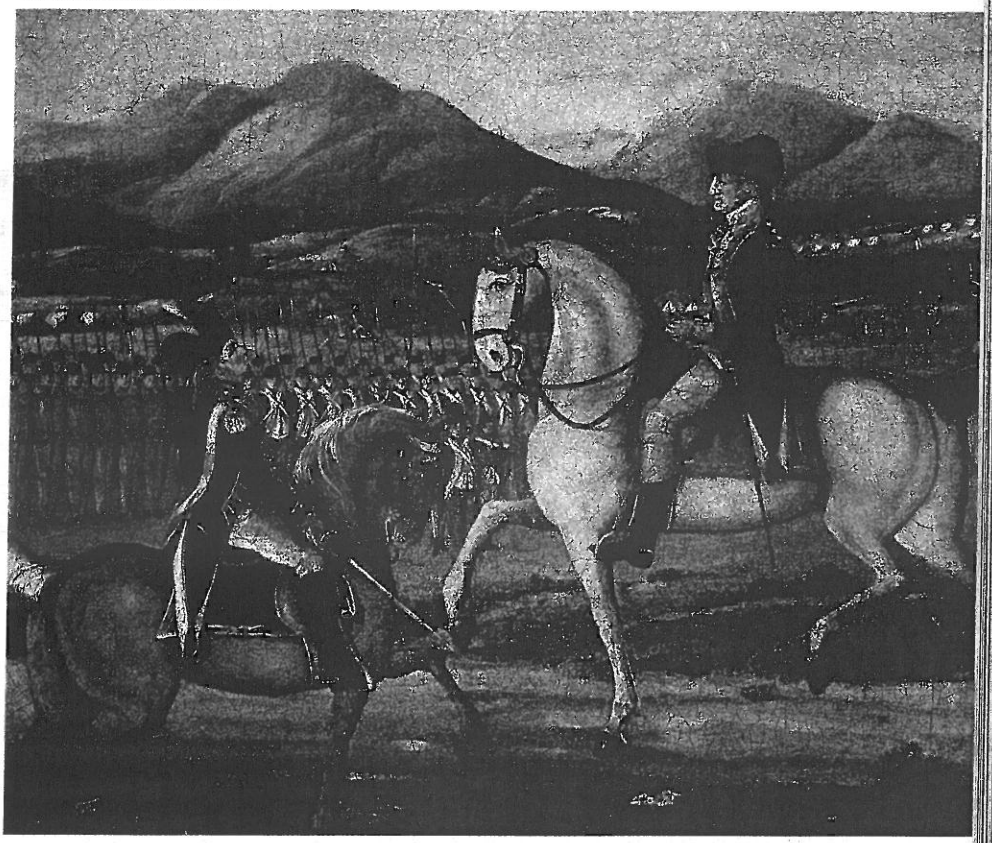
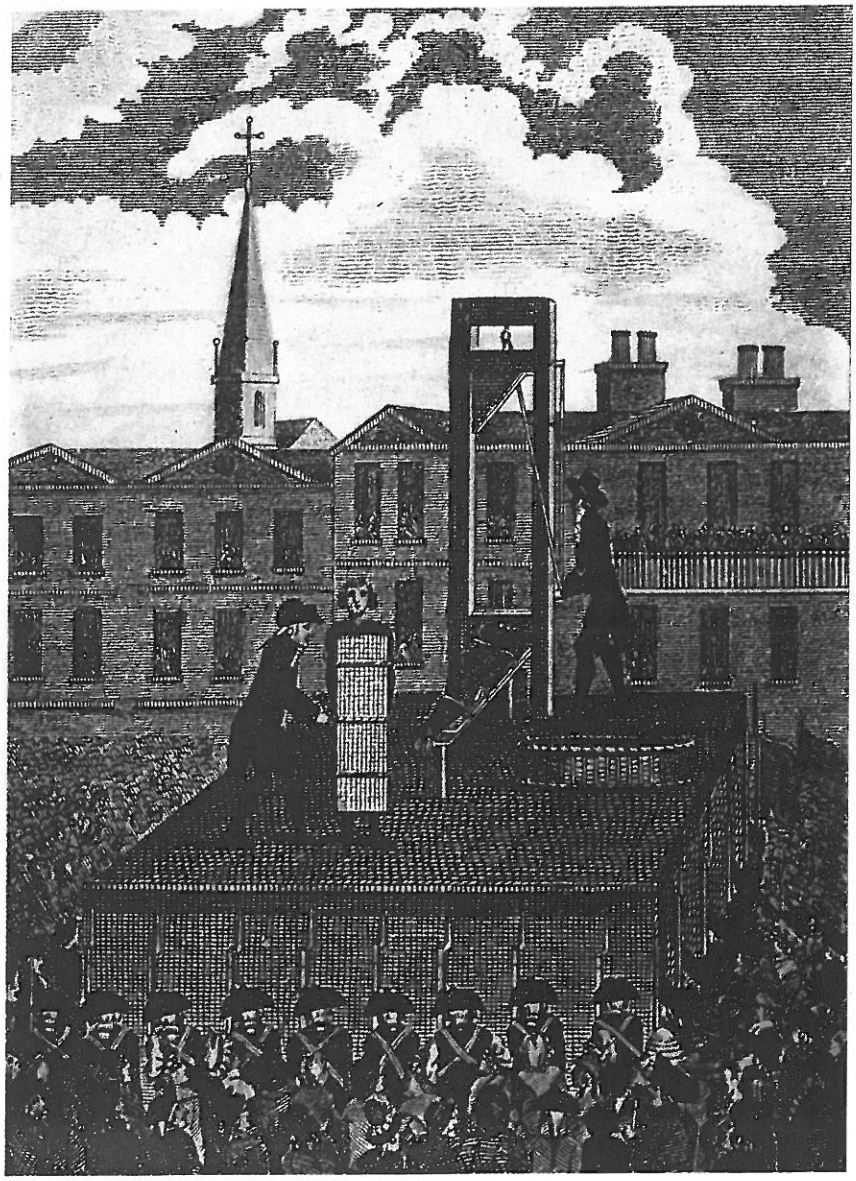


