



Election of 1800: Origins of American Political Parties TEACHER GUIDE

Lesson Overview

This lesson uses primary source analysis and exploration to examine how the election of 1800 revealed deepening divisions in American society about the role and function of government and provides an understanding of the origins of American political parties. It is designed for students currently studying U.S. history or government in the classroom and scaled to the 11th grade TEKS. Lessons can also be used with younger students with some modifications.

The lesson is designed to be completed in a single 45- to 60-minute class period.



Essential Question

In what ways did the election of 1800 signify that political parties had become an important part of national politics?

Objectives

- Students will engage with primary sources to help them understand how and why differing visions of the government led to the development of political parties.
- Students will use multimodal engagement strategies to develop their historical thinking skills.
- Students will analyze, organize, and use information from a variety of primary sources and communicate that analysis through writing and discussion.

Key Vocabulary

Students will need to have an understanding of the following terms to effectively complete the lesson:

- Federalism
- Nullification
- Sedition



TEKS

113.44.2.A,B; 113.44.10.A,B; 113.44.15.A

Lesson Procedure

Warm-Up

There are two possible components for the lesson warm-up: an election snapshot and a primary source document for the class to analyze together. Depending on your classroom needs, you may choose to complete one or both components. The content for both the snapshot and the warm-up document analysis are available as PDF documents and a teacher slide deck.

1. Using the election snapshot, briefly review the main ideas, issues, and players of the election of 1800.
 - a. Be sure to remind students that while the election was important for many reasons, the main thing that you'll be focusing on today is what the election teaches us about the development of political parties in the United States.
2. Using the sample primary source, review with your students how to thoroughly analyze and explore primary sources.
 - a. This lesson uses a simplified version of the [National Archives and Records Administration's Document Analysis](#) strategies.
 - b. As a group, use the warm-up exercise to review "Tally of Electoral Votes." Remind students that it is important to use close reading skills and apply historical context that they have already learned.
 - c. After analyzing the source as a whole, answer the "Checking for Understanding" questions to ensure student comprehension.

Exploring Primary Sources

The purpose of this section is to have students explore primary sources that describe some of the issues at the center of the election of 1800 and how those issues contributed to the development of American political parties.

There are many ways that you can choose to engage with the primary sources with your students. Depending on interest, student level, and classroom goals, you may choose to engage with any or all of the provided primary sources.

Three possible engagement models are suggested here:

Write

Using the worksheets provided, have your students work individually to read and examine the documents and then write their answers to the comprehension questions.

The most important takeaway for this engagement model is determining WHO is writing/speaking and WHAT each primary source is about.

Speak

Divide students into groups and provide one primary source to each group. After reading the source on their own, students should consider the author of the source and the author's perspective.

The most important takeaway for this engagement model is determining HOW the author is communicating and WHY they are saying what they are saying.

Draw

Have students, working individually or in pairs, design a creative, visual representation of the main argument of one primary source. They may choose to create a Venn diagram, a flow chart, or an identity map.

The most important takeaway for this engagement model is determining WHO is writing/speaking and HOW they are getting their point across.

Discussing Primary Sources

In this section, students will discuss their observations, analysis, and conclusions gleaned from analyzing primary sources about the significance of the election of 1800 in the development of political parties.

Lead a discussion of the issues at hand. Students will use the key ideas learned during the warm-up and their analyses of primary sources to answer questions.

1. What were the geographical areas of strength for each party? How were the economies of these geographic areas different?
2. What specific policy issues divided the two parties?
3. How did the parties view each other? How did this contribute to the growing divide?

Closure

If desired, use the final few minutes of the lesson to write or discuss, or assign as homework, the following prompt, which encourages students to compare the issues in the election of 1800 to contemporary election cycles:

What similarities and differences do you see between the issues that led to the emergence of political parties and the issues that divide American political parties today?



Election of 1800: Origins of American Political Parties Election Snapshot

Essential Question

In what ways did the election of 1800 signify that political parties had become an important part of national politics?

