Presidency of John Adams (1797-1801)

Name: __________________________________________________________ Class: ________

The first election with two political parties had a strange outcome. The President and Vice President belonged to different political parties. The President, John Adams, and Vice President, Thomas Jefferson, had different ideas about how government should run which made this a difficult time for the country.

Adams in Office

John Adams has served the American colonies and the United States in many ways before he became President. He was a Patriot who later became ambassador to France, to the Netherlands, and to Great Britain. An ambassador is someone who is sent by one country to go live in another country as its long-term representative. He helped to negotiate the Treaty of Paris with the British in 1783 that ended the Revolutionary War. John Adams was our nation’s first Vice-President under George Washington. He described the job of Vice-President as “the most insignificant office ever the invention of man contrived (made)....” Adams was a testy, stubborn Federalist whose personality may have kept him from getting the respect he deserved.

1. Name three (3) ways John Adams served the United States before becoming President.
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2. What is an ambassador?

3. Why do you think it is important to have ambassadors?
Problems with France

The United States began having problems with France. The French were upset because the U.S. made the Jay Treaty, which protected trade with Great Britain. French ships began stopping American ships in the Caribbean Sea and taking their goods. France also liked Thomas Jefferson and wanted him to be the president instead of Adams. Americans became furious with the French because they were interfering with their trade and politics. Adams was fearful of a war so he sent three people (John Marshall, Charles Pinckney, and Elbridge Gerry) to a meeting in France to promote peace.

4. What problems was the United States having with France?

XYZ Affair

The meeting between John Marshall, Charles Pinckney, Elbridge Gerry, and the French representatives was a disaster. The French foreign minister sent three agents to meet with the Americans and the agents said France was willing to make peace with the U.S. but the U.S. would have to pay in order to avoid war. The French agents demanded that a bribe of $250,000 and a loan of about $10 million be paid to France. Outraged at being asked for a bribe, Pinckney replied, “No! Not a sixpence!” The event soon became public, and the French agents were referred to as X, Y, and Z. The French asking for a bribe became known as the XYZ Affair. Many Americans were outraged and brought the two countries closer to war. A popular slogan was “Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute!” Congress quickly voted to enlarge the United States army and navy and soon American warships were fighting French ships at sea.

5. What did France want in order to stay out of war with the United States?

6. Why was it called the XYZ Affair?
Keeping America out of a War with France

President Adams decided to wait before asking Congress to declare war on France because he hoped that eventually France would negotiate for peace. France’s new leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, decided that France needed to meet with the U.S. again. France was already at war with Great Britain and didn’t want to fight another war against the U.S. at the same time. President Adams sent representatives to France again to discuss peace. In the Convention of 1800 France and the United States agreed to peace. Adams was very proud of his accomplishment. He was able to keep the U.S. out of war with France. He wanted the following words etched on his gravestone: “Here lies John Adams who took upon himself the responsibility of the peace with France in the year 1800.”

Alien and Sedition Acts

Beginning in 1798, the Federalist-controlled Congress passed four laws that stirred up trouble between the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans. The new laws were aimed at stopping the growth of the Democratic - Republican Party. Three of the laws, known together as the Alien Acts, were supposedly to protect the country from aliens, or foreigners living in the United States.

The Naturalization Act increased the time required to become a United States citizen from 5 to 14 years. The Federalist Party wanted to make becoming a citizen more difficult for immigrants coming from France and Ireland because they tended to join the Democratic - Republican Party and not the Federalist Party.

The Alien Act gave the President power to imprison or deport – send out of the country – any foreigner he considered to be dangerous. The Federalists hoped this law would silence the French people living in the United States.

The Alien Enemies Act allowed the United State government to arrest and deport all aliens who were citizens of foreign nations at war with the United States.

The final law in this group was the Sedition Act. Sedition means to act or speak out against the government in a way that might cause trouble. This law made it a crime to speak or write critically about the President, members of Congress, the federal government, or federals laws. Its purpose was to silence criticism. Under the Sedition Act, about 25 Democratic-Republican
newspaper editors and others were arrested and 10 were convicted for printing criticisms of President Adams. The Democratic-Republicans were outraged. They believed that the Sedition Act violated the first amendment to the Constitution which gave people the freedom of speech and of the press. Free speech includes the right to criticize the President and other government leaders.

8. What did the Naturalization Act do?

9. Why did the Federalists pass the Naturalization Act?

10. What did the Alien Act do?

11. Why did the Federalists pass the Alien Act?

12. What did the Alien Enemies Act do?

13. What does sedition mean?

14. What did the Sedition Act do?

15. What was the purpose of the Sedition Act?
Election of 1800

John Adams and the Federalists were losing support. The Sedition Act made many people fearful that the John Adams and the Federalists were acting too much like a king and a government with too much power. Even people within his own party were upset because John Adams made peace with France instead of going to war. The Federalists chose John Adams to run again for President and Charles Pinckney to run for Vice President. The Democratic-Republicans chose Thomas Jefferson as their candidate for President and Aaron Burr for Vice President.

The Election of 1800 was vicious and hard-fought. The final voting came closer than expected and produced a strange result. The Federalist candidates, John Adams and Charles Pinckney received 65 and 64 votes, respectively. Both Democratic-Republican candidates (Jefferson and Burr), however, received 73 votes and were tied. The Democratic-Republicans had won but who was President, Jefferson or Burr? The Democratic-Republicans meant for Jefferson to be President and Burr to be Vice President but they got the same amount of votes. Burr decided to not step down and accept being Vice President. He now wanted to be President.

According to the Constitution, the tie-breaking vote now went to the House of Representatives. Each state would have one vote. Federalists would now have to vote for which one of the Democratic-Republicans they wanted to be President. At first, most Federalists were going to support Aaron Burr but Alexander Hamilton (Federalist) talked his fellow Federalists into voting for Thomas Jefferson because he disliked Burr so much. After 35 rounds of voting, Thomas Jefferson became our third President and Aaron Burr became Vice President.

16. Who were the candidates in the election of 1800?

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<th>Federalist</th>
<th>Democratic-Republican</th>
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<td>President:</td>
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<td>Vice President:</td>
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17. What two candidates received the most votes?

18. What did Burr decide to do?
19. How did Alexander Hamilton influence the voting in the election of 1800?

20. Do you think what Burr did was right or wrong? Explain your answer.

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**A New Capital**

One thing that the Federalists achieved that will forever be remembered is the creation of our nation’s capital. Washington D.C. (District of Columbia) was named for George Washington who passed away in 1799. The states of Maryland and Virginia each gave up some land to create the capitol. John and Abigail Adams were the first presidential family to live in the not-quite-finished President’s House, later called the White House. The rest of the city consisted of few other buildings and was surrounded by woods and wilderness.

21. How did Washington D.C. get its name?

22. What did Washington D.C. look like?