The Whiskey Rebellion was a serious challenge to the new nation's ability to enforce its laws. When several hundred Whiskey Boys refused to pay a federal whiskey tax, President Washington personally led 13,000 state militia troops to put down the rebellion.

In time, news from France caused supporters of the revolution to think again. Cheered on by angry mobs, France's revolutionary government began lopping off the heads of wealthy nobles. Some 20,000 men, women, and children were killed.

Hamilton and his followers, who called themselves Federalists, were appalled by the bloodshed. Many Federalists were themselves well-off. After hearing about the fate of wealthy families in France, they began to finger their own necks, wondering whether such terrors could happen in the United States. "Behold France," warned one Federalist, "an open hell...in which we see...perhaps our own future."

When the French Revolution turned violent, and an endless stream of nobles was beheaded on the guillotine, many Americans withdrew their support for the revolution.



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Washington's Farewell Address The growing division between Republicans and Federalists so disturbed Washington that he agreed to run for a second term as president in 1792. He was the only person, Hamilton and Jefferson told him, who could keep the nation from pulling apart.

Near the end of his second term, Washington announced that he would not run again. Before leaving office, the president prepared a farewell address, or message. In it he reminded Americans of all that bound them together as a people. "With slight shades of difference," he said, "you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together."

Next, Washington warned of two threats to the nation's future. You will read about one of those threats—problems with other countries—in the next chapter. The other threat was "the spirit of party." It was natural for people to hold different opinions, Washington said. But he warned against the dangers of passionate loyalty to parties. If fighting between parties was not controlled, it could tear the young nation apart.

Despite his worries for the future, Washington had much to be proud of as he left office. The new government was up and running. The nation was growing so fast that it had added three new states—Kentucky, Tennessee, and Vermont. Most of all, Washington had steered his government safely through quarrelsome times. He left the nation united and at peace.

11.4 Alexander Hamilton and the Federalist Party

Washington's warnings did not stop the rise of political parties in the young nation. The Federalist Party appeared first during the debates over the ratification of the Constitution. Its most influential leader was Washington's energetic treasury secretary, Alexander Hamilton.