Key Ideas

- The election of 1800 was dominated by disputes between supporters of two competing visions for America's future that were represented by two different political parties.
 - The Federalist vision: Strong central government; pro-British foreign policy; economic policies that boosted American manufacturing; growth of cities and centers of manufacturing and commerce
 - The Democratic-Republican vision: Small, limited government; pro-French foreign policy; economic policies that benefited small farmers, rather than merchants; rural, agrarian-based economy
- The election of 1800 saw the first large-scale examples of active political campaigning.
- After the election was ultimately sent to the House of Representatives to determine the winner, the election of 1800 resulted in the first orderly and peaceful transition of power from one political party to another.

Candidates and Outcome

John Adams
(Federalist)

Thomas Jefferson
(Democratic-
Republican)

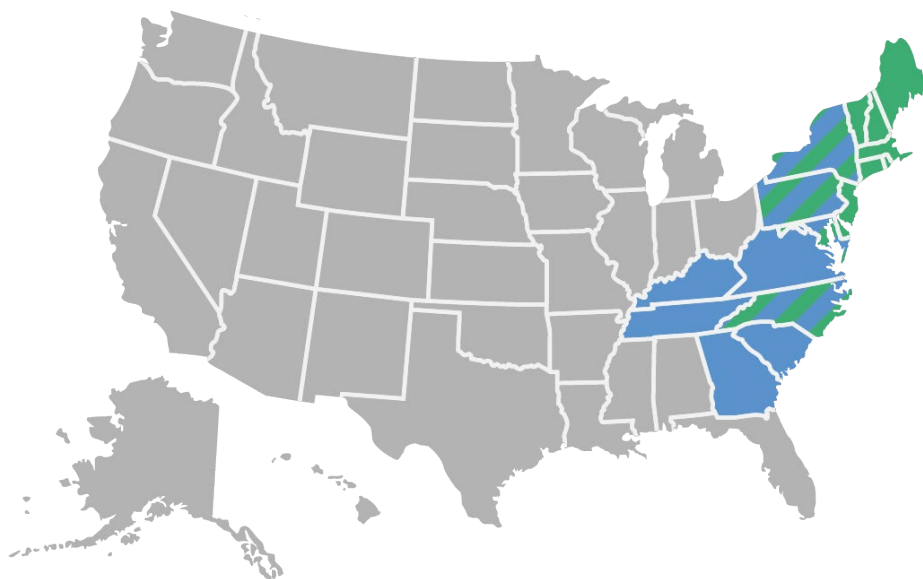
Aaron Burr
(Democratic-
Republican)

Charles Pinckney
(Federalist)

John Jay
(Federalist)

Jefferson 73

Adams 65





Election of 1800: Origins of American Political Parties Primary Sources and Questions

Warm-Up

Tally of Electoral Votes [excerpt] [visual source], 1801
Annals of Congress, House of Representatives, 6th Congress, 2nd Session
[Library of Congress](#)

Primary Sources

“The Providential Detection” [visual source], c. 1797–1800
Artist unknown

Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to close friend Philip Mazzei criticizing Federalist principles (and by extension, President Washington), accusing Federalists of being corrupt and under the undue influence of Britain. The contents of Jefferson’s letter were made public not long after it was received. This cartoon represents the negative response to Jefferson’s perspective and portrays him as a French traitor to U.S. patriotism.

[Library of Congress, American Antiquarian Society](#)

Sedition Act [excerpt] [visual source], 1798
United States Statutes

The Alien and Sedition Acts were passed by a Federalist government in anticipation of a possible war with France. Directed primarily at their opponents, these laws were subject to enormous criticism, and opposition to them played a major role in the election of 1800.

[National Archives](#)

Kentucky Resolution [excerpt], 1799
Thomas Jefferson (debated)

Thomas Jefferson and James Madison wrote a series of resolutions in Kentucky and Virginia responding to what they saw as a dangerous expansion of the federal government’s power. One of the most contentious issues was a concept called “nullification”: the question of who ultimately got to decide whether a federal law could be enforced—the federal government or the individual states. The resolutions sparked great debate and were passed largely by removing specific reference to this proposed concept. This last resolution in the series is the only version that passed containing specific language about “nullification.”

[The Avalon Project](#)

Letter, Elizabeth House Trist to Thomas Jefferson [excerpt], 180[1]
Elizabeth House Trist

Elizabeth House Trist formed a long-lasting friendship with Thomas Jefferson when he stayed at her mother’s boardinghouse in Philadelphia during his time in the Continental Congress.

