

Hamilton vs. Jefferson Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:

What were the differences between Hamilton and Jefferson?

Materials:

- Textbook passage on differences between Hamilton and Jefferson (**NOTE: Teacher must provide textbook passage.**)
- Copies of Jefferson Letter to Washington
- Copies of Hamilton Letter to Washington
- Copies of Hamilton vs. Jefferson Guiding Questions

Plan of Instruction:

1. **Introduction:** Ask students to read the section of the textbook that describes the differences between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. Students should answer two questions:
 - a. In your own opinion, what would you say is the BIGGEST difference between Jefferson and Hamilton?
 - b. If you were alive then, whom would you like more? Why?
2. **Debrief:** Ask students to give answers to (a). List the differences on the board. Elicit student responses to (b).
3. **Transition:** *Does the textbook help you understand anything about the personalities of these men? We can learn a lot about the personalities of historical figures by reading their writing.*

Today we're going to look at two letters from Hamilton and Jefferson to George Washington, and we're going to see if we can get a sense of their personalities from these letters.

4. Pass out Jefferson and Hamilton Letters and Guiding Questions. Have students ANSWER THE SOURCING QUESTION BEFORE READING THE DOCUMENTS.

Have students complete Guiding Questions in pairs.

5. Review answers to worksheet, focusing on questions 3 and 4.

Additional question: What do these letters add to the textbook passage?

Citations:

Document A

Alexander Hamilton, letter to President George Washington, September 9, 1792.

http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1384&chapter=107484&layout=html&Itemid=27

Document B

Thomas Jefferson, letter to President George Washington, September 9, 1792.

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-24-02-0330>

Document A: Alexander Hamilton Letter to George Washington, 1792 (Modified)

Sir:

--I have the pleasure of your private letter on the 26th of August. I most sincerely regret the causes of the uneasy sensations you experience. It is my most anxious wish to smooth the path of your administration, and to render it prosperous and happy, though I consider myself as the deeply injured party.

I *know* that I have been an object of uniform opposition from Mr. Jefferson. I *know* from the most authentic sources, that I have been the frequent subject of the most unkind whispers and insinuations from him. I have long seen a party formed in the Legislature under his auspices, bent upon my subversion. I cannot doubt from the evidence I possess, that the *National Gazette* [a newspaper] was instituted by him for political purposes, and that one leading object of it has been to render me as odious as possible.

Nevertheless, I can truly say, that, except explanations to confidential friends, I never directly or indirectly retaliated till very lately.

But when I saw that the undoing of the funding system in particular (which would prostrate the credit and the honor of the nation) was an avowed object of the party, I considered it as a duty to resist the torrent.

Nevertheless, I pledge my honor to you, sir, that if you hereafter form a plan to reunite the members of your administration, I will not directly or indirectly say or do a thing that shall endanger a feud.

With the most affectionate and faithful attachment, etc.

A Hamilton

Vocabulary:

odious – extremely unpleasant; repulsive

prostrate – weaken; overcome; devastate

Source: This letter was written by Alexander Hamilton to President George Washington on September 9, 1792. Hamilton was Secretary of the Treasury in Washington's administration.

Document B: Thomas Jefferson Letter to George Washington, 1792 (Modified)

DEAR SIR,

I received your letter of August 23rd. In part of your letter you notice the internal dissentions which have taken place in our government. To no one have they given deeper concern than myself. I am so desirous that you should know the whole truth.

If it has been supposed that I have ever intrigued among the members of the legislature to defeat the plans of the Secretary of Treasury, it is contrary to all truth. I value too highly their freedom of judgment. That I have, in private conversations, disapproved of the system of the Secretary of Treasury, I acknolege and avow. His system flowed from principles adverse to liberty, and was calculated to undermine and demolish the republic.

If our tensions cannot be avoided altogether, my regard for you will be a sufficient motive for deferring it till I become merely a private citizen. At that point, however, I reserve the right to write about the issues that concern the republic.

I will not let my retirement be clouded by the slanders of a man whose history, if history stoops to notice him, is against the liberty of the country. –Still however I repeat the hope that it will not be necessary to make such an appeal.

I trust that you know that I am not an enemy to the Republic, nor a waster of it's revenue, nor a traitor, as Hamilton has written about me.

In the mean time and ever I am with great and sincere affection & respect, dear Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant.

Th. Jefferson

Vocabulary:

dissentions – disagreement; conflict; dispute

desirous – keen; eager

intrigued – plotted; schemed

avow – admit; confess

slanders – lies; false accusations

Source: This letter was written by Thomas Jefferson to President George Washington on September 9, 1792. Jefferson was Secretary of State in Washington's administration.

Guiding Questions:

Name _____

Using BOTH letters by Hamilton and Jefferson, answer the questions below:

1. (Sourcing) When were these letters written? What do you predict they will say?

2. (Contextualization) Why are both Hamilton and Jefferson writing to George Washington? Based on both of these letters, what seems to have been happening in George Washington's administration? How can you tell?

3. (Close Reading) Which letter is angrier? Find a quote to support your claim.

Write one adjective about each man's *personality* and find a quote to support your claim.

In this letter, Hamilton seems to be _____. I'm basing this claim on the following quote:

In this letter, Jefferson seems to be _____. I'm basing this claim on the following quote:

4. (Corroboration) Who do you believe "started" the fight? Based on what they wrote, whom do you trust more: Hamilton or Jefferson? Why?