Personal Background Hamilton was born in the West Indies and raised on the Caribbean island of St. Croix. When Hamilton was 13, a devastating hurricane struck the island. Hamilton wrote a vivid description of the storm that impressed all who read it. A few St. Croix leaders arranged to send the talented teenager to New York, where he could get the education he deserved. Once in America, Hamilton never looked back.

Hamilton grew up to be a small, slim, handsome man. His blue eyes were said to turn black when he was angry. But most of the time they sparkled with intelligence and energy. With no money or family connections to help him rise in the world, he made his way on ability, ambition, and charm.

George Washington spotted Hamilton's talents early in the Revolutionary War. Washington made the young man his aide-de-camp, or personal assistant. Near the end of the war, Hamilton improved his fortunes by marrying Elizabeth Schuyler. His new wife came from one of New York's richest and most powerful families. With her family's political backing, Hamilton was elected to represent New York in Congress after the war. Later, he served as a delegate from New York to the Constitutional Convention.

This portrait of Alexander Hamilton was painted by John Trumbull, a famous American artist. Hamilton rose from poverty to become a leader of the Federalist Party. His brilliant career was cut short when he was killed in a duel with Vice President Aaron Burr, whom he had accused of being a traitor.

View of Human Nature Hamilton's view of human nature was shaped by his wartime experiences. All too often, he had seen people put their own interests and personal profit above patriotism and the needs of the country. "Every man ought to be supposed a knave [scoundrel]," he concluded, "and to have no other end [goal] in all his actions, but private interests."

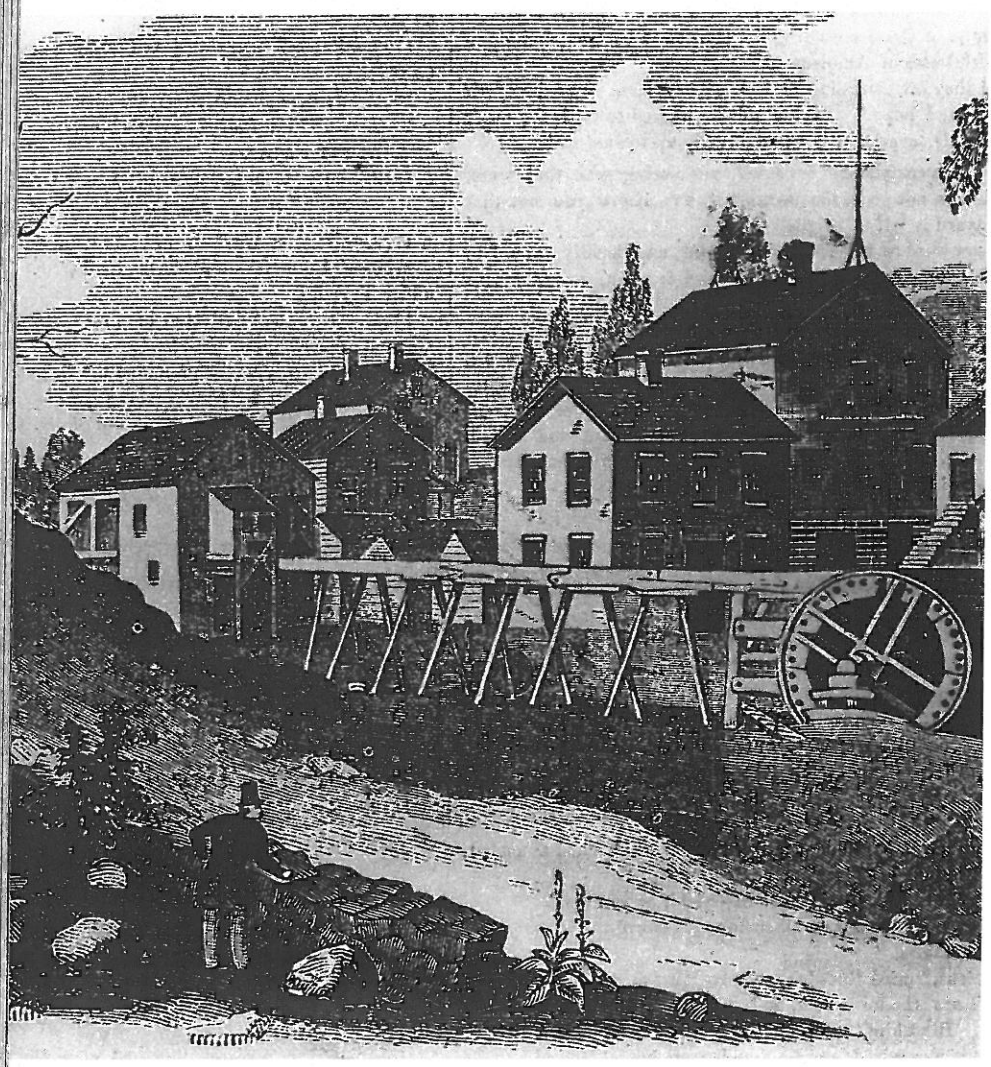
Most Federalists shared Hamilton's view that people were basically selfish and out for themselves. For this reason, they distrusted any system of government that gave too much power to the "the mob," or the common people. Such a system, said Hamilton, could only lead to "error, confusion, and instability."