[National Archives](#)

First Inaugural Address [excerpt], 1801
Thomas Jefferson

Following the contentious results of the election of 1800, which was ultimately decided by the House of Representatives, Thomas Jefferson used his inaugural address to call on the country to look past political differences and unite.

[National Archives](#)



Warm-Up: Tally of Electoral Votes
Annals of Congress, House of Representatives, 6th Congress, 2nd Session
1801

STATES.	Thomas Jefferson.	Aaron Burr.	John Adams.	Charles C. Pinckney.	John Jay.
New Hampshire - - -	-	-	6	6	
Massachusetts - - -	-	-	16	16	
Rhode Island - - -	-	-	4	3	1
Connecticut - - -	-	-	9	9	
Vermont - - -	-	-	4	4	
New York - - -	12	12			
New Jersey - - -	-	-	7	7	
Pennsylvania - - -	8	8	7	7	
Delaware - - -	-	-	3	3	
Maryland - - -	5	5	5	5	
Virginia - - -	21	21			
Kentucky - - -	4	4			
North Carolina - - -	8	8	4	4	
Tennessee - - -	3	3			
South Carolina - - -	8	8			
Georgia - - -	4	4			
	73	73	65	64	1

Recapitulation of the votes of the Electors.

Thomas Jefferson - - -	73
Aaron Burr - - -	73
John Adams - - -	65
Charles Cotesworth Pinckney - - -	64
John Jay - - -	1

The PRESIDENT of the Senate, in pursuance of the duty enjoined upon him, announced the state of the votes to both Houses, and declared that THOMAS JEFFERSON, of Virginia, and AARON BURR, of New York, having the greatest number, and a majority of the votes of all the Electors appointed, and, being equal, it remained for the House of Representatives to determine the choice.

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Warm-Up Exercise: Understanding Perspective Tally of Electoral Votes

Analyzing a Source: Use the chart below (which is based on the National Archives and Records Administration analysis model) to examine the primary source. Remember that every document is created by a person with a specific point of view that is based on their background, beliefs, and experiences. These questions help you to understand that point of view, or perspective.

Meet the source. What type of source is it? What do you notice first? How would you describe it to someone who hasn't read it?	
Observe its parts. Who created it? Who is the intended audience? When was it created? Where was it created?	
Try to make sense of it. What is it talking about? Why did the maker create it? What was happening at the time in history when this source was created?	
Use it as historical evidence. What did you find out that you might not learn anywhere else? What evidence does the creator present that you should "fact check"? What questions do you have that this source doesn't answer?	

Checking for Understanding: After reviewing the source using the chart above, answer these questions as a class.

- What geographic area of the United States voted for Adams and Pinckney? What geographic area of the United States voted for Jefferson and Burr? Why do you think this was the case?
- What kind of division among American voters is illustrated in the results?

“The Providential Detection”
Artist Unknown
1797-1800

Context: Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to close friend Philip Mazzei criticizing Federalist principles (and by extension President Washington), accusing Federalists of being corrupt and under the undue influence of Britain. The contents of Jefferson’s letter were made public not long after it was received. This cartoon represents the negative response to Jefferson’s perspective and portrays him as a French traitor to U.S. patriotism.



Artist unknown. “The Providential Detection.” Copyprint of lithograph. 1797–1800. From Library of Congress, courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts (136).
<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/jeffed.html#136>.

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for “The Providential Detection”

1. The creator of this political cartoon included several symbols that represent danger. What are they and where do they appear in the cartoon?
2. There is a fire burning on top of the pillar and the words “Altar of Gallic Despotism” appear etched into its side. “Gallic” refers to the French, and “despotism” is a government in which a leader has absolute power. What does the cartoon’s artist want us to think about Jefferson’s position? What does his position suggest about his loyalties?
3. What was the eagle preventing Jefferson from throwing on the fire? What do you think the eagle might represent?
4. Based upon your understanding of the divisions between opposing political parties competing in the election of 1800, this political cartoon most likely represented the views of which political party?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for “The Providential Detection”

1. The creator of this political cartoon included several symbols that represent danger. What are they and where do they appear in the cartoon?

