Shaping a Republic

How individuals influenced rights and federal power, 1776 to 1796

8.H.10 "Analyze the influence of important individuals on social and political developments of the time (1775-1800)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline an action taken by each person, then number the effect of each action with the same number. Use your marks to trace how individuals shaped debates or decisions.

Who Would Shape the New Nation?

1. In 1776, as leaders debated independence, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John, who was serving in the Continental Congress. She urged him to "remember the ladies" when making new laws. Her words challenged the idea that political freedom mattered only for men. Congress did not grant women equal political rights, and most women could not vote in national elections. Still, Abigail used a private letter to press a public question: Who would have a voice in the new republic? Her challenge showed that independence did not settle every debate about rights.

2. After the Constitution took effect, Alexander Hamilton became the first treasury secretary. In 1790, he proposed that the federal government take over states' unpaid Revolutionary War debts. He argued that this would strengthen national credit and tie wealthy lenders to the new government. Some leaders, including Thomas Jefferson, worried that Hamilton's plans would give the federal government too much power. Congress approved the debt plan after a hard bargain among leaders. Hamilton's influence turned arguments about national strength into a policy that increased the federal government's role in the economy.

3. In 1794, farmers in western Pennsylvania resisted a federal tax on whiskey. President George Washington sent a large militia force to stop the uprising, though most protesters scattered before troops arrived. His decision showed that the new federal government could enforce its laws, unlike the weaker national government under the Articles of Confederation. But using force also raised questions about how leaders should respond to protest. By 1796, Washington warned that fierce political parties could divide the country. His choices and warnings shaped debates over federal power and the risks of political conflict.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Abigail Adams try to influence the new republic, and what limit did her effort face?

2. How did Hamilton's debt plan change the federal government's role, and why did Jefferson worry about plans like it?

3. What did Washington's response to the whiskey protest show about federal power?

4. Whose action led to a more immediate change in federal policy, Abigail Adams's or Hamilton's? Support your choice with evidence from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a member of Congress in 1796. In five or six sentences, propose a new way for people to influence federal decisions, use the actions of two people in the passage to explain why your idea could matter, and identify one limit.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.H.10

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline an action taken by each person, then number the effect of each action with the same number. Use your marks to trace how individuals shaped debates or decisions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Abigail Adams try to influence the new republic, and what limit did her effort face?	**She urged John Adams to consider women when making laws, raising the question of who would have a political voice. Congress did not grant women equal political rights.**
2	How did Hamilton's debt plan change the federal government's role, and why did Jefferson worry about plans like it?	**Congress approved the plan for the federal government to take over states' war debts, increasing its role in the economy. Jefferson worried that Hamilton's plans gave it too much power.**
3	What did Washington's response to the whiskey protest show about federal power?	**By sending a militia force, Washington showed that the federal government could enforce its laws, unlike the weaker national government under the Articles of Confederation.**
4	Whose action led to a more immediate change in federal policy, Abigail Adams's or Hamilton's? Support your choice with evidence from the passage.	**Hamilton's action led to a more immediate policy change because Congress approved his debt plan. Abigail Adams raised a question about rights, but Congress did not grant women equal political rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress should invite written comments from women before voting on new federal laws. Abigail Adams used a letter to ask lawmakers to consider women's rights, so this plan would give such requests a public hearing. Washington showed that federal decisions could affect people directly when he sent a militia force in response to the whiskey protest. Hearing from more people before decisions might help Congress understand how laws affect them. This plan would not give women the right to vote. Leaders could still ignore the letters, so public input would not guarantee change.

Accept other evidence-based comparisons in question 4 if students distinguish influence on debate from an approved policy. For Part 3, look for a new proposal, accurate connections to two individuals, and a realistic limit.