Best Form of Government Federalists believed that the country should be ruled by "the best people"—educated, wealthy, public-spirited men like themselves. Such people had the time, education, and background to run the country wisely. They could also be trusted to make decisions for the general good, not just for themselves. "Those who own the country," said Federalist John Jay bluntly, "ought to govern it."

Federalists favored a strong national government. They hoped to use the new government's powers under the Constitution to unite the quarreling states and keep order among the people. In their view, the rights of states were not nearly as important as national power and unity.

Hamilton agreed. Having grown up in the Caribbean, Hamilton had no deep loyalty to any state. His country was not New York, but the United States of America. And he hoped to see his adopted country become a great and powerful nation.

Ideal Economy Hamilton's dream of national greatness depended on the United States developing a strong economy. In 1790, the nation's economy was still based mainly on agriculture. Hamilton wanted to expand the economy and increase the nation's wealth by using the power of the federal government to promote business, manufacturing, and trade.



Alexander Hamilton believed that to become strong, the United States needed to develop businesses such as this foundry (factory for melting and shaping metal) in Connecticut.

Before this could happen, the new nation needed to begin paying off the huge debts that Congress and the states had piled up during the Revolutionary War. In 1790, Hamilton presented Congress with a plan to pay off all war debts as quickly as possible. If the debts were not promptly paid, he warned, the government would lose respect both at home and abroad.

