

The Rise of America's First Political Parties

Option A

Lexile: 1150
Word Count: 450

Vocabulary

- ▶ federalist ▶ agrarian ▶ distrust ▶ ratification ▶ backbone
- ▶ landowner ▶ side ▶ laborer ▶ sympathetic

Political Parties

Political parties are groups of people who share similar beliefs about government and work together to influence laws and leadership. They help organize political debates, support candidates, and shape policies. However, the Founders were cautious about political parties. George Washington warned in his Farewell Address that parties could divide the nation and lead to corruption. Despite these concerns, political parties quickly emerged in the Early Republic as leaders debated how the new government should function.

Development of the First Political Parties

The first two major political parties were the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. The Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton and John Adams, supported a strong central government, while the Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, favored stronger state governments. These differences deepened as the country faced challenges in the 1790s and early 1800s, leading to fierce political rivalries.

The Federalists

The Federalist Party believed in a strong national government that could unite the states and maintain order. They supported a powerful president and a loose interpretation of the Constitution, meaning the government could take actions not explicitly stated in the document if they were necessary. Federalists favored an economy based on trade, manufacturing, and banking, believing a strong financial system would make the U.S. a powerful nation. In foreign policy, they tended to be more sympathetic to Britain over France. This was largely because Britain was the main trading partner with the United States, despite tensions left over from the American Revolution. Federalists tended to be merchants, bankers, and wealthy landowners, especially in New England and larger cities.

The Democratic-Republicans

The Democratic-Republican Party argued that government power should remain more so with the states. They believed in a strict interpretation of the Constitution, meaning the government should only do what the document explicitly allowed. Democratic-Republicans supported an economy based on agriculture, with independent farmers as the backbone of the nation. They opposed national banks and large industries, fearing they would give too much power to the wealthy. In foreign affairs, they tended to be more sympathetic with France, America's ally in the Revolutionary War, and distrusted Britain's influence. Their supporters were mainly small farmers, laborers, immigrants and settlers in the South and the western frontier.

Conclusion

Despite Washington's warnings, political parties became a lasting part of American government. The disagreements between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans shaped the country's early policies and set the stage for future political debates. While the Federalist Party eventually faded, its ideas influenced later political movements, just as the Democratic-Republicans' vision of a more democratic, agrarian society shaped the nation's identity. The emergence of these parties showed that even in a new democracy, people would always have different ideas about how best to govern.



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Option B

Lexile: 960
Word Count: 292

Vocabulary

- | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|-------------|
| ▶ farming | ▶ worried | ▶ shape | ▶ friendly | ▶ factory |
| ▶ trade | ▶ divide | ▶ farmer | ▶ warn | ▶ disappear |

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