

Name _____

Period _____

“Political Parties” from American Nation pg 229-231

In 1789, there were no political parties in the US as there are today. In fact, President Washington and other leaders distrusted political parties. Yet before Washington left office in 1796, two parties had developed.

Against All Warnings

During the 1700s, most Americans distrusted political parties. In his Farewell Address, Washington warned that parties caused “jealousies and false alarms.” Jefferson echoed this warning. He said, “If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go at all.”

Americans had good reason to distrust political parties. They had seen how parties worked in Britain. Parties, called factions in Britain, were made up of a few people who schemed to win favors from the government. They were more interested in personal profit than in the public good. American leaders wanted to keep factions from forming. But disagreements between two of Washington’s chief advisers spurred the growth of political parties.

The two parties that developed in the 1790s were led by Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. Hamilton and Jefferson were different in many ways. Hamilton was a short, slender man. He spoke forcefully, dressed elegantly, and sparkled with energy. He was much in demand at formal parties.

Jefferson was tall and a bit gawky. Although he was a Virginian aristocrat, he dressed and spoke informally and sparkled with brilliant ideas.

1. Why did most people in America in the 1700s distrust political parties?
2. What did Washington worry political parties would do?
3. What did Jefferson mean when he said: “If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go at all.”?

Two Views on Government

Hamilton and Jefferson had very different views about what was good for the country. Hamilton wanted the federal government to be stronger than state governments. Jefferson believed that state governments should be stronger.

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Hamilton supported the Bank of the United States. Jefferson opposed it because he felt that it gave too much power to wealthy investors who would help run it. Also, Jefferson interpreted the Constitution strictly. He argued that nowhere did the Constitution give the federal government the power to create a national bank.

Hamilton interpreted the Constitution more loosely. He pointed out that the Constitution gave Congress the power to make all laws “necessary and proper” to carry out its duties. He reasoned that since Congress had the right to collect taxes and the Bank was necessary to collect taxes, then the Congress had the right to create the Bank.

Hamilton wanted the government to encourage economic growth. His programs favored the growth of trade, manufacturing, and cities. He favored business leaders and distrusted the common people. Jefferson believed that the common people, especially farmers, were the backbone of the nation. He thought that crowded cities and manufacturing might corrupt American life.

Finally, Hamilton favored Britain, an important trading partner of the US. Jefferson favored France, America’s first ally and a nation whose people were struggling for liberty and freedom.

Fill in the chart below with the correct name either Hamilton or Jefferson

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Favored strong federal government | Favored state governments being stronger than the national government | Created the national bank |
| Interpreted the Constitution strictly | Interpreted the Constitution loosely | Favored France |
| Favored Britain | Supported business & manufacturing | Favored city life |
| Supported the common people | Believed farmers were the backbone of the nation | Wanted the government to encourage economic growth |

Parties Take Shape

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At first, Jefferson and Hamilton disagreed only in private. But when Congress began passing Hamilton’s program, Jefferson and his friend James Madison, decided to organize support for their views. They moved quietly and cautiously at first.

In 1791, they went to New York State, telling people that they were going to study its wildlife. In fact, Jefferson was interested in the nature and traveled as far north as Lake George. But he and Madison also met with such important New York politician as Governor George Clinton and Aaron Burr, a strong critic of Hamilton. Jefferson asked Clinton and Burr to help defeat Hamilton’s program by getting New Yorkers to vote for Jefferson’s supporters at the next election.

Republicans and Federalists

Before long, leaders in other states began organizing to support either Jefferson or Hamilton. Jefferson’s supporters called themselves Democratic Republicans. Often, the name was shortened to Republicans. Hamilton and his supporters were known as Federalists because they favored a strong federal government. Federalists had the support of merchants and shipowners in the Northeast and some planters in the South. Small farmers, craft workers, and some wealthier landowners supported the Republicans.

1. Why did Jefferson and Madison go to New York?
2. Who supported the Federalists? Why
3. Who supported the Democratic-Republicans? Why