

SHAPING America

LESSON 11 : “SEARCHING FOR STABILITY”

Lesson Assignments

You are encouraged to be very attentive while viewing the video program. Review the video objectives and be prepared to record possible answers, in abbreviated form as you view the video. The topics and time periods may differ somewhat from the chapters of the textbook your school system is using. Each video program chronicles a wide array of events and personalities during a specific time period of American history prior to 1877. Keep in mind that one of the overarching goals of each lesson is to help you understand how past historical events and actions by historical personalities did not occur in a vacuum, and that they are inextricably interwoven in your society today.

Activities:

Your teacher may assign one or more activities for each lesson. Refer to your course syllabus for details.

OVERVIEW

By 1790, the newly formed United States had a population of nearly 4 million people. The population of the new nation was growing at an amazing rate and was doubling every twenty-five years. Cities such as New York and Charleston blossomed proportionately. The rapidly growing population began to spread westward and the inevitable conflicts with the Native Americans and the Spanish colonial empire soon followed.

The Electoral College unanimously elected George Washington, the esteemed Revolutionary War hero, as president in 1789 to govern this rapidly growing mass of humanity. He was perhaps the only president who did not in some way campaign for the office. He commanded his followers by the strength of his character rather than by the arts of a politician. He immediately put his stamp on the new government by appointing Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State and Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasurer. Those two men would become the leaders of opposing philosophies on the role government should play in shaping the future of the young republic.



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Yet it was Washington who guided the nation through the troubled waters that followed the Revolutionary War. He did so through the strength of his personality. Yes, he surrounded himself with capable leaders such as Jefferson and Hamilton, but he kept the country together and helped establish financial stability because the people viewed him as a dependable leader who would meet the issues of the day in a realistic fashion. His critics referred to him as “King George,” but Washington proved the hollowness of that charge when he willingly surrendered his “crown” after two terms in office. This very act became a precedent for future presidents, which was not broken until the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Washington was not a brilliant man when it came to the art of politics, but he was astute in his selection of Hamilton to handle economic affairs and Jefferson to guide the affairs of state.

Hamilton was a financial genius who saw the importance of giving the general public an economic stake in the success of the nation. His funding and assumption plans not only strengthened the power of the central government, but it also forged a bond among the states, people, and the central government. His efforts resulted in the formation of the First National Bank, which helped create a uniform currency system that helped bring economic stability and a high credit rating in the international community. His concept of implied powers provided the central government with powers that exceeded anything dreamed possible by most of the delegates at the Constitutional Convention.

Hamilton viewed the economic stability of the country as being of primary importance, and he instituted the excise tax to supplement the revenue from tariff duties. He viewed the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 as a major test of the new government’s power to tax and, ultimately, to survive. Hamilton persuaded Washington of the importance for the central government to send a clear message to the people that insurrection against the government would not be tolerated.

Jefferson, whose vision for America was quite different from Hamilton’s, envisioned an agrarian society that was to be governed by principles embedded in the Constitution. A strict interpretation of the Constitution would ensure that the central government did not usurp the powers granted to the people. Jefferson felt only disdain for Hamilton’s aristocratic tendencies and bias toward the business community.

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VIDEO OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are designed to assist the viewer in identifying the most significant aspects of the video segment of this lesson. You should take succinct notes while viewing the video.

1. Compare and contrast the views of Jefferson and Hamilton with reference to: funding, assumption, strict interpretation of the Constitution, implied powers, agrarian and merchant interests, and who should govern.
2. Assess the significance of the Whiskey Rebellion.
3. Evaluate Washington's legacy.
4. Analyze the effects on Native Americans and the institution of slavery with reference to American expansion westward.



WEB ACTIVITIES

These activities are assigned at the discretion of your teacher. They are offered as suggestions to help you learn more about the material presented in this lesson.

Activity 1:

- a. Access and review the following web sites:
An American Time Capsule:
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/rbpehtml/pehome.html>
Alexander Hamilton to David Ross, 1792:
<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query>
Library of Congress. Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources:
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/studqsts.html>
Library of Congress. Analysis of Primary Sources:
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/analyze.html>
- b. Analyze the letter written to David Ross in 1792 and use the Library of Congress Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources as a guide for your analysis.

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PRACTICE TEST

After watching the video and reviewing the objectives, you should be able to complete the following Practice Test. Access the Answer Key to score your answers after you have completed the Practice Test.

Multiple Choice:

Select the single best answer. It will be indicated if more than one answer is required.

1. Which of the following did Jefferson support:
 - A. Funding.
 - B. Assumption.
 - C. Agriculture as the ideal occupation.
 - D. Merchants in the urban centers.
2. Alexander Hamilton's financial plan for strengthening the economy and bolstering national credit proposed all of the following except:
 - A. Funding the national debt.
 - B. Assuming state debts.
 - C. Abolishing tariffs.
 - D. Establishing a National Bank.
3. The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 arose in southwestern Pennsylvania when the federal government:
 - A. Levied an excise tax on whiskey.
 - B. Tried to prohibit the sale of whiskey.
 - C. Allowed the import of foreign whiskey.
 - D. Halted the export of American whiskey.
4. George Washington:
 - A. Was realistic and dependable.
 - B. Surrounded himself with capable cabinet leaders.
 - C. Helped establish financial stability.
 - D. Did all of the above.

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5. Which of the following statements is not accurate:
- A. African Americans exerted major influence in the crafts industry of Charleston.
 - B. New York and Charleston were noted for their pluralistic societies.
 - C. The northwest Indian tribes in the Willamette Valley were able to peacefully resolve questions of land ownership with American frontiersmen.
 - D. A majority of the Americans lived in rural areas in the 18th century.
6. Alexander Hamilton's financial program for the economic development of the United States favored:
- A. Agricultural interests.
 - B. Trade with France.
 - C. The wealthy.
 - D. The rural poor.



Essay Question:

1. Assess the significance of Hamilton's financial programs. Why did Jefferson oppose Hamilton's economic initiatives?

Answers to the Practice Test:

The correct answer is indicated first, followed by the objective (s) that correlate with the test questions.

1. C: 1
2. C: 1
3. A: 2
4. D: 3
5. C: 4
6. C: 1

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TEACHER'S NOTES