Student should identify the eagle talons, snake, fire, and skull and crossbones, naming where each appears in the cartoon.

2. There is a fire burning on top of the pillar and the words “Altar of Gallic Despotism” appear etched into its side. “Gallic” refers to the French, and “despotism” is a government in which a leader has absolute power. What does the cartoon’s artist want us to think about Jefferson’s position? What does his position suggest about his loyalties?

The cartoon suggests that Jefferson will be beholden to French ideals and serve them and their interests, placing them above the interests of the United States government.

3. What was the eagle preventing Jefferson from throwing on the fire? What do you think the eagle might represent?

The eagle is preventing Jefferson from throwing the U.S. Constitution on the fire.

Student must make a claim and support it with reference to the image. Answers should point toward the eagle representing those people in the government fighting against Jefferson.

4. Based upon your understanding of the divisions between opposing political parties competing in the election of 1800, this political cartoon most likely represented the views of which political party?

The political cartoon most likely represents the Federalist Party.



**Excerpt from the Sedition Act
United States Statutes
1798**

Context: The Alien and Sedition Acts were passed by a Federalist government in anticipation of a possible war with France. Directed primarily at their opponents, these laws were subject to enormous criticism, and opposition to them played a major role in the election of 1800.



CHAP. LXXIV—An Act in addition to the act, entitled “An act for the punishment of certain crimes against the United States.”

...

SEC. 2 And be it farther enacted, That if any person shall write, print, utter or publish, or shall cause or procure to be written, printed, uttered or published, or shall knowingly and willingly assist or aid in writing, printing, uttering or publishing any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States, or either house of the Congress of the United States, or the President of the United States, with intent to defame the said government, or either house of the said Congress, or the said President, or to bring them, or either of them, into contempt or disrepute; or to excite against them, or either or any of them, the hatred of the good people of the United States, or to stir up sedition within the United States, or to excite any unlawful combinations therein, for opposing or resisting any law of the United States, or any act of the President of the United States, done in pursuance of any such law, or of the powers in him vested by the constitution of the United States, or to resist, oppose, or defeat any such law or act, or to aid, encourage or abet any hostile designs of any foreign nation against United States, their people or government, then such person, being thereof convicted before any court of the United States having jurisdiction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars, and by imprisonment not exceeding two years.

...

APPROVED, July 14, 1798

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for Excerpt from the Sedition Act

1. What behavior did Section 2 of the Sedition Act make a criminal offense?

2. How might the enforcement of the Sedition Act threaten the rights granted to Americans in the Bill of Rights?

3. This is one portion of the larger Alien and Sedition Acts that were passed by a Congress controlled by the Federalist Party and signed into law by the Federalist president John Adams. What about these laws aligns with the Federalists' vision of national power?

4. The supporters of Thomas Jefferson opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts. What about these laws threatened Jefferson's vision of national power?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for Excerpt from the Sedition Act

1. What behavior did Section 2 of the Sedition Act make a criminal offense?

Section 2 of the Sedition Act made it a criminal offense to engage in writing, printing, saying or publishing anything “false, scandalous and malicious” about the U.S. government or helping anyone to do the same.

2. How might the enforcement of the Sedition Act threaten the rights granted to Americans in the Bill of Rights?

The enforcement of the Sedition Act might go against the freedoms of speech and press guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

3. This is one portion of the larger Alien and Sedition Acts that were passed by a Congress controlled by the Federalist Party and signed into law by the Federalist president John Adams. What about these laws aligns with the Federalists' vision of national power?

The Federalists believed in a strong central government that wished to have a larger degree of control over the actions and decisions of its citizens.

4. The supporters of Thomas Jefferson opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts. What about these laws threatened Jefferson's vision of national power?

Jefferson's vision was of a small, limited government that did not have a great deal of control over the actions or decisions of its citizens.



Excerpt from the Kentucky Resolution
Thomas Jefferson (debated)
1799

Context: Thomas Jefferson and James Madison wrote a series of resolutions in Kentucky and Virginia responding to what they saw as a dangerous expansion of the federal government’s power. One of the most contentious issues was a concept called “nullification”: the question of who ultimately got to decide whether a federal law could be enforced—the federal government or the individual states. The resolutions sparked great debate and were passed largely by removing specific reference to this proposed concept. This last resolution in the series is the only version that passed containing specific language about “nullification.”



