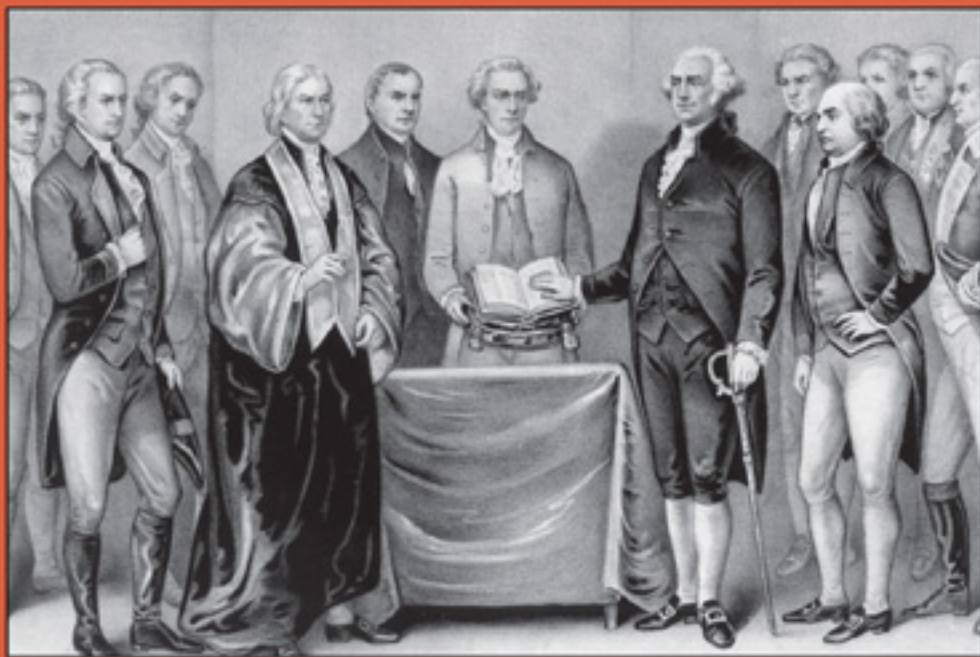


History
UNFOLDING

"A REPUBLIC, IF YOU CAN KEEP IT"

THE FOUNDING OF AMERICA'S FEDERAL UNION



MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1	From Yorktown to Philadelphia	4
Lesson 2	The New Constitutional Order	8
Lesson 3	The Federalists in Power	12
Lesson 4	Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800	16
Appendix	Image Close-ups	21

Introduction

The Founding of a Republic

The U.S. Constitution is often portrayed as the heroic final act of the entire revolutionary drama. This seems appropriate given that the document still functions today as the world’s oldest written constitution and has inspired countless others in democratic nations around the world. The U.S. Constitution has been a beacon to people all over the world for two centuries.

But this booklet departs from this viewpoint somewhat. We depict the Constitution as the key moment in what was in fact a longer process by which the nation finally established a fully functioning republic. The Framers all said they opposed party, or “faction,” as Madison called it in “Federalist No. 10.” Yet until power could pass from one party to another peacefully, it was not clear that a stable republican form of government had been established. This transfer of power took place in the election of 1800, when the Federalists gave way to Jefferson’s Republicans.

Of course, in a sense, we are always retaking this test of our republican institutions—as Benjamin Franklin knew we would have to. When he was leaving the Convention, a lady asked him what the delegates had created. He replied, “A republic, madam, if you can keep it.”

In this spirit, this set covers the entire formative period from the Articles of Confederation to the election 1800. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

From Yorktown to Philadelphia

The Revolution was a triumphant moment for Americans. But the newly independent states could not find much unity under the Articles of Confederation. The illustrations here focus on the hopes and the frustrations of these years just after the Revolution.

The New Constitutional Order

The visuals for this lesson touch on aspects of the Philadelphia Convention, the U.S. Constitution it produced and the debates it generated during the battle over ratification.

The Federalists in Power

The precedents set by Washington may have helped to give the Constitution the authority and prestige it needed. His willingness to seek out only the best advisers and department heads, even when they disagreed strongly with one another, set a tone of high statesmanship.

Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800

The illustrations here focus on the troubled presidency of John Adams and the bitter election of 1800. This election helped establish the notion that, in America, a loyal opposition is to be seen as a normal part of the nation’s political life. In this way, that election made clear that the U.S. Constitution worked as well as or even better than expected.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

“A Republic, If You Can Keep It”—The Founding of America’s Federal Union

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better understand the difficulties that led leaders of the new nation to discard the Articles of Confederation and attempt to create a whole new framework for the young American republic.
-

From Yorktown to Philadelphia

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Illustration 1

Americans saw their Revolution as heralding a new golden age. In this 1787 illustration, for example, Columbia as a young Roman woman appears with two children before the goddess Minerva. A scene of commercial and agricultural plenty fills the background. The scroll next to Minerva reads “Independence the reward of Wisdom Fortitude and Perseverance.” The classical imagery here is typical of the way they viewed their place in history—as the heirs of a tradition of liberty going back to ancient Greece, yet also as the founders of something new and glorious in world history.

Illustration 2

With the Articles of Confederation, the new nation was only a loose alliance of independent states. Little was accomplished under them—a major exception being success in organizing the territories northwest of the Ohio River. But the Articles provided no real executive power. Congress could not even impose taxes. At the same time, each state could tax goods from other states. Border conflicts between states festered. Tensions between debtors and lenders worsened, feeding the anger of poor backcountry farmers toward seacoast planter and merchant elites. The scene on the right is of Shays’s Rebellion, a violent protest by debt-ridden farmers in Western Massachusetts. This upheaval above all convinced many that a stronger central government was needed.

Illustration 3

In the May 1787, 55 delegates were chosen to meet here, at the Philadelphia State House. Among them were Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and other famous leaders of the American Revolution. Also present were several younger men, brilliant and determined—men such as James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. Over the course of that hot summer, the delegates worked in secret, meeting, debating and writing. By September, their work was done. Officially, they were supposed to revise the Articles of Confederation. Instead, they decided to scrap the Articles and start over. They didn’t want an improved confederation—a loose organization of independent states. Their goal was a true federal union—one in which a national government would have real powers while also preserving many of the powers of the states.

Lesson 1—From Yorktown to Philadelphia

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

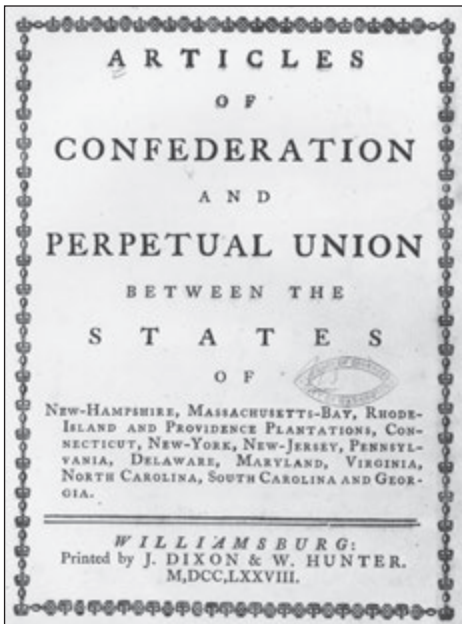
Discussing the Illustration

1. Many Americans felt the American Revolution would open a new and glorious chapter in all of human history. When did the American Revolution end? Why do you think it gave some many Americans such strong hopes for the future?
2. This painting captures the spirit of hope many felt about the Revolution. In it, Columbia is shown as a Roman woman bringing two children before the Roman god Minerva. This figure of “Columbia” is a symbol for something. Can you explain what?
3. Next to Minerva is a scroll that says, “Independence the reward of Wisdom Fortitude and Perseverance.” Minerva is the Roman goddess of wisdom, crafts and commerce. Why do you think the artist chose this figure for a painting about America’s independence?
4. How do the features in the background of the painting add to its positive view of the newly independent United States?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Each member of the group should take one of the following parts: wife of a soldier killed in the Revolution; a tobacco planter in Virginia; a farmer in Pennsylvania; a loyalist in the North Carolina backcountry; a merchant in New York City; a black slave freed as a reward for fighting for Virginia in the Revolution; a black slave recaptured by his owner after fleeing to join the British; a widow running a tavern in Baltimore; a New England minister. As the person chosen, write a letter or diary entry about the above painting and your thoughts about it.
2. It is 1783. Word has just arrived of the peace talks in Europe that finally settled the American Revolution. Read more about those talks and the final settlement. Now pretend you are a newspaper editor at the time. Write an account of the talks, and use the above illustration as a part of your published news story. Make up quotes from various Americans reacting to the news about the final peace settlement.

