

Understanding the Conflicts of Jefferson and Hamilton through “Hamilton, An American Musical”

Lesson Plan

Title: Understanding the Conflicts of Jefferson and Hamilton through *Hamilton: An American Musical*

Descriptive Subtitle: Ron Chernow, author of the best-selling book that inspired *Hamilton: An American Musical*, noted that George Washington was “...by nature a decorous man...who longed for respectful public discourse and was taken aback by the vitriolic rhetoric that accompanied his two terms in office.”^[1] Despite his dislike of the party system, Washington saw his first cabinet sharply divided by the differing political beliefs of two of his appointed cabinet members, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton. The political division between Jefferson and Hamilton led to what Washington feared most: the creation of the two-party system in American politics. Through the use of primary sources, secondary sources and tracks from *Hamilton: An American Musical*, this lesson will help students understand how both the personal and political differences of Jefferson and Hamilton created factions in Washington’s first cabinet and the creation of American two-party political system.

Grade level: High (9-12)

Topic/subject: Jefferson’s Public Life and Politics, Arts and Music, Civics, Government, History: U.S., Primary Documents & Jefferson Writings

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Duration: 150-180 min

Overview: During this lesson students will be using primary sources, secondary sources, and tracks

from the musical *Hamilton: An American Music* to better understand the conflicts that arose between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton during their time as secretaries in George Washington's first presidential cabinet. After this lesson, students will have a better understanding how these conflicts led to the creation of the two-party system in the United States.

Prior knowledge: Prior to this lesson students should have some background information on the formation of Federalists and Democratic-Republican parties during the Early Republic. Students should also have some knowledge of the Resolution of 1790 which relocated the nation's capital to Washington D.C. and Washington's decision to not run for re-election in 1796.

Standards:

Understands the institutions and practices of government created during the Revolution and how they were revised between 1787 and 1815 to create the foundation of the American political system based on the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Identifying factors leading to the development and establishment of political parties, including Alexander Hamilton's economic policies, conflicting views of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, George Washington's Farewell Address, and the election of 1800.

Objectives:

Students will understand how political and ideological conflicts between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton created factions in Washington first presidential cabinet. Students will also understand that these conflicts contributed to the creation of the two-party system in the American political system.

Students will be able to use critical thinking skills to interpret primary and secondary sources.

Students will know how differing political ideologies and personal conflicts among politicians of the Early Republic helped shape the American political system that still exist today.

Steps:

Disclaimer: It would be advised that instructors review all suggested tracks from *Hamilton: An American Musical* before playing in class. Several tracks do contain strong language. Several sites including Amazon and YouTube provide "clean" versions of the tracks that are appropriate for classroom use.

1. *60 Minutes*

Activity 1: Understanding the personal differences between Jefferson and Hamilton

Before students can understand how the faction between Jefferson and Hamilton led to the political division that led to the creation of our nation's two-party system, they need to understand the two men that created the divide. Individual's personal and political ideologies are often defined by their personal

lives, especially their upbringings. Students will listen to tracks from the musical *Hamilton: An American Musical* and examine primary and secondary resources to better understand Jefferson and Hamilton as individuals.

To help students get a better understanding of the personal differences of Jefferson and Hamilton, they will use the graphic organizer found in the document packet for Activity 1 in order to help compare and contrast the two men. Students should fill out the organizer as they listen to the tracks from the musical and during their examination of the primary and secondary sources. This portion of the lesson could be done in groups or individually. Please pass out the graphic organizer before beginning the lesson.

An exciting way to initially introduce Jefferson and Hamilton to your students would be through the use of tracks from *Hamilton: An American Musical*. Note: You may want to print or display lyrics for each song for your students. Copies of the official lyrics from the musical can be found at <http://atlanticrecords.com/HamiltonMusic/> Additionally, you can find the tracks from *Hamilton: An American Musical* on YouTube or other providers such as Apple Music, Spotify, Amazon or on compact disc.

First, to introduce Hamilton to your students, please refer to Track 1 of the musical soundtrack entitled "Alexander Hamilton." This track provides a brief introduction to Hamilton's upbringing up until his arrival in New York City from island of St. Croix in 1774, just prior to the start of the Revolutionary War.

Next, introduce Jefferson to your students by referring to Track 24 of the musical soundtrack entitled "What Did I Miss." This track provides a brief introduction to Jefferson, his time spent in France from 1784 to 1789 and his appointment as Secretary of State by Washington in 1789.

After listening to the two suggested tracks, students should read a short biography of both men to help them better understand each man's personal background. These biographies can be found in the document packet for this lesson. Students could also use their textbooks or other relevant resources to evaluate the lives and upbringings of Jefferson and Hamilton. Students should fill in any relevant information they find in their graphic organizer.

Next, to help students understand Jefferson and Hamilton's views on how they believed the American economy should be run, please pass out the provided quotes by each man. Students should fill in any relevant information in their graphic organizer.

