A Republic Divided

How competing visions shaped the first political parties

8.H.8 "Compare and contrast the views of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, and explain how their differences caused the development of political parties, affecting the nation for the future."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two of Hamilton's views and circle two contrasting views held by Jefferson. Write 1 beside a goal they shared and 2 beside one lasting effect of their disagreement.

Two Plans for a New Nation

1. When the new United States faced heavy war debts in the 1790s, Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton proposed that the national government take over state debts and create a national bank. He believed a strong central government could build public credit, support trade, and help the country grow. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson worried that a national bank gave the federal government too much power. He argued that the Constitution did not clearly authorize one. Both men wanted the republic to succeed, but they disagreed about how to protect it.

2. Jefferson pictured a nation of independent farmers and believed state governments should handle many decisions close to home. Hamilton saw trade, manufacturing, and a national financial system as important sources of strength. Hamilton read the Constitution as allowing powers needed to carry out its listed duties, even if those powers were not spelled out. Jefferson argued for a narrower reading of federal power. Their disagreement was not simply about money. It raised a question that still matters: who should decide what the national government may do?

3. These arguments moved beyond cabinet meetings. Hamilton's supporters became known as Federalists, while Jefferson's supporters joined the Democratic-Republicans. Newspapers and elections gave each group ways to gather voters around its ideas about federal power and the economy. This competition helped create the nation's first political parties. The parties did not last forever in their original forms, but organized disagreement became a lasting feature of American politics. Later generations would also argue about how much power belongs in Washington and how much belongs with the states.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Hamilton support a national bank, while Jefferson questioned it?

2. How did Hamilton and Jefferson differ in their reading of the Constitution?

3. Compare the kind of economy each man thought would make the nation strong.

4. How did their disagreements help create political parties, and what effect lasted beyond those first parties?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a proposal in the 1790s for the national government to pay for roads connecting several states. In four sentences, predict how Hamilton and Jefferson might respond, explain how their disagreement could help form parties, and describe one possible lasting effect.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two of Hamilton's views and circle two contrasting views held by Jefferson. Write 1 beside a goal they shared and 2 beside one lasting effect of their disagreement. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Hamilton support a national bank, while Jefferson questioned it?	**Hamilton believed a bank could strengthen national finances and trade. Jefferson questioned it because the Constitution did not clearly authorize it and he feared expanded federal power.**
2	How did Hamilton and Jefferson differ in their reading of the Constitution?	**Hamilton believed the federal government could use powers needed to carry out its listed duties. Jefferson favored a narrower reading of federal power.**
3	Compare the kind of economy each man thought would make the nation strong.	**Jefferson emphasized independent farmers. Hamilton emphasized trade, manufacturing, and a national financial system.**
4	How did their disagreements help create political parties, and what effect lasted beyond those first parties?	**Supporters organized as Federalists and Democratic-Republicans around competing ideas about federal power and the economy. Organized political disagreement remained a feature of American politics.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Hamilton might support the roads because they could increase trade between states and strengthen the nation's economy. Jefferson might ask whether the Constitution gives the national government power to build them, and he might prefer that states make the decision. People who agreed with each man could join different parties and support candidates who shared their view. Future voters might continue to debate when a project should be paid for by the national government instead of the states.

For the open task, accept plausible predictions grounded in each man's views, not claims that either man took a specific position on this imagined proposal. Responses should connect the disagreement to party organization and identify a lasting question about government power.