Illustration 2



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. Americans may have been hopeful after the Revolution. But many of them also quickly began to worry about the Articles of Confederation. What were the Articles of Confederation?
2. Under the Articles a president existed, but he was only the president of the Congress. And that Congress had very little power, especially when it came to raising taxes. Can you explain?
3. Why do you think the power to raise taxes was so important a concern for those Americans who wanted a stronger national government?
4. By 1786, problems with the Articles were growing. Then, an uprising known as Shays's Rebellion took place. The scene on the right is of one moment in that uprising. Where did this rebellion take place and what were the rebels upset about? Why did the rebellion add to the calls for a stronger national government?
5. Can you tell from the illustration who the artist sided with most in Shays's Rebellion? Explain.

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Read through and discuss the Articles of Confederation: Choose the three parts of the Articles that you think caused the biggest problems for the new nation. Now find three parts of the Articles that you think were good ideas. Try to arrive at a group decision on these choices. Present your conclusions to the class, and conduct a debate about these various positive and negative features of the Articles of Confederation.
2. The above illustration of Shays's Rebellion is actually from 1800s. But pretend for now that it is an accurate illustration based on an eyewitness account. Read more about Shays's Rebellion itself. Pretend you are a newspaper editor at the time. Write an account of the rebellion, and use this illustration in your article. Be sure to write a caption explaining what you think the illustration shows.

Illustration 3



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. In 1787, growing unhappiness with the Articles of Confederation finally led the states to choose 55 delegates to meet together in the building shown here, the Philadelphia State House. The delegates were sent for a specific purpose. But soon after they first met in May of 1787, they altered that purpose in an important way. Can you explain?
2. Were the delegates right to alter their purpose as they did? Why or why not?
3. Some of America's most famous leaders met in Philadelphia to create a new framework for the U.S. government. One of the most famous is on the right standing with his hand raised. Can you identify him? What other important leaders and highly respected Americans took part in the Constitutional Convention?
4. The rules for the daily sessions at the Convention called for delegates to keep all proceedings secret? And they were kept secret. Why do you think this was done? Was it a good idea? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. At the end of the Constitutional Convention, Franklin summed up his thoughts this way:

Mr. President, I confess that there are several parts of this Constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve of them.

For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions, even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. . . . On the whole, sir, I cannot help expressing a wish that every member of the Convention, who may still have objections to it, would with me, on this occasion, doubt a little of his own infallibility, and, to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument.

Read Franklin's own autobiography or some other book on his life. Based on what you learn, write a brief essay explaining why you do or do not think the above words by Franklin are a good way to sum up his whole outlook on life.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand the key features of the federal system as defined in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Students will better understand the nature of the debates between Federalists and Anti-federalists.

The New Constitutional Order

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

The Framers of the Constitution found guidance for their work in the history of Greece, Rome and Europe, as filtered through the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke and Montesquieu. A key man able to describe and apply these historical examples and ideas at Philadelphia was young James Madison, on the left here. But the Framers did not just copy the pure ideas of great thinkers. A number of messy compromises had to be hammered out in a much more practical way. Madison’s own notes, shown here, describe the most important compromise, one setting rules for choosing members of the two houses of the legislative branch.

Illustration 2

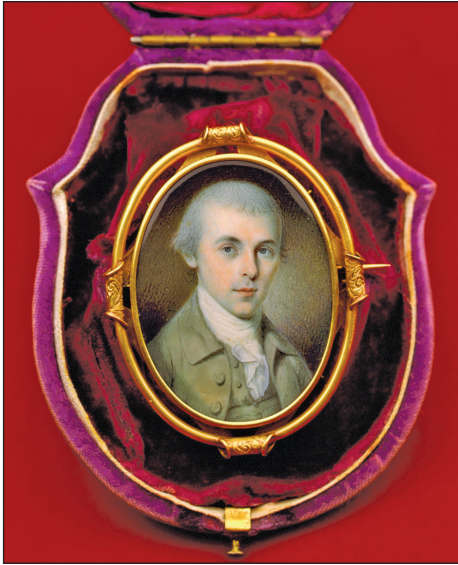
The Framers wanted a strong government. But at the same time, they also feared unlimited power. Therefore, the U.S. Constitution divided the government’s powers among its legislative, executive and judicial branches—and between the central government and the states. The term “checks and balances” well describes the way this government of divided powers was to work. The signing of the Constitution, shown here, is often thought of as a heroic moment when far-seeing statesmen set the nation’s course for ages to come. Many paintings, such as this one from 1897, capture that sense of triumph. The painting suggests that George Washington played the key role. This is accurate, even though others contributed more in the way of specific ideas. Above all, the beloved Washington’s participation convinced Americans to respect the Convention and accept its work.

Illustration 3

Americans greatly respected Washington, Franklin, Madison and the others. Still, not everyone liked the new Constitution. State conventions had to ratify it before it could have the force of law. Debates in each state were intense. Virginia’s Patrick Henry, shown debating here, was only one of many admired patriots who feared the power the new central government would have. The views of these anti-federalists were countered most effectively in a famous set of essays written by three New Yorkers: Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. Collected in a book, *The Federalist*, they continue to be seen as among the wisest ideas ever written about republican government.

Lesson 2—The New Constitutional Order

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

The Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 by James Madison

MONDAY. JULY 16. IN CONVENTION

On the question for agreeing to the whole Report as amended & including the equality of votes in the 2d. branch. it passed in the Affirmative.

Mas. divided Mr. Gerry, Mr. Strong, ay. Mr. King Mr. Ghorum no. Cont. ay. N.J. ay. Pena. no. Del. ay. Md. ay. Va. no. N.C. ay. Mr. Spaight no. S.C. no. Geo. no. 1

The whole, thus passed is in the words following viz

“Resolved that in the original formation of the Legislature of the U. S. the first branch thereof shall consist of sixty five members, . . . But as the present situation of the States may probably alter in the number of their inhabitants, the Legislature of the U. S. shall be authorized from time to time to apportion the number of Reps., . . . upon the principle of their number of inhabitants. . . .

“Resolvd. that in the 2d. branch of the Legislature of the U. S. each State shall have an equal vote.”

Discussing the Illustrations

1. One of the most brilliant Framers of the Constitution was also one of the youngest in Philadelphia that summer of 1787. He arrived early, talked to everyone, and had a huge influence on many delegates. He is shown here on the left. Can you name him?
2. In applying his great learning, Madison focused the Framers on the idea of dividing up the national government’s powers—specifically, dividing those powers into three parts, or “branches.” Can you identify and define these three branches? Why do you think the Framers were so determined to divide power up in this way?
3. The Framers did not simply apply pure ideas or historical examples in writing the Constitution. They made several practical compromises. Madison took notes on all the discussions in the Convention. His notes here are about the key compromise—over how to select members of the House and Senate. Can you explain what the compromise was and why the delegates had to compromise on this issue?

