

Guided Readings: Federalists and Jeffersonians

READING 1

Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.

—Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1787

READING 2

While we have land to labour then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a workbench, or twirling a distaff . Carpenters, masons, smiths, are wanting in husbandry: but, for the general operations of manufacture, let our workshops remain in Europe. . . The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners, and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution.

—Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1787

READING 3

If I could not go to Heaven but with a party I would not go there at all.

—Thomas Jefferson to Francis Hopkinson, March 13, 1789

READING 4

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. The voice of the people has been said to be the voice of God; and however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government. Can a democratic assembly, who annually revolve in the mass of the people, be supposed steadily to pursue the public good?

—Alexander Hamilton, Debates of the Constitutional Convention, June 18, 1787

READING 5

Yesterday Expired,

Deeply regretted by Millions of grateful Americans,

And by all good men,

The Federal Administration

of the

Government of the United States. . . .

It found the United States bankrupt in estate and reputation; it hath left them unbounded in credit; and respected throughout the world. It found the treasuries of the United States and individual states empty; it hath left them full and overflowing. . . .

It found the United States at war with the Indian Nations;—it hath concluded peace with them all. . . . It found Great Britain in possession of all the frontier posts; it hath demanded their surrender, and it leaves them in the possession of the United States. It found the American seacoast utterly defenseless; it hath left it fortified. It found our arsenals empty; and magazines decaying; it hath left them full of ammunition and warlike implements. It found our country dependent on foreign nations for engines of defense; it hath left manufactories of cannon and muskets in full work. . . .

It found our mechanics and manufacturers idle in the streets for want of employ; it hath left them full of business, prosperous, contented, and happy. It found the yeomanry of the country oppressed with unequal taxes;—their farms, houses and barns decaying; their cattle selling at the sign-posts; and they driven to desperation and rebellion; it hath left their coffers in cash; their houses in repair; their barns full; their farms overstocked; and their produce commanding ready money, and a high price. .

It found the United States deeply in debt to France and Holland; it hath paid all the demands of the former and the principal part of the latter. . . . It found the United States without a swivel on float for their defense; it hath left a navy—composed of thirty-four ships of war. . . . It found the exports of our country, a mere song, in value; it hath left them worth above seventy millions of dollars per annum.

—(Boston) *Columbian Centinel*, 1801

READING 6

. . . the Bible would be cast into a bonfire, our holy worship changed into a dance of Jacobin phrensy, our wives and daughters dishonored, and our sons converted into the disciples of Voltaire and the dragoons of Marat.

—Yale College President Timothy Dwight, on the possibility of Jefferson's election

READING 7

Thomas Jefferson is a firm Republican,—John Adams is an avowed Monarchist. . . . Thomas Jefferson first drew the declaration of American independence;—he first framed the sacred political sentence that all men are born equal. John Adams says this is all a farce and a falsehood; that some men should be born Kings, and some should be born Nobles. Which of these, freemen of Pennsylvania, will you have for your President? Will you, by your votes, contribute to make the avowed friend of monarchy, President? —or will you, by neglectfully staying at home, permit others to saddle you with Political Slavery?"

—Jeffersonian election statement, 1796

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Describe the differences between the Federalists and the Republicans in their attitudes toward democracy, the role of government, and cities and manufacturing.
2. Do you consider the Federalists or the Republicans to be more realistic? More idealistic?
3. What was the purpose of Hamilton's program—to create a wealthy class and bind their loyalties to the national government or to build a strong and prosperous nation?
4. Why do you think the Federalists were defeated in 1800?