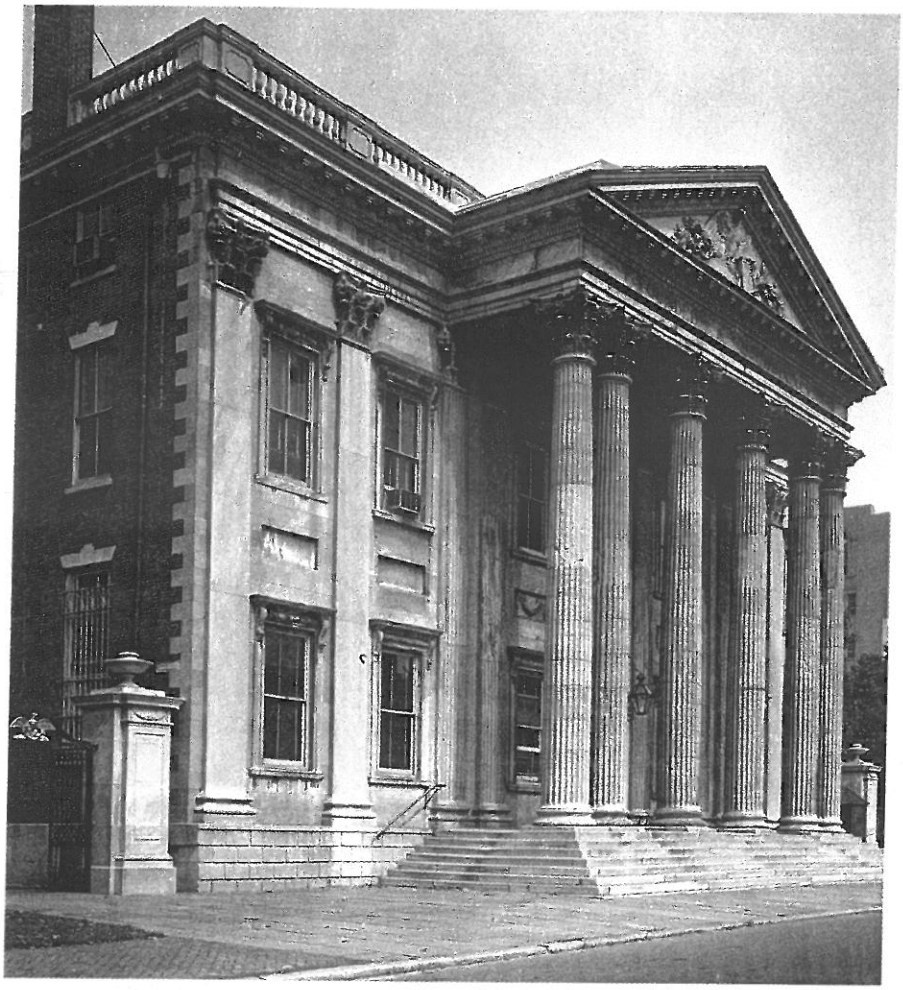
Hamilton's plan for repaying the debts was opposed by many Americans, especially in the South. Most southern states had already paid their war debts. They saw little reason to help states in the North pay off what they still owed.

To save his plan, Hamilton linked it to another issue—the location of the nation's permanent capital. Both northerners and southerners wanted the capital to be located in their section of the country. Hamilton promised to support a location in the South if southerners would support his debt plan. The

debt plan was passed, and the nation's new capital—called the District of Columbia—was located in the South on the Potomac River between Maryland and Virginia.

Next, Hamilton asked Congress to establish a national bank. Such a bank, Hamilton said, would help the government by collecting taxes and keeping those funds safe. It would print paper money backed by the government, giving the nation a stable currency. Most important, the bank would make loans to businesspeople to build new factories and ships. As business and trade expanded, Hamilton argued, all Americans would be better off.

Once again, Hamilton's proposal ran into a storm of opposition. Where in the Constitution, his opponents asked, was Congress given the power to establish a bank? In their view, Congress could exercise only those powers specifically listed in the Constitution.



Hamilton established the first national bank, pictured here in 1933. The bank collected taxes, printed money, and made loans to businesses.