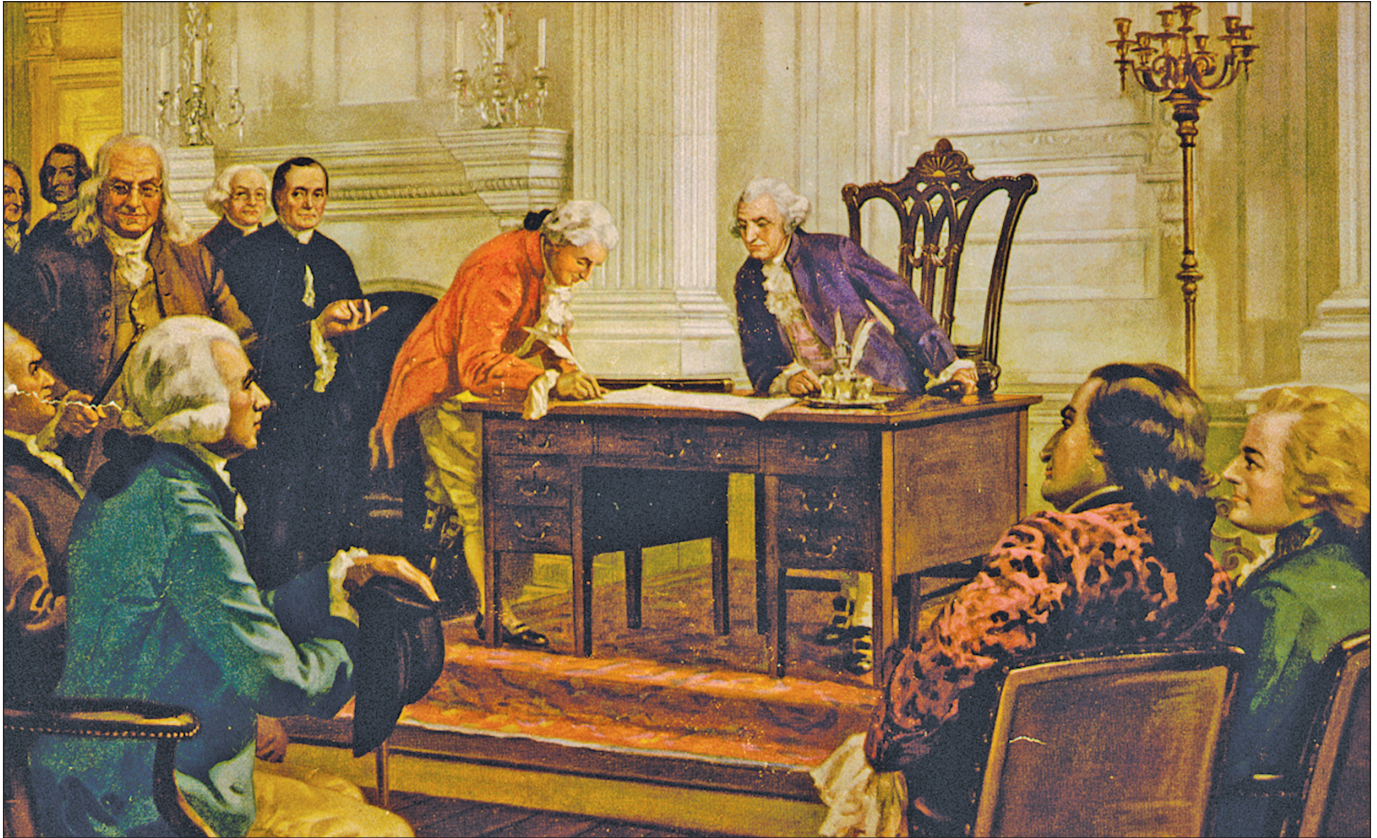
Follow-up Activity

1. The Great Compromise actually included another key compromise that the Convention had to make. That compromise had to do with slavery—and with the number of House members each state would get. This compromise is usually known as the “Three-Fifths Compromise.” Here is what one historian said of it recently:

Many people today complain that it was terrible for the Constitutional Convention to basically count each slave as three-fifths of a person. But actually, it would have been even WORSE had the Framers counted each slave as a full person.

Learn more about the issue leading to the “Three Fifths Compromise.” Find out how anti-slavery and pro-slavery delegates felt about this issue. Based on what you learn, write a brief essay explaining the statement quoted above. Explain also why you do or do not agree with this statement.

Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. This is one of many paintings done over the years of the Framers meeting in Philadelphia. This one shows them signing the Constitution while the man who presided over the meeting looks on. Who is that man?
2. Some historians say that, more than any other man at the Convention, George Washington was the key to its success. Why do you think they feel this way? Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
3. The Framers wanted to create a strong national government. But they also wanted to be sure this new government would not use its powers unfairly or in a cruel way. Therefore, they gave each of the three branches of the government real and important powers. They also created a system of so-called “checks and balances” between the three branches and between the federal government and the states. What is meant here by the phrase “checks and balances”? How well do you think these checks and balances work to keep the government from abusing its powers?

Follow-up Activity

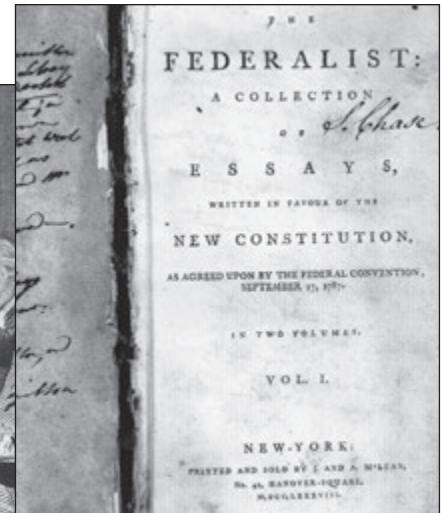
1. In explaining the Constitution’s system of checks and balances, James Madison said the following:

It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.

For one week, look through newspapers and magazines for stories about government, either in this country or another. Find a story you think either supports Madison’s view here or disproves it. Share your story with the class in a discussion of the meaning of Madison’s words.

Lesson 2—The New Constitutional Order

Illustration 3



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. The Convention finished work on September 17, 1787. However, a long struggle still remained before the Constitution could go into effect. What had to happen for the Constitution to take effect?
2. In just about every state, those who supported the Constitution argued against those who opposed it. The painting here shows one famous opponent debating in the Virginia legislature. This man was famous for his vigorous support of the American patriots during the Revolution, and for his cry, "Give me liberty or give me death." Can you identify him? Why do you suppose someone with such an intense love of liberty might have opposed the new U.S. Constitution?
3. In New York, a famous series of essays stated the case for the Constitution. They were collected in a single volume called *The Federalist*. Can you name the three authors of these essays? How does the title *The Federalist* give a clue as to their point of view about the Constitution?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** Those opposed to the Constitution came to be called "Anti-federalists." One Anti-federalist was Thomas Tredwell, who in New York's ratifying convention, spoke this way:

In this Constitution, sir, we have departed widely from the principles and political faith of '76, when the spirit of liberty ran high, and danger put a curb on ambition. Here we find no security for the rights of individuals, no security for the existence of our state governments; here is no bill of rights, no proper restriction of power; our lives, our property, and our consciences, are left wholly at the mercy of the legislature, and the powers of the judiciary may be extended to any degree.

Pretend each of you is one of the following: James Madison, Patrick Henry, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams. Learn more about the person you have chosen. Then, as this person, write a long letter to Tredwell explaining how your own views differ from his or how and why you agree with him.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will understand the great importance of Washington’s presidency.
2. Students will better understand how divisions in Washington’s administration launched a key debate about government still with us in various forms today.

The Federalists in Power

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

Many Americans supported the Constitution in part because they knew George Washington would be the first U.S. president. Washington led Americans to victory in the Revolution, and he presided at the Constitutional Convention. But his leadership as the first U.S. president was just as important as these other accomplishments. Washington set dozens of precedents that secured real respect for the new government. He made the presidency a strong and dignified office, without glorifying it or turning into a new form of monarchy or dictatorship. He chose the best men in America as his advisers. His calm and dependable character saw the nation through yet another huge change in what were still very dangerous times for the new republic.