Now that students have personal background information on Jefferson and Hamilton, it is important to explore the relationship each man shared with George Washington. As students venture deeper into the next portion of the lesson plan they will begin to see how each man's relationship with Washington affected their abilities to accomplish their political goals during their time in Washington's first cabinet. Pass out the provided articles found in the document packet for this activity concerning each man's relationship with Washington. Students should review the provided resources in order to better understand both Jefferson's and Hamilton's relationship with Washington before and during their time as secretaries in the first presidential cabinet. In their graphic organizer, students should give a brief description of each man's relationship with Washington.

2. 20 Minutes

Activity 2: Class Discussion on Differences between Jefferson and Hamilton

As a way to wrap up the first portion of this lesson it would be suggested to hold a class discussion where students shared what differences they found between Jefferson and Hamilton. It might be helpful to project the chart on your whiteboard or SmartBoard and have students fill in the chart in front of the class in order to facilitate meaningful discussion.

3. 90 Minutes

Activity 3: Examination of Conflicts Between Jefferson and Hamilton Through *Hamilton: An American Musical*

Now that students have established basis of the personal differences between Jefferson and Hamilton, it is time to examine how these differences played a role in their political divisions during their time as secretaries in Washington's first cabinet. It should be noted to your students that prior to Jefferson and Hamilton's appointment to Washington's cabinet in 1789 there had been little, if any, personal interaction between these two men. This should be clear through the examination of Jefferson and Hamilton's biographies but please clarify just in case there is any confusion among your students.

For this portion of the lesson you will many use the provided discussion questions in the document packet for Activity 3 for each track as discussion questions or have your students answer the questions individually as you proceed through the activity and hold a class discussion at the end of each track or at the end of the activity.

To start the lesson, a great way to introduce the track "Cabinet Battle 1" is through a clip from the HBO mini-series "John Adams" based on the book of the same name by historian David McCullough (See below for link). This clip highlights a conversation between Jefferson, Hamilton and Vice President John Adams where Hamilton defends his proposal for the assumption of states' debts and the establishment of a national bank. This will give background knowledge on the conflict to help students grasp the issues discussed in "Cabinet Battle 1."

This clip can be found at: <https://youtu.be/UrxKOO0nKwc>.

Next, pass out the accompanying primary source for the next track, "The Room Where it Happened." This track is particularly interesting because it highlights one of the rare incidences where Jefferson and Hamilton actually agreed upon a resolution presented to Washington's cabinet, the Resolution of 1790. This resolution permanently relocated the capital of the United States to its present-day location of Washington D.C. While reading the primary source, Jefferson's 1818 account of what happened in the meeting between him, Hamilton, James Madison and others, ask your students to think about if this was truly a compromise or did all parties involved achieve their desired goals.

After completing the questions or discussion on "The Room Where It Happened," pass out the primary source document from the document packet for this activity that accompanies the track "Cabinet Battle

2.” In this excerpt from Hamilton’s essay entitled “Pacificus 1,” the Secretary of State defended his belief that the United States should stay neutral during the war that began between France and Great Britain in 1793.

The next, “Washington On Your Side” would be a great way wrap up your discussion on Jefferson and Hamilton and show students how Jefferson and his fellow Democratic-Republican colleague James Madison, felt about Hamilton’s relationship with Washington. Play this track for the students and ask them to think about how Washington’s relationship with both Jefferson and Hamilton affected their work in the President’s first cabinet.

Lastly, have your students listen to the track entitled, “One Last Time.” This track allows students an opportunity gain a sense of how Washington truly felt about partisan fighting among American politicians. To help put this into context, have students read the provided excerpt from Washington’s farewell address that addresses this issue after listening to the track. This can resource can be found in the document packet for Activity 3.

Once you have completed your discussion of Activity 3, students will answer a series of reflection questions to help you access their understanding of this lesson’s objectives. These assessment questions can be found in the activity packet for Activity 3.

Materials:

- A copy of the *Hamilton: An American Musical* soundtrack, digital or compact disc version
- Classroom computer
- Projector or SmartBoard
- Access to YouTube
- Document Packet for Activity 1
- Document Packet for Activity 3 and Assessment
- Suggested resource: lyrics for each track from *Hamilton: An American Musical* that is used during each activity

Assessment(s): *Upon the completion of this lesson plan, students should answer the provided reflection questions to ensure they have a clear understand of the objectives of the lesson. Note: These questions can be found in the document packet for Activity 3.*

Assessment Criteria (rubric, checklist, etc.): The instructor should check the reflection questions for completion and competency of the intended objectives.

Accommodations: Students with Special Needs

By Resource: Less able students would perhaps benefit from working from abridged versions of the documents given with a vocabulary card to help students develop an understanding of key language in a supportive yet independent manner.

By Task: In completing the graphic organizer in Activity 1 and discussion questions in Activity 3, less able students could be grouped together and given some key ideas and themes to look for. These

could then be color-coded and students be asked to read, find and highlight these key ideas in an appropriate color before comparing and contrasting these documents.

Accommodations: Advanced Learners

By Resource: More able students will be encouraged to make further links and connections between what they have read in the documents and musical tracks provided in each activity.

By Task: More able student will be encouraged to provide addition questions that could help further discussion during each activity.

[1] <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704911704575326891123551892>



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