

**DBQ****THE ALIEN AND SEDITION ACTS**

## CHAPTER 5

**Directions:** The following question requires you to construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretation of Documents A-J *and* your knowledge of the period referred to in the position. High scores will be earned only by essays that both cite key pieces of evidence from the documents and draw on outside knowledge of the period. Some of the documents have been edited, and wording and punctuation have been modernized. Be sure to:

1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes.
3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question.
4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge outside of the documents.

**Question:** The debate over the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 revealed bitter controversies on a number of issues. Discuss the issues involved and explain why these controversies developed.

**Document A**

Source: Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia* (published in Paris, 1785)

“The present desire of America is to produce rapid population by as great importations of foreigners as possible. But is this founded in good policy?”

“Every species of government has its specific principles. Ours perhaps are more peculiar than those of any other in the universe. It is a composition of the freest principles of the English constitution, with others derived from natural right and natural reason. To these nothing can be more opposed than the maxims of absolute monarchies. Yet from such we are to expect the greatest number of emigrants. They will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, imbibed in “- their early youth; or, if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing, as is usual, from one extreme to another. It would be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty. These principles, with their language, they will transmit to their children. In proportion to their numbers, they will share with us the legislation. They will infuse into it their spirit, warp and bias its directions, and render “it a heterogenous, incoherent, distracted mass.”

**Document B**

Source: George Washington, President of the United States, letter to John Adams, Vice-President (November 15, 1794)

“My opinion, with respect to [immigration] is, that except of useful mechanics and some particular descriptions of men or professions, there is no need of encouragement, while the policy or advantage of its taking place in a body (I mean the settling of them in a body) may be much questioned; for, by so doing, they retain the Language, habits and principles (good or bad) which they bring with them—Whereas by an intermixture with our people, they, or their descendants, get assimilated to our customs, measures and laws:—in a word, soon become one people.”

**Document C**

Source: Thomas Jefferson, United States minister to France, letter to Francis Hopkinson of Pennsylvania (March 13, 1789)

“You say that I have been dished up to you as an antifederalist, and ask me—in it be just. . . . I am not a Federalist, because I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction is the last degradation of a free and moral agent. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all. Therefore I protest to you I am not of the party of federalists. But I am much farther from that of the Antifederalists. I approved, from the first moment, of the great mass of what is in the new constitution. . . .”

**Document D**

Source: Thomas Jefferson, secretary of state, letter to George Washington (September 9, 1792)

“That ... [internal] dissensions have taken place is certain, and even among those who are nearest to you in the administration. To no one have they given deeper concern than myself. . . .

“That I have utterly, in my private conversations, disapproved of the system of the Secretary of the Treasury [i.e., Hamilton’s economic program], I acknowledge and avow; and this was not merely a speculative difference. His system flowed from principles adverse to liberty, and was calculated to undermine and demolish the Republic, by creating an influence of his department over the members of the Legislature. I saw his influence actually produced, and its first fruits to be the establishment of the great outlines of his project by the votes of the very persons who, having swallowed his bait, were laying themselves out to profit by his plans. . . .

**Document E**

Source: John Adams, President of the United States, address to special session of Congress (May 16, 1797)

“The Speech of the President [of the French Directory] . . . evinces a disposition to separate the people of the United States from the Government; to persuade them that they have different affections, principles, and interests, from those of their fellow citizens, whom they themselves have chosen to manage their common concerns; and thus to produce divisions fatal to our peace. . . .”

**Document F**

Source: Thomas Jefferson, letter to William Branch Giles, Democratic-Republican congressman from Virginia (December 31, 1795)

“Were parties here divided merely by a greediness for office, as in England, to take a part with either would be unworthy of a reasonable or moral man, but where the principle of difference is as substantial and as strongly pronounced as between the republicans and the Monocrats of our country, I hold it as honorable to take a firm and decided part, and as immoral to pursue a middle line, as between the parties of Honest men, and Rogues, into which every country is divided.”

**Document G**

Source: Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the treasury, letter to Colonel Edward Carrington of Virginia (May 26, 1792)

“It was not till the last session [of Congress] that I became unequivocally convinced of the following truth: ‘That Mr. Madison, cooperating with Mr. Jefferson [the secretary of state], is at the head of a faction decidedly hostile to me and my administration; and actuated by views, in my judgment, subversive of the principles of good government and dangerous to the Union, peace, and happiness of the country.’

“In almost all the questions, great and small, which have arisen since the first session of Congress, Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison have been found among those who are disposed to narrow the federal authority.

“In respect to foreign politics, the views of these gentlemen are, in my judgment, . . . unsound and dangerous. They have a womanish attachment to France and a womanish resentment against Great Britain. They would draw us into the closest embrace of the former, and involve us in all the consequences of her politics; and they would risk the peace of the country in their endeavors to keep us at the greatest possible distance from the latter. . . . Various circumstances prove to me that if these gentlemen were left to pursue their own course, there would be, in less than six months, an open war between the United States and Great Britain.

“A word on another point. I am told that serious apprehensions are disseminated in your state [Virginia] as to the existence of a monarchical party meditating the destruction of State and republican government. If it is possible that so absurd an idea can gain ground, it is necessary that it should be combated. I assure you, on my private faith and honor as a man, that there is not, in my judgment, a shadow of foundation for it. A very small number of men indeed may entertain theories less republican than Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison, but I am persuaded there is not a man among them who would not regard as both criminal and visionary any attempt to subvert the republican system of the country”

**Document H**

Source: John Adams, President of the United States, address to special session of Congress (May 16, 1797)

“The Speech of the President [of the French Directory] . . . evinces a disposition to separate the people of the United States from the Government; to persuade them that they have different affections, principles, and interests, from those of their fellow citizens, whom they themselves have chosen to manage their common concerns; and thus to produce divisions fatal to our peace. . . .”

## Document I

Source: Thomas Jefferson, letter to Phillip Mazzei of Italy (April 24, 1796)

“The aspect of our politics has wonderfully changed since you left us. In place of that noble love of liberty, & republican government which carried us triumphantly thro’ the war, an Anglican monarchical, & aristocratical party has sprung up, whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance, as they have already done the forms, of the British government. The main body of our citizens, however, remain true to their republican principles; the whole landed interest is republican, and so is a great mass of talents. Against us are the Executive, the Judiciary, two out of three branches of the legislature, all the officers of the government, all who want to be officers, all timid men who prefer the calm of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty, British merchants & Americans trading on British [capital], speculators & holders in the banks & public funds. . . .”

## Document J

Source: Alexander Hamilton, draft of George Washington’s Farewell Address, substantially incorporated in the final version (August, 1796)

“Besides the more serious causes which have been hinted at as endangering our Union, there is another less dangerous, but against which it is necessary to be on our guard; I mean the petulance of party differences of opinion.

“All obstructions to the execution of the laws—all combinations and associations under whatever plausible character, with the real design to counteract, control, or awe the regular action of the constituted authorities, are contrary to this fundamental principle [the duty of every individual to obey the established government], and of the most fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, and to put in the stead of the delegated will of the whole nation the will of a party, often a small minority of the whole community .... They are likely to produce, in the course of time and things { the most effectual engines by which artful, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and usurp the reins of government.”

**Referencing the Documents:**

1. John Smith, in *History of Virginia*, said: “. . . .”
2. In Document A, John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony agreed with. . . .
3. In the Wage and Price Regulations in Connecticut, . . . (Document E).