Illustration 2

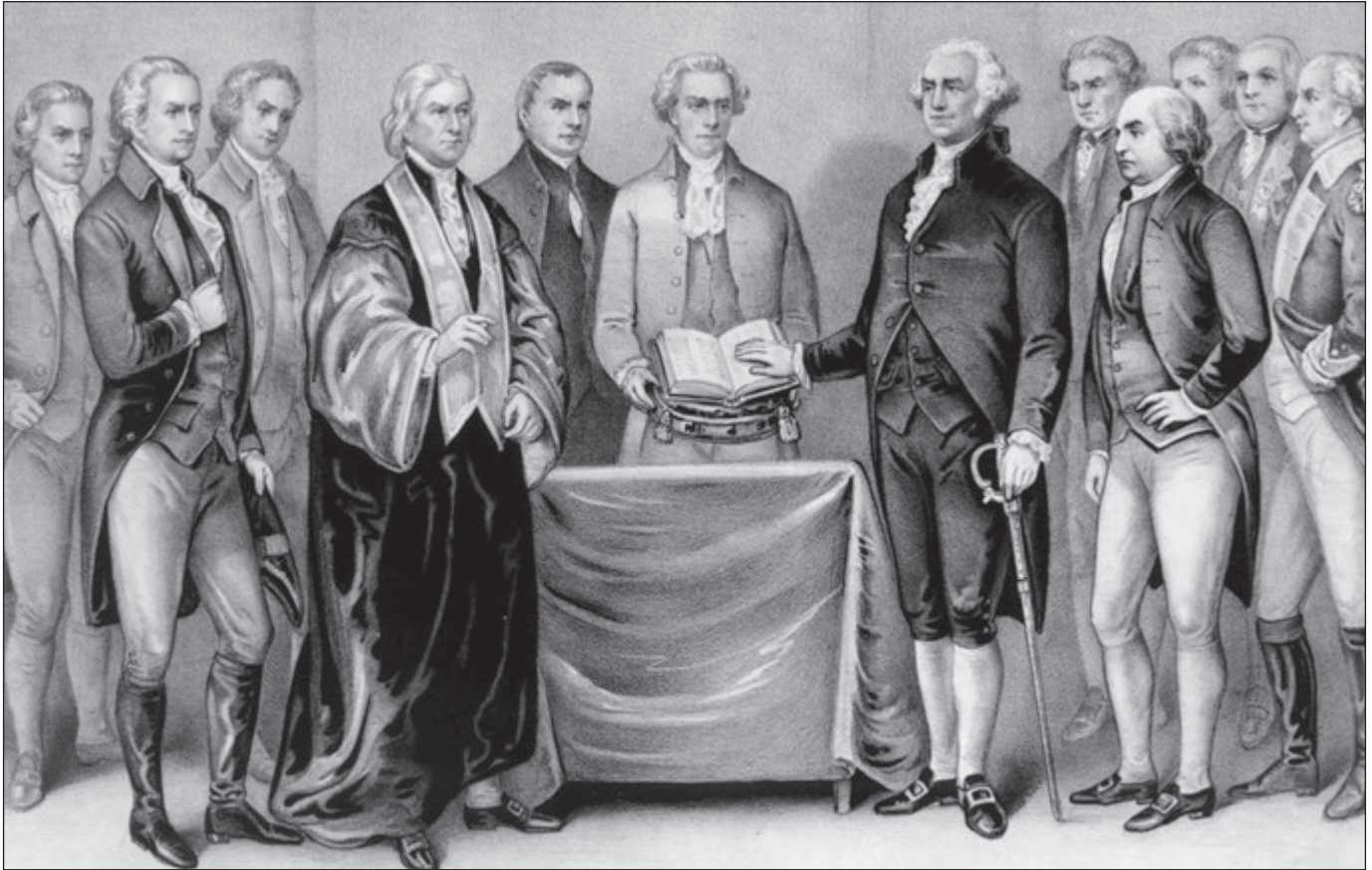
The two key members of Washington’s Cabinet were Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton. They disagreed fundamentally about the nature of the new government. As these words suggest, Hamilton wanted that government to rest mainly on the loyalty and leadership of a wealthy and educated elite. To that end, he pushed plans that would give such people a real stake in the success of the new federal government. Jefferson mistrusted elites, placed more faith in ordinary citizens and feared the kind of powerful central government Hamilton favored. The split between these two was of historic importance. For the first time, it set out clearly two opposing viewpoints that would divide America into two political parties in varying ways for many decades to come—even perhaps to the present day.

Illustration 3

The French Revolution began in 1789. Jefferson welcomed it as a huge leap forward for liberty and republican government. Hamilton feared it as a danger to good order. Soon Britain and France were at war, and a militarily weak America was caught between these two world powers. At first, many Americans sided with the French. But soon, growing anarchy there turned most Americans against the French Revolution. This cartoon pictures both France and Britain in a harsh light. Britain is portrayed as hopelessly corrupt, while in France an ignorant mob rules over former kings and nobles not justly, but with terror and blood.

Lesson 3—The Federalists in Power

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. Many Americans supported the Constitution in part because they were sure Washington would be the first U.S. president under it. And Washington did win the presidency by getting the votes of all 69 electors. Can you explain who those electors were? This scene shows Washington taking the oath of office.
2. Washington acted carefully and cautiously as president. He knew his every action might set a precedent. What is a precedent and why would setting precedents matter to the new nation? In fact, Washington did set many precedents. For example, he created the first presidential “Cabinet,” even though the Constitution said nothing about a Cabinet. Can you explain what this “Cabinet” is?
3. Washington’s Cabinet was made up of highly talented people. The men Washington picked often had big differences of opinion about how the government should be run. But Washington wanted only the best men as his advisers. Do you think this is a wise approach for a president to take? Why or why not?

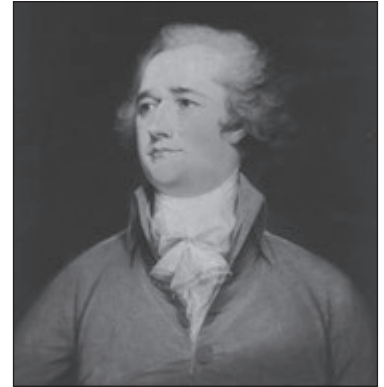
Follow-up Activities

1. Every so often, groups of historians rank U.S. presidents from best to worst. There are always some differences in these lists. But in just about every one of them, George Washington is ranked number one. Why is that so? Read a biography of Washington. Pay especially close attention to its account of Washington’s years as president. Based on what you learn, write a brief essay explaining why you think Washington is nearly always ranked first among our presidents. Finally, explain why you do or do not agree with this ranking.
2. After the American Revolution, Washington always wanted most of all to retire to his home, at Mount Vernon along the Potomac River in Virginia. Why? Learn more about Washington’s Mount Vernon home. Find illustrations of the buildings and grounds there and of all aspects of Washington’s life there. Use these in a brief talk in class on Washington at home in Mount Vernon.

Illustration 2

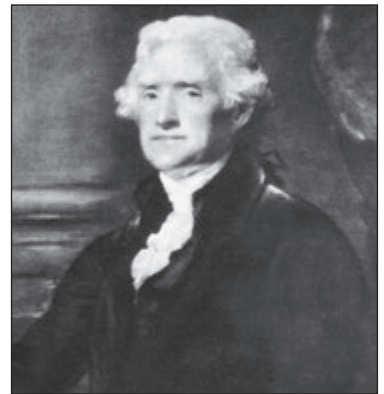
“All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born; the other the mass of the people . . . turbulent and changing, they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct permanent share in the Government.”

— Alexander Hamilton



“I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.”

— Thomas Jefferson



Both images courtesy
of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. Washington's first Cabinet consisted of just four individuals: Henry Knox as Secretary of War, Edmund Randolph as Attorney General and two other very famous men. From what you see here, can you name them and the posts they held in that first Cabinet?
2. Hamilton and Jefferson disagreed all the time. Their smaller disagreements usually reflected a much more basic difference of philosophy about republican government and what makes that type of government work most soundly. From the words here and your knowledge of the two men generally, can you explain what you see as their big difference of views?
3. One student of history says this: “Jefferson may have been the bigger ‘idealist’ about democracy and the common people, but it was Hamilton the ‘realist’ who did the most to put the republic on a sound footing at its very start.” Based on what you know about the issues during Washington's years as president, can you explain this statement? Do you agree with the statement? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** The biggest domestic issue about which Hamilton and Jefferson disagreed was the creation of the Bank of the United States. Learn more about this issue. Find out why Hamilton proposed and pushed so strongly for this bank; find out why Jefferson opposed it. As a group, prepare a script for a play in which first Hamilton and then Jefferson meet with Washington to present their views on this matter. In your play, you may use actual words from these figures, including the words shown above. However, be sure your play clearly presents the key reasons for and against the bank. Also, have Washington ask questions and make comments in a way that fits with what you know about him.
2. Many Americans only agreed to back the Constitution if a Bill of Rights was added to it. The Bill of Rights amendments were added during Washington's first term in office. What did Jefferson and Hamilton think about the need for this Bill of Rights? Find out and report what you learn to the class.