...

RESOLVED, That this commonwealth considers the federal union, upon the terms and for the purposes specified in the late compact, as conducive to the liberty and happiness of the several states: That it does now unequivocally declare its attachment to the Union, and to that compact, agreeable to its obvious and real intention, and will be among the last to seek its dissolution: That if those who administer the general government be permitted to transgress the limits fixed by that compact, by a total disregard to the special delegations of power therein contained, annihilation of the state governments, and the erection upon their ruins, of a general consolidated government, will be the inevitable consequence ... That the several states who formed that instrument, being sovereign and independent, have the unquestionable right to judge of its infraction; and that a nullification, by those sovereignties, of all unauthorized acts done under colour of that instrument, is the rightful remedy: That this commonwealth does upon the most deliberate reconsideration declare, that the said alien and sedition laws, are in their opinion, palpable violations of the said constitution; and however cheerfully it may be disposed to surrender its opinion to a majority of its sister states in matters of ordinary or doubtful policy; yet, in momentous regulations like the present, it would consider a silent acquiescence as highly criminal:

...

AND FINALLY, in order that no pretexts or arguments may be drawn from a supposed acquiescence on the part of this commonwealth in the constitutionality of those laws, and be thereby used as precedents for similar future violations of federal compact; this commonwealth does now enter against them, its SOLEMN PROTEST.

Approved December 3rd, 1799.

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for Excerpt from the Kentucky Resolution

1. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Kentucky Resolutions. In this excerpt of the Kentucky Resolutions, what law was Jefferson opposing?
2. What does Jefferson see happening if those in charge of the government are allowed to ignore the limits for the federal government established by the Constitution?
3. Why do you think Jefferson begins the statement reaffirming "attachment to the Union"?
4. The Kentucky Resolution first introduced the idea of "nullification." Based on what you have read in this excerpt, what does that concept allow state governments to do? What does this say about Jefferson's views on the relationship between state governments and the federal government?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for Excerpt from the Kentucky Resolution

1. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Kentucky Resolution. In this excerpt of the Kentucky Resolution, what law was Jefferson opposing?

Jefferson was opposing the Alien and Sedition Acts.

2. What does Jefferson see happening if those in charge of the government are allowed to ignore the limits for the federal government established by the Constitution?

Jefferson sees the power of state governments being greatly reduced and replaced by a “centralized consolidated government.”

3. Why do you think Jefferson begins the statement reaffirming “attachment to the Union”?

Student must state a claim and support it with evidence from the text. Answers should indicate that Jefferson believes in the Union, but wishes to see his version of federal power manifested.

4. The Kentucky Resolution first introduced the idea of “nullification.” Based on what you have read in this excerpt, what does that concept allow state governments to do? What does this say about Jefferson’s views on the relationship between state governments and the federal government?

Nullification allows state governments to refuse to enforce federal laws that they oppose.

Jefferson believes that state governments should be more powerful than the federal government.



**Excerpt from Letter, Elizabeth House Trist to Thomas Jefferson
Elizabeth House Trist
1800**

Context: Elizabeth House Trist formed a long-lasting friendship with Thomas Jefferson when he stayed at her mother's boardinghouse in Philadelphia during his time in the Continental Congress.



Richmond March 1st 1800 [i.e., 1801]

As an old friend I cannot resist the impulse of my heart, in expressing to you its exultation on the Triumph of Republicanism— . . . great was our joy hearing you pronounced President—After felicitateing my Country on its choice believeing that we shall now have a fair experiment of What a Republican Administration can effect as to the happiness of the people, I have only to regret that the task which devolves upon you, will be attended with difficulties, especially as your Predecessor seems disposed to trammel you all he can but I hope and trust that you will rise superior to all their machinations. it has mortified many of your friends that you have express'd such favorable sentiments of Mr. Adams none of whom think him deserving of any elogium from you—. . . he has done all he cou'd to injure you and he hates you on that account—and I hope you will not Compliment him in your Inauguration address, it will be sufficiently generous not to retort a little of his own abuse upon him— . . . I need not appologize for the freedom I take in thus addressing you. The only privilege our sex injoy is that of freely communicating our sentiments. We are generally thought of little consiquence in the Political World. but if we are incompetent to decide properly on these subjects, we certainly can revibrate the opinion of others—and I have often thought that those placed at the head of the Nation have been led to do unpopular things for want of a Friend that wou'd candidly inform them of the real sentiments of the people. that you will ever commit any act prejudicial to your Country I can never contemplate—but a generous nature may some times by praising their enemies commit their best friends . . .

