

From Factions to Parties

Compare early political arguments and explain how organized parties developed

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1: Read the evidence

Source cards: These are original classroom summaries adapted from a secondary source, not primary-source quotations. Read each card and the timeline. Then complete Task 1 using evidence.

Federalists

Federalists, associated with Alexander Hamilton, generally supported a stronger national government. They supported Hamilton's financial plans, including a national bank. Many favored a broad reading of the Constitution, meaning the national government could use implied powers to carry out its duties.

Democratic-Republicans

Democratic-Republicans, associated with Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, generally emphasized state power and a narrower reading of the Constitution. They worried that a powerful national government and Hamilton's plans could benefit wealthy interests too much.

Development timeline

- 1787: Delegates write the Constitution.
- 1790-1791: Hamilton proposes major financial plans.
- Early 1790s: Supporters and opponents organize around competing ideas.
- 1796: Organized Federalist and Democratic-Republican candidates compete in a presidential election.
- 1820s-1830s: The Federalists fade; Democratic-Republicans divide, and new parties, including the Whigs, organize.
- 1854: A later Republican Party forms. It was not the same party as the earlier Democratic-Republicans.

1. Compare the factions. In each row, state one argument or concern and copy or paraphrase one supporting detail from the source cards or timeline.

Faction	Argument or concern	Evidence from a card or the timeline
Federalists		
Democratic-Republicans		

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Part 2: Explain the change over time

2. Write a 5-7 sentence explanation. How did disagreements help produce organized political parties? Use both early faction names, describe one disagreement, and use at least one timeline detail to show development over time. End by explaining why the later Republican Party should not be treated as the same group as the Democratic-Republicans.

Quick check before turning in: Did I use evidence from the source cards or timeline? Did I explain change over time, not just list differences?

Source credit: Library of Congress, “Formation of Political Parties,” n.d., adapted summary, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/formation-of-political-parties.html>

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Answer key and teaching notes

Purpose: Students analyze adapted secondary-source summaries and a timeline to explain how competing views became organized early political parties. The student source cards are labeled adaptations; they are not invented quotations or primary sources.

Materials supplied: Student pages with source cards, timeline, comparison table, and writing lines. **Additionally needed:** pencils and an optional document camera or board for displaying the source cards.

Setup: Print and supply all student pages, keeping teacher-key pages separate. Give each student the complete student task. Display Part 1 only if students benefit from shared reading. Do not prefill the table or provide party-label hints beyond the student materials.

Teaching script: Say: “Today you will compare two early political factions. A faction is a group within a larger community that shares political ideas. Read for what each group wanted or feared. Then use the timeline to explain how disagreement moved from competing groups to organized parties. Notice that names can sound similar across history without meaning the groups are the same.” Say: “Use a detail from the cards or timeline as evidence. Your explanation must show a change over time.” No teacher-read source text is required.

Observation method: While students complete Task 1, check whether each student (1) identifies a position for each faction, (2) points to a matching detail in a source card or timeline, and (3) keeps the two faction names distinct. During Task 2, check for a causal link: disagreement led supporters to organize, compete, and form parties. Confer with students who only list vocabulary or confuse Democratic-Republicans with the later Republican Party.

1. Comparison-table key:

Federalists: acceptable argument/concern: supported a stronger national government; supported Hamilton's financial plans or a national bank; favored broad constitutional interpretation. Matching evidence: “stronger national government,” “national bank,” or “implied powers.”

Democratic-Republicans: acceptable argument/concern: emphasized state power; favored narrow constitutional interpretation; worried national power and Hamilton's plans would favor wealthy interests. Matching evidence: “state power,” “narrower reading,” or concern about “wealthy interests.” Students may paraphrase accurately.

2. Writing rubric and sample response: Award credit when the response has 5-7 sentences or a comparably complete explanation; names both factions; accurately explains at least one disagreement; uses a timeline detail; explains organization over time; and distinguishes the later Republican Party. Sample response: “Federalists and Democratic-Republicans disagreed about how much power the national government should have. Federalists generally supported a stronger national government and Hamilton's financial plans. Democratic-Republicans emphasized state power and worried about concentrated national power. These disagreements gave people reasons to support leaders who shared their views. In the early 1790s, supporters and opponents began organizing around those ideas. By the 1796 election, organized Federalist and Democratic-Republican candidates competed. Later political parties changed again, and the Republican Party formed in 1854 was not the same group as the earlier Democratic-Republicans.”