Lesson 3—The Federalists in Power

Illustration 3



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress



Discussing the Illustrations

1. Aside from troubles at home, Washington faced a growing challenge in dealing with the world beyond our shores. This was especially so because of a huge upheaval in one of Europe's greatest nations, an upheaval starting the same year as Washington's presidency. Can you explain?
2. At first, many Americans were sympathetic with the French Revolution and took France's side when Great Britain and France went to war in 1793. But in time, many Americans probably came to view the two nations as this cartoonist does. How does the top panel of the cartoon suggest a hostile view toward the French Revolution and its effects?
3. The view of England in the bottom panel of the cartoon is also hostile. It suggests that the public is being overtaxed, with the money used by corrupt politicians to build up their own power. Hamilton was much more favorable toward England in these years, while Jefferson tended to sympathize with France and its Revolution. Why do you think that was so?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** The French Revolution created real problems for Washington, especially during his second term in office (1793–1797). To fully understand why, you need to learn more about the French Revolution itself, as well as about U.S. dealings with France in those years. As a group, read more about both of these topics. Create two time lines. The first will be a time line of key events in the French Revolution from 1789 to 1800. The second will be a time line of all key events involving France and the U.S. from 1789 to 1800. Don't leave out events having to do with the French here inside the U.S. Use your time lines in a presentation to the class entitled "The Challenge of France in the 1790s."
2. Many critics of Washington and Hamilton hated Jay's Treaty, ratified in 1795. Why? And were they right to be upset? Read more about this treaty and the issues that led to it. Pretend you are an adviser to President Washington. Write a memo to him to help him better understand what upsets the critics of the treaty.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will understand how the intense political battles of the 1790s led to one of the nation’s most bitter election campaigns.
2. Students will discuss the long-term importance of the presidential election of 1800.

Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

Washington refused to serve more than two terms. His vice president, John Adams, was then elected president in 1796. Adams stood with Hamilton and the other “Federalists” who favored strong central government. The Federalists were also friendlier to England than to France. Washington avoided war with either nation. But Adams faced a tougher challenge, and naval warfare with France soon broke out. France’s aid to Adams’ political opponents in the U.S. further angered the Federalists. The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 were meant to stop this interference. But the Sedition Act especially turned Americans against the Federalists because of its limits on freedom of speech and press. The Kentucky and Virginia Resolves were then an extreme reaction against these rather extreme laws. The resolves were an early example of a state’s-rights stand against obeying federal laws, a stand similar to one the South would later use to defend slavery.

Illustration 2

The election of 1800 pitted Federalist candidate Adams against Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson’s supporters were already referring to themselves as Republicans. Party politics emerged on a national level full force in this election. The words next to Adams’ picture here are typical of the rhetoric common in the election. The cartoon suggests that the Federalists also engaged in such rhetoric. It portrays Jefferson as a dangerous fanatic who would destroy the Constitution itself. Many expected a new revolution or a bloody civil war to follow no matter who won in the election of 1800.

Illustration 3

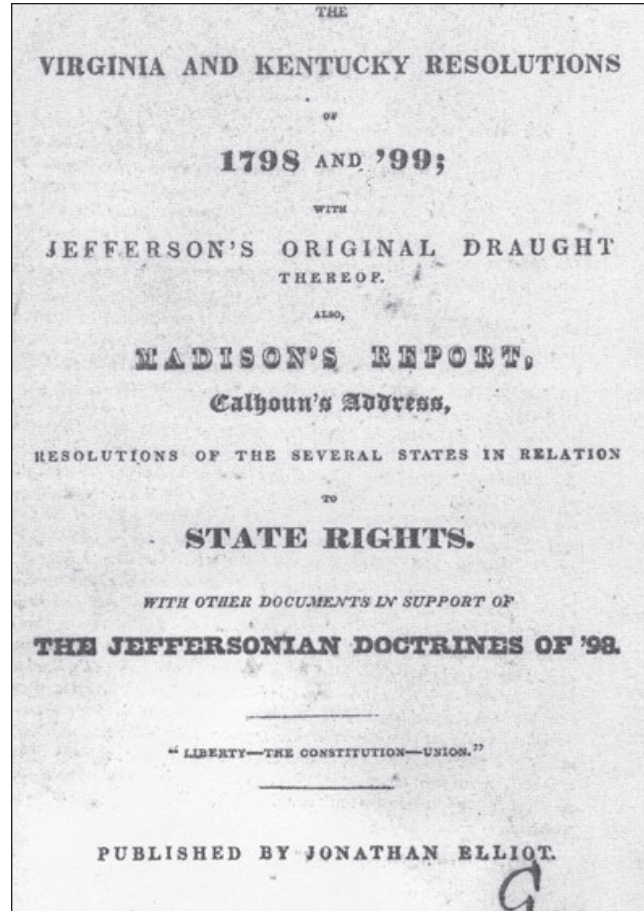
Instead, a peaceful change took place. No bloodshed followed, and soon it was clear that Jefferson would make only minor changes in the way the government was run. Jefferson’s inaugural address reached out to his opponents. The notion of a “loyal opposition” was given expression here. In a way, the election of 1800 can be seen as completing the work of the Framers. For the first time, true opponents of the previous president won an election and peacefully took control of the federal government. Nothing proved more fully that the republic and its Constitution worked. A new day had indeed dawned for Americans and for the world.

Lesson 4—Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800

Illustration 1



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress



Discussing the Illustrations

1. In 1796, Washington's vice president became the nation's next president. Like Hamilton, this man was a Federalist, the term used for those who favored a strong national government. Can you name him?
2. Adams soon found it necessary to defend the nation at sea against France. During this naval warfare, French meddling in American politics and the "XYZ" affair also angered many Americans, especially the Federalists. What do you know of these events? Can you explain why they especially angered Federalists like Hamilton and Adams?
3. Adams made a big mistake in dealing with these troubles when he backed the Alien and Sedition Acts. What did these acts provide, and why did they spell trouble for Adams politically?
4. The Kentucky and Virginia resolves, shown here, declared these acts illegal and in violation of the Constitution. Do you think individual states had or should have the right to do this? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** The Sedition Act is usually seen as one of the worst violations of freedom of press and speech in the nation's history. But is there another side of the story? As a group, read more about the Sedition Act and the events that led to its passage. Now divide your group into two sides. Each side will write a long newspaper editorial as if the Act just passed a few days ago. One side will make the case in defense of the Act; the other side will oppose it. Base your arguments in each case on as much detail about the times as you can. Share your two editorials with the class and debate them.
2. What do the following have in common? The Kentucky and Virginia Resolves; the Hartford Conspiracy; the Nullification Crisis of 1832; the Secession of the South in 1861? Write a brief essay comparing and contrasting these four episodes in U.S. history.

Illustration 2



“[John Adams is] that strange compound of ignorance and ferocity, of deceit and weakness. . . . The reign of Mr. Adams has hitherto been one continual tempest of malignant passion.”



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

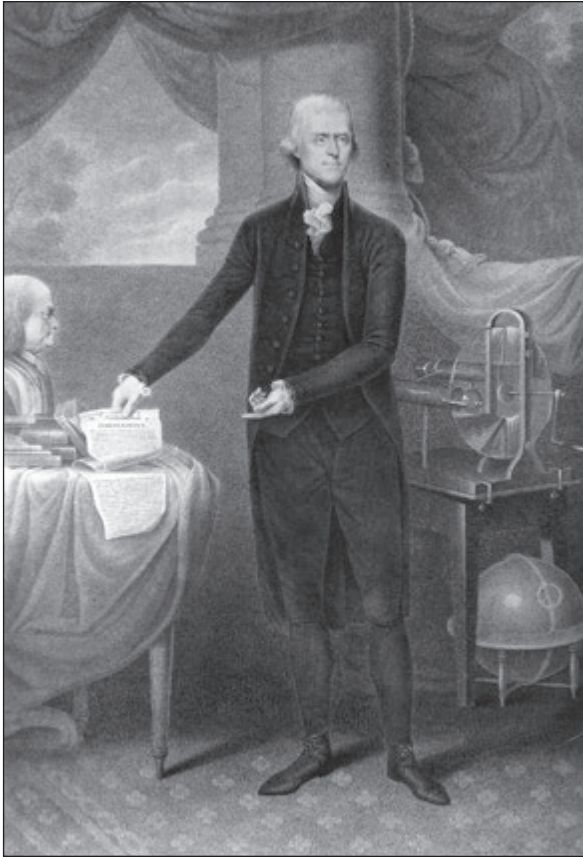
Discussing the Illustrations

1. The troubles Adams faced as president carried over into the election of 1800. This was really the first presidential election in which two opposing political parties and their candidates faced each other. Adams was the Federalist candidate. Who was his opponent and what name now began to be used for that opponent's political party?
2. The campaign of 1800 was a very bitter one. Each side pictured the other side's candidate in the worst possible way. The words next to Adam's picture here are from a writer working to elect Jefferson. Does it surprise you to know that President Adams was attacked in this manner? Why or why not?
3. The cartoon provides an equally harsh criticism of Jefferson by one of his opponents. In it, a Federalist eagle tries to stop Jefferson as he sacrifices the Constitution on an altar to "Gallic (that is, French) despotism." What point does this make about Jefferson? Why do you think many saw Jefferson as this kind of enemy of the Constitution?