Mrs Monroe Eliza and Polly Unite with me in wishing every happiness and believe me truly Your Friend

E. Trist

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for Excerpt from Letter, Elizabeth House Trist to Thomas Jefferson

1. What occasion prompted Trist to write Jefferson this letter?
2. What did she believe Jefferson's election would bring to the country?
3. What elements of the letter suggest that the emergence of political parties in the election of 1800 had created divisions in American society?
4. Trist makes an argument for why women should be included in political discussions. What is her argument?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for Excerpt from Letter, Elizabeth House Trist to Thomas Jefferson

1. What occasion prompted Trist to write Jefferson this letter?

Trist writes to Jefferson on the occasion of his election as president.

2. What did she believe Jefferson's election would bring to the country?

She believes that Jefferson's election will show "what a Republican Administration can effect as to the happiness of the people."

3. What elements of the letter suggest that the emergence of political parties in the election of 1800 had created divisions in American society?

Trist writes about the negative things that Adams and his supporters have said about Jefferson during the campaign.

4. Trist makes an argument for why women should be included in political discussions. What is her argument?

Trist believes that women can "candidly inform" leaders of what the "true sentiments" are of the people.



**Excerpt from First Inaugural Address
Thomas Jefferson
March 4, 1801**

Context: Following the contentious results of the election of 1800 that was ultimately decided by the House of Representatives, Thomas Jefferson used his inaugural address to call on the country to look past political differences and unite.



. . . Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things. And let us reflect that, having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions. During the throes and convulsions of the ancient world, during the agonizing spasms of infuriated man, seeking through blood and slaughter his long-lost liberty, it was not wonderful that the agitation of the billows should reach even this distant and peaceful shore; that this should be more felt and feared by some and less by others; and should divide opinions as to measures of safety; 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. I know indeed that some honest men fear that a republican government can not be strong, that this government is not strong enough; but would the honest patriot, in the full tide of successful experiment, abandon a government which has so far kept us free and firm, on the theoretic and visionary fear, that this government, the world's best hope, may, by possibility, want energy to preserve itself? I trust not. I believe this, on the contrary, the strongest government on earth. . . .

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for Excerpt from First Inaugural Address

1. In the very first line, what does Jefferson call on his fellow citizens to do? Why do you think he started his speech this way?
2. Jefferson claimed that religious intolerance, “that had for so long caused humankind to suffer,” might be replaced with what new form of intolerance?
3. Jefferson’s statement that “We are all republicans, we are all federalists,” is considered the most famous line of this inaugural address. What do you think he meant by this?
4. According to Jefferson, why was this new federal government worth preserving?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for Excerpt from First Inaugural Address

1. In the very first line, what does Jefferson call on his fellow-citizens to do? Why do you think he started his speech this way?

Jefferson calls on the country to unite.

Student must make a claim and support it with evidence from the text. Answers should point toward the divisive campaign that led to Jefferson's election.

2. Jefferson claimed that religious intolerance, "that had for so long caused humankind to suffer," might be replaced with what new form of intolerance?

Jefferson claims that religious intolerance might be replaced by political intolerance.

3. Jefferson's statement that "We are all republicans, we are all federalists," is considered the most famous line of this inaugural address. What do you think he meant by this?

Student must make a claim and support it with evidence from the text. Answers should point toward Jefferson's claim that differences of opinion are not differences of principle, that citizens can disagree about specific issues but still support the same government.

4. According to Jefferson, why was this new federal government worth preserving?

Jefferson states that the new federal government is the "world's best hope" and is the strongest government on earth.