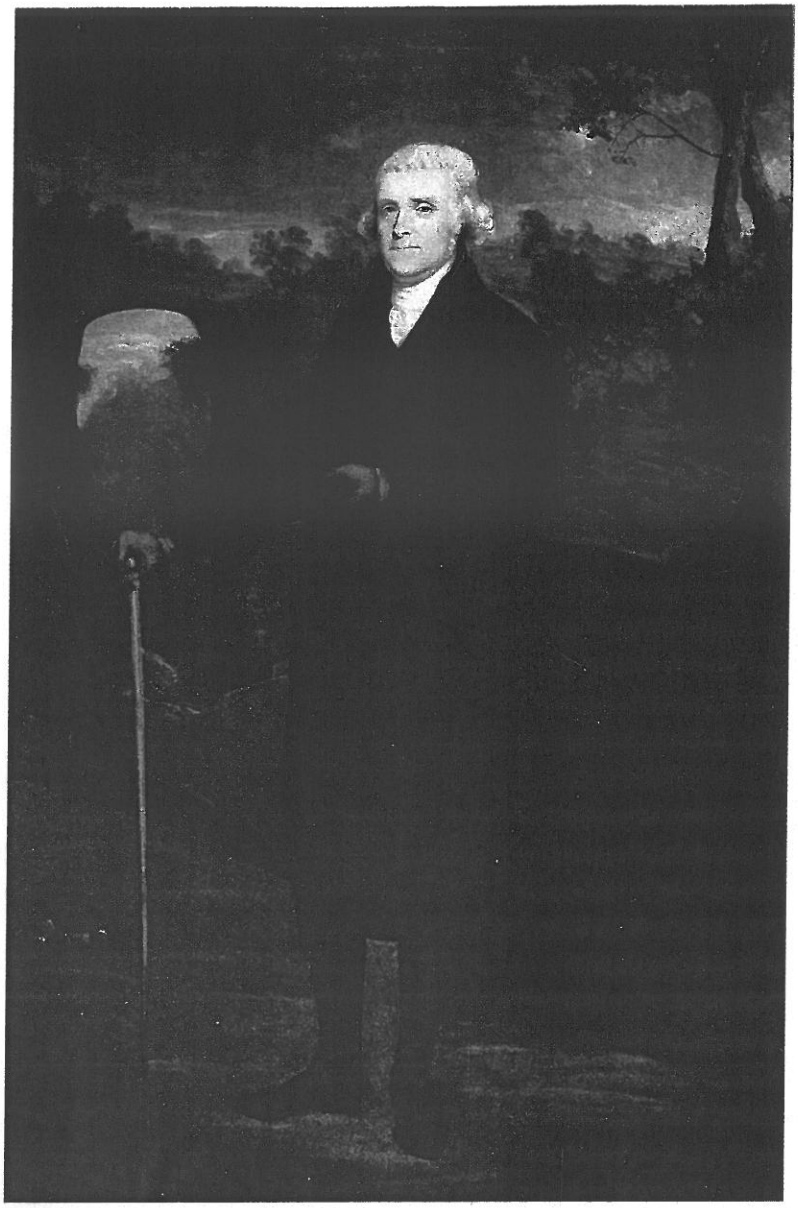
Hamilton, in contrast, supported a loose construction (broad interpretation) of the Constitution. He pointed out that the "elastic clause" allowed Congress to "make all laws which shall be necessary and proper" for carrying out its listed powers. Since collecting taxes was one of those powers, Congress could set up a bank to help the government with tax collection.

After much debate, Hamilton was able get his bank approved by Congress. Once established, the Bank of the United States helped the nation's economy grow and prosper.

Relations with Britain and France When the French Revolution began, Hamilton hoped that it would lead to the "establishment of free and good government." But as he watched it lead instead to chaos and bloodshed, his enthusiasm for the revolution cooled.

When war broke out between France and England in 1793, most Federalists sided with Britain. Some were merchants and shippers whose business depended on trade with America's former enemy. Others simply felt more comfortable supporting orderly Britain against revolutionary France.

Hamilton leaned toward Britain for yet another reason. Great Britain was all that he hoped the United States would become one day: a powerful and respected nation that could defend itself against any enemy.



Thomas Jefferson was one of America's greatest patriots. His strongest support came from the middle class: farmers, laborers, artisans, and shopkeepers.

11.5 Thomas Jefferson and the Republican Party

Hamilton's success in getting his plans through Congress alarmed Thomas Jefferson and his fellow Republicans. In Jefferson's view, almost everything Hamilton did to put the United States on the path to greatness was instead a step down the road to ruin. The two men held very different views on almost everything.

Personal Background Jefferson was born in Virginia to an old and respected family. One of ten children, he was gifted with many talents. As a boy, he learned to ride, hunt, sing, dance, and play the violin. Later, he carried a violin with him in all his travels.

Jefferson was also a gifted student. When he entered college at age 16, he already knew Greek and Latin. He seemed to know something about almost everything. He once wrote that "not a sprig of grass [is] uninteresting to me." This boundless curiosity would remain with him all his life.

Jefferson grew up to be a tall, lanky man with reddish brown hair. Abigail Adams, the wife of John Adams, wrote that his appearance was "not unworthy of a God." With land inherited from his father, Jefferson set himself up as a Virginia tobacco planter. Like other planters, he used slaves to work his land.

Once he was established as a planter, Jefferson entered Virginia politics. As a politician, he lacked the ability to make stirring speeches. Instead, Jefferson spoke eloquently with his pen. His words in the Declaration of Independence and other writings are still read and admired today.