Follow-up Activity

1. Of the essays making up *The Federalist*, perhaps the most famous is "Federalist No. 10," written by James Madison. Find a copy of *The Federalist* and read this essay. In the essay, Madison discusses the problem of "factions," or what we would today call political parties. It is clear that the Framers did not like the idea of parties and hoped the Constitution would keep them from forming or from causing great harm. After reading "Federalist No. 10," also read more about the election of 1800. Pretend you are a voter during the election of 1800. The election just ended a few weeks ago. Reflect on it and write a long letter to James Madison commenting on the election and on his essay "Federalist No. 10."

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

— Thomas Jefferson
First Inaugural Address, 1801

Discussing the Illustrations

1. The exaggerated rhetoric of the campaign of 1800 led many Federalists to live in fear of a victory by Thomas Jefferson. What do you think they feared would happen?
2. In fact, Jefferson did win the election, and he took office in 1801. No violence occurred. No civil war broke out. Instead, Jefferson was sworn in as president peacefully and then gave a very famous inaugural address. A part of that address is shown here. What do you think Jefferson means when he says that “not every difference of opinion is a difference of principle”? Why might it be important in a democracy for voters and political leaders to understand the point Jefferson is making here?
3. Jefferson did not mean literally that all Americans were now both Federalist and Republican. What do you think he really meant? Do you agree with the overall point he was trying to make in this part of his inaugural address? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

1. Read Jefferson’s entire inaugural address of 1801. Choose four additional passages from the speech that you think, together, best sum up its key ideas. Prepare a brief talk in class on the address. Include your four selections along with the one above as a part of your talk.
2. **Small-group activity:** One recent book on the election of 1800 is *America Afire: Jefferson, Adams, and the Revolutionary Election of 1800*, by Bernard A. Weisberger (Morrow, Williams & Co. 2000). As a group, read and discuss key parts of this book. (Your teacher may be able to help you identify the best chapters to read and discuss.) Based on the book, prepare a brief talk summarizing the main events of the election of 1800 and the main points Weisberger makes about that election. Express your own views as to the value of this book.

Image Close-ups

From Yorktown to Philadelphia

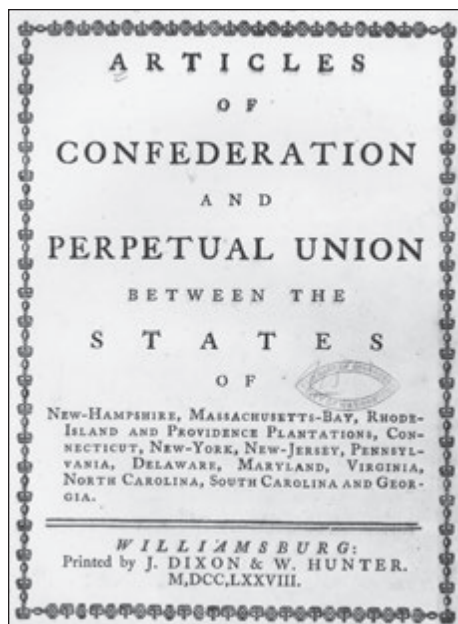
Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

From Yorktown to Philadelphia

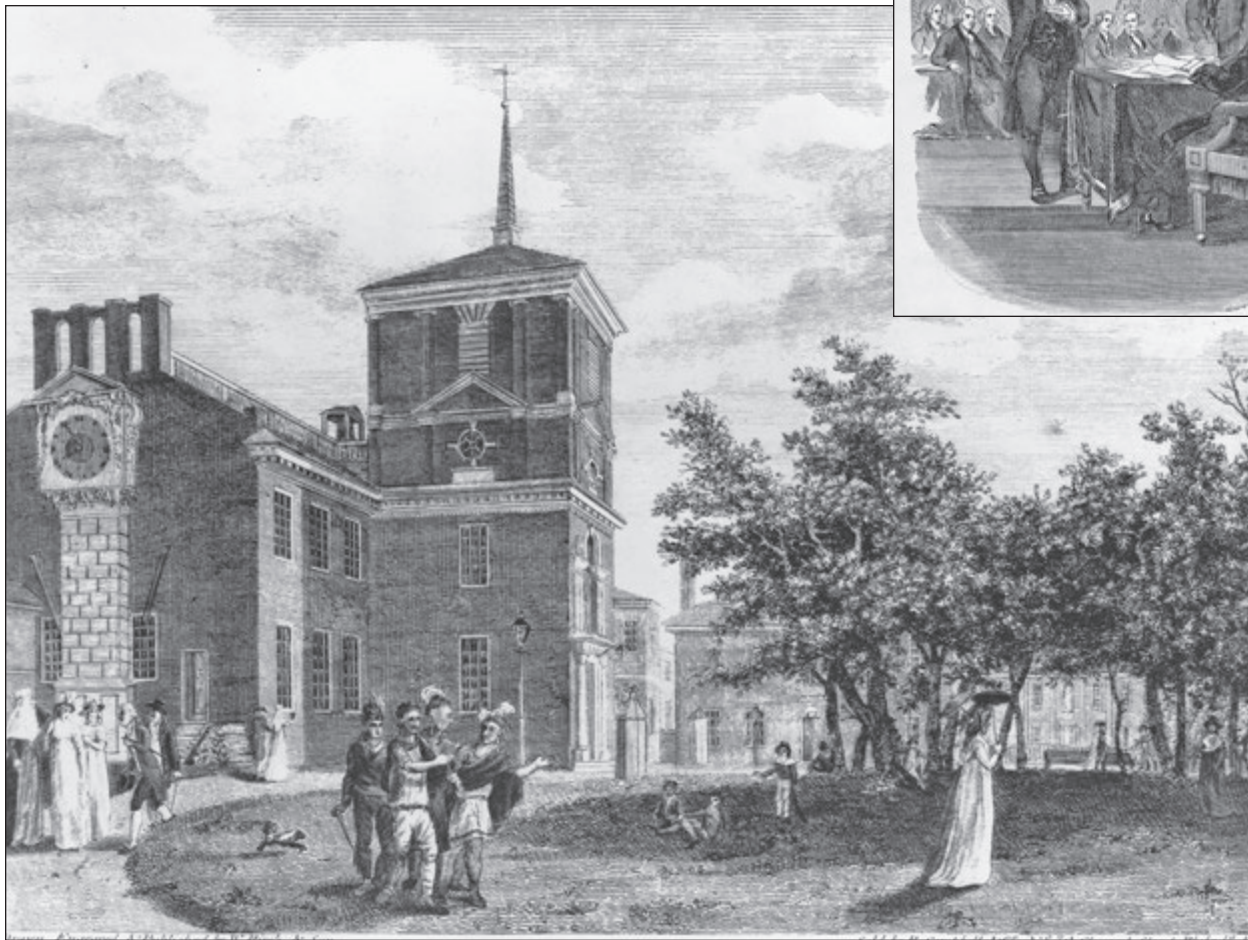
Illustration 2



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

From Yorktown to Philadelphia

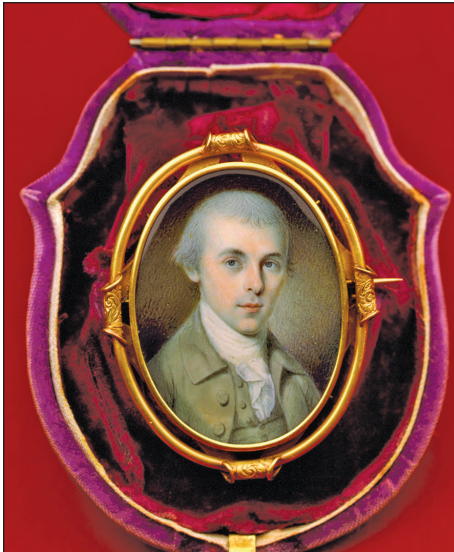
Illustration 3



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

The New Constitutional Order

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

The Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 by James Madison

MONDAY. JULY 16. IN CONVENTION

On the question for agreeing to the whole Report as amended & including the equality of votes in the 2d. branch. it passed in the Affirmative.

Mas. divided Mr. Gerry, Mr. Strong, ay. Mr. King
Mr. Ghorum no. Cont. ay. N.J. ay. Pena. no. Del. ay.
Md. ay. Va. no. N.C. ay. Mr. Spaight no. S.C. no.
Geo. no. 1

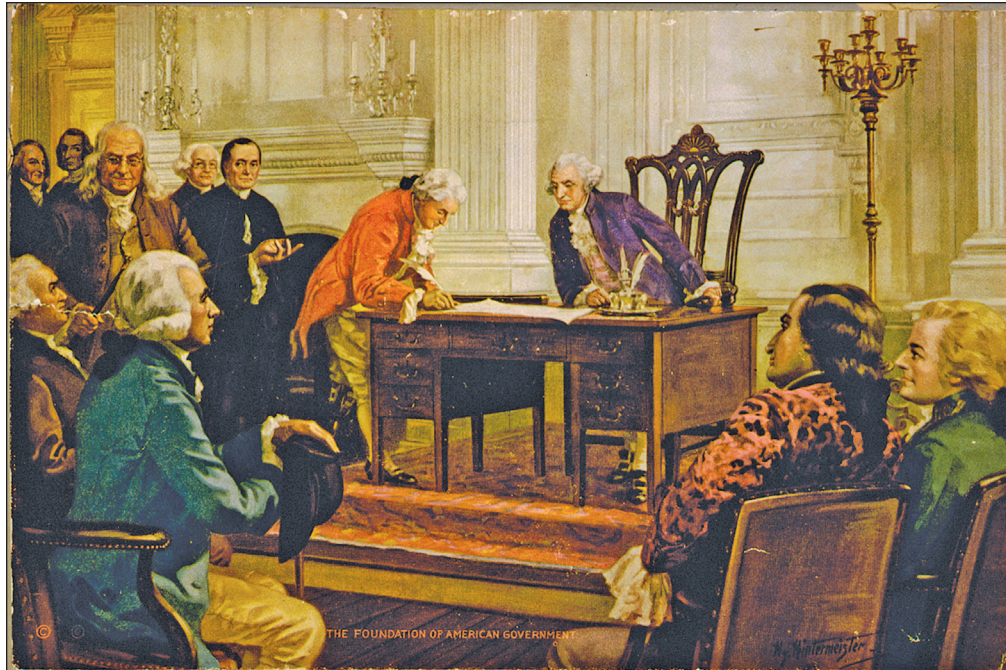
The whole, thus passed is in the words following viz

“Resolved that in the original formation of the Legislature of the U. S. the first branch thereof shall consist of sixty five members, . . . But as the present situation of the States may probably alter in the number of their inhabitants, the Legislature of the U. S. shall be authorized from time to time to apportion the number of Reps., . . . upon the principle of their number of inhabitants. . . .

“Resolvd. that in the 2d. branch of the Legislature of the U. S. each State shall have an equal vote.”

The New Constitutional Order

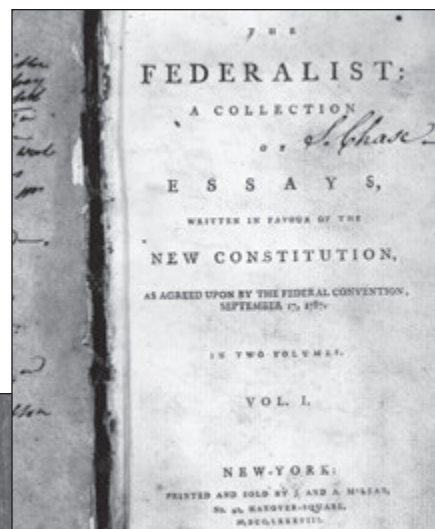
Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

The New Constitutional Order

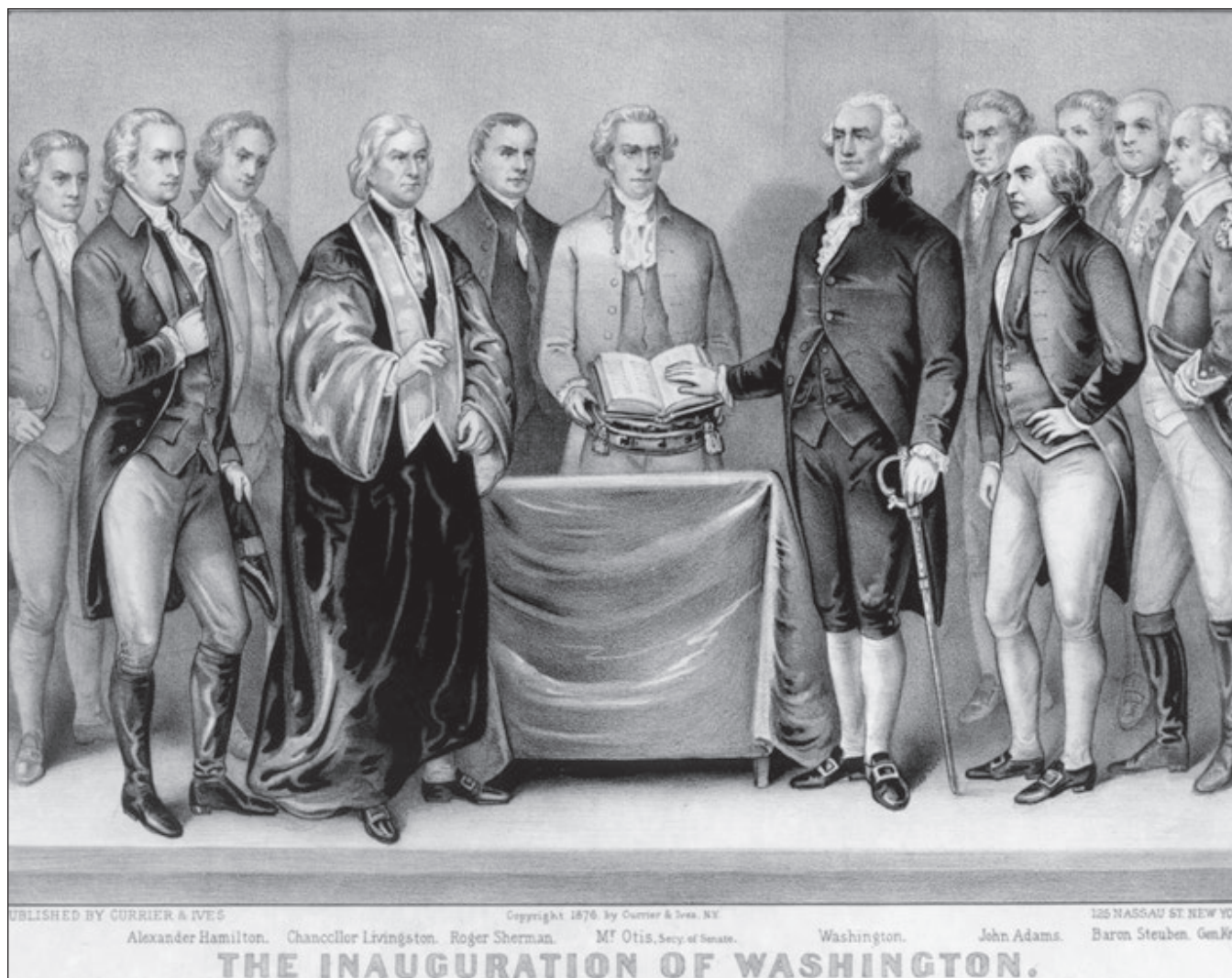
Illustration 3



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

The Federalists in Power

Illustration 1



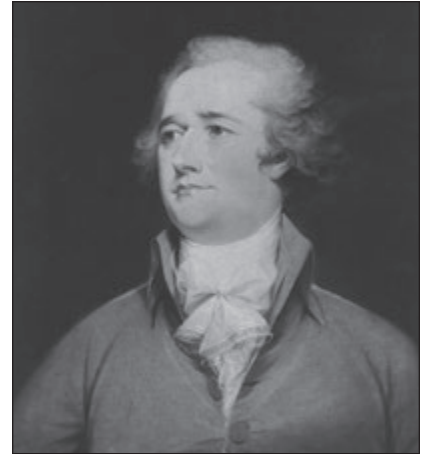
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