View of Human Nature Jefferson's view of human nature was much more hopeful than Hamilton's. He assumed that informed citizens could make good decisions for themselves and their country. "I have so much confidence in the good sense of men," Jefferson wrote when revolution broke out in France, "that I am never afraid of the issue [outcome] where reason is left free to exert her force."

Jefferson had great faith in the goodness and wisdom of people who worked the soil—farmers and planters like himself. "State a problem to a ploughman [farmer] and a professor," he said, and "the former will decide it often better than the latter."

Best Form of Government Republicans favored democracy over any other form of government. They had no patience with the Federalists' view that only the "best people" should rule. To Republicans, this view came dangerously close to monarchy, or rule by a king.

Republicans believed that the best government was the one that governed the least. A small government with limited powers was most likely to leave the people alone to enjoy the blessings of liberty. To keep the national government small, they insisted on a strict construction, or interpretation, of the Constitution. The Constitution, they insisted, meant exactly what it said, no more and no less. Any addition to the powers listed there, such as the creation of a national bank, was unconstitutional and dangerous.

Along with a weak national government, Republicans favored strong state governments. State governments, they argued, were closer to the people, and the people could control them more easily. Strong state governments could also keep the national government from growing too powerful.

Ideal Economy Like most Americans in the 1790s, Jefferson was a country man. He believed that the nation's future lay not with Federalist bankers and merchants, but with plain, Republican farm folk. "Those who labor in the earth," he wrote, "are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people."

Republicans favored an economy based on agriculture. They opposed any measures, such as the national bank, designed to encourage the growth of business and manufacturing. In their view, the national bank was not only unconstitutional, but anti-farmer. While the bank was happy to loan money to businesspeople to build factories and ships, it did not make loans to farmers to buy land.

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Agriculture, according to Jefferson, was the most important part of the economy. He believed farming was the best occupation because it kept people out of corrupt cities.

Relations with Britain and France Another issue that sparked heated arguments between Republicans and Federalists was the French Revolution. Most Americans favored the revolution until it turned violent and led to war. As you have read, most Federalists then turned against the new French republic and sided with Great Britain. For this change of heart, a Republican newspaper branded the Federalists "British bootlickers."

Despite the violence of the revolution, most Republicans continued to support France. While regretting the bloodshed, they argued that a few thousand noble heads was a small price to pay for freedom. For their

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Edmond Genet, who called himself Citizen Genet, was the French representative to the United States. During his stay, he attempted to convince Americans to join the French in their war with Britain. After Genet insulted President Washington, he was ordered to leave the country.

loyalty to France, Republicans were scorned in a Federalist newspaper as "frog-eating, man-eating, blood-drinking cannibals."

In 1793, the French government sent Edmond Genet to the United States as its new official representative. Genet preferred to be called "Citizen," using the title adopted by French revolutionaries to emphasize the equality of all people. His mission was to convince Americans that they should join France in its war against Great Britain.

Citizen Genet was welcomed by Republicans as a conquering hero. As he traveled about the country preaching against kings and nobles, he was cheered by large crowds. In Philadelphia, the nation's temporary capital, a great banquet was held in his honor. Throughout the city, people drank toasts to Citizen Genet and to France.

The cheering crowds quickly went to Genet's head. When he formally presented himself to President Washington, he expected another warm and enthusiastic reception. Washington, however, did not want to be drawn into war with Britain. His response to Genet was cool and dignified.

Genet began making speeches attacking the president. "I live in the midst of continual parties," he crowed. "Old man Washington is jealous of my success, and of the enthusiasm with which the whole town flocks to my house." These attacks on Washington brought thousands of Genet's supporters into the streets of Philadelphia. "Day after day," recalled Vice President Adams, the protesters "threatened to drag Washington out of his house, and effect [bring about] a revolution in the government, or compel it to declare war in favor of the French revolution."

This was too much, even for Jefferson. Washington's cabinet agreed that Genet had to go. Calling him "hotheaded...disrespectful, and even indecent toward the President," Secretary of State Jefferson asked the French government to recall its troublesome representative.