The Federalists in Power

Illustration 2

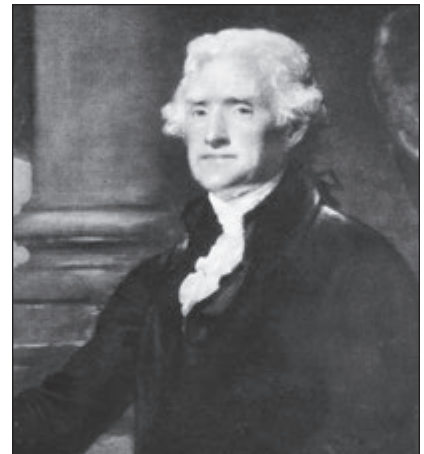
“All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born; the other the mass of the people . . . turbulent and changing, they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct permanent share in the Government.”

— Alexander Hamilton



“I know no safe depositary of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.”

— Thomas Jefferson



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

The Federalists in Power

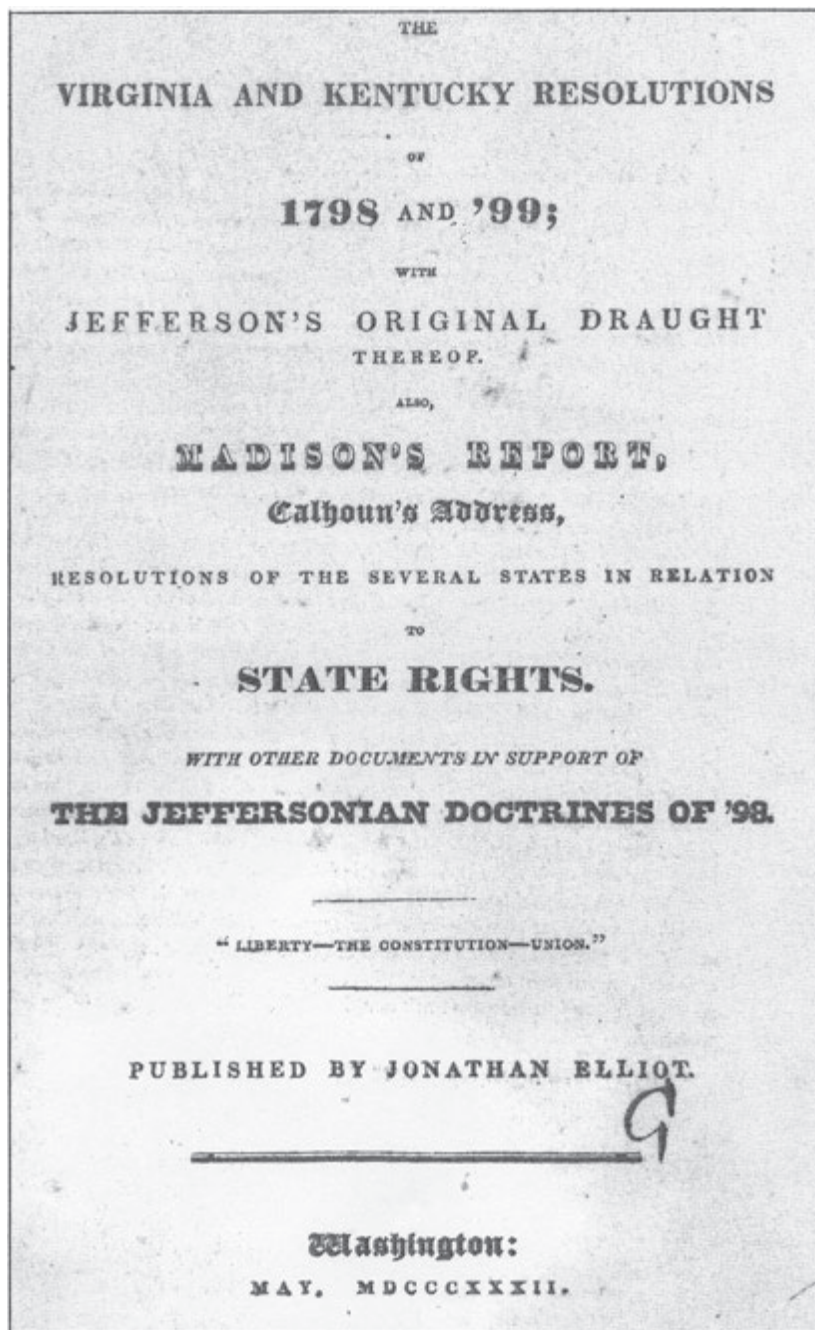
Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800

Illustration 1



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800

Illustration 2



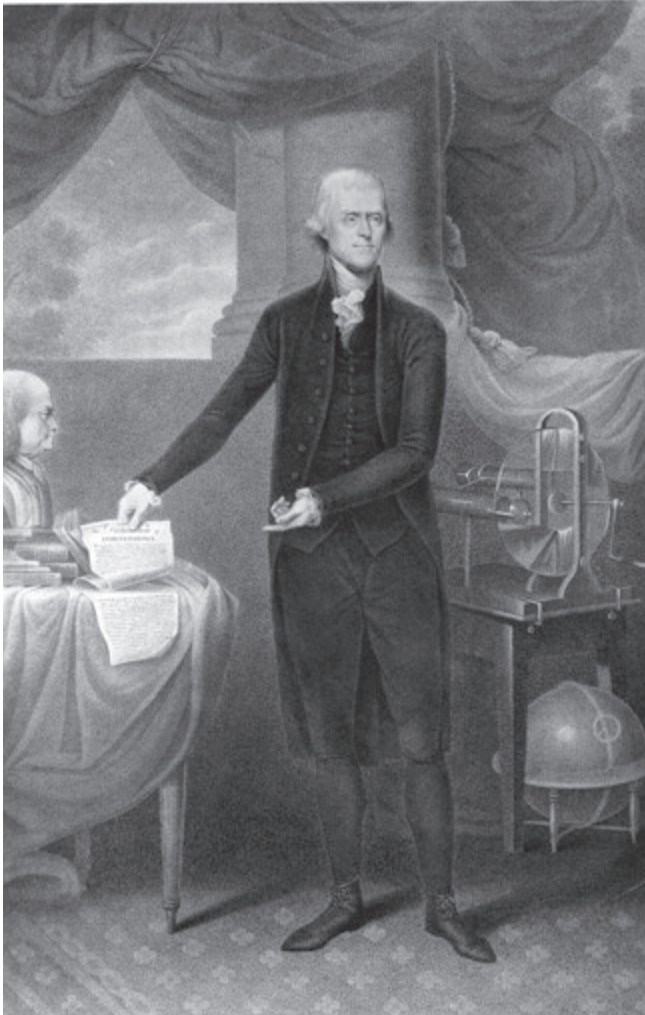
“[John Adams is] that strange compound of ignorance and ferocity, of deceit and weakness. . . . The reign of Mr. Adams has hitherto been one continual tempest of malignant passion.”



Both images courtesy of the Library of Congress

Passing the Torch: The Election of 1800

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

— Thomas Jefferson
First Inaugural Address, 1801

