

Thomas jefferson dbq

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Thomas Jefferson DBQ Inaugurated into his presidency in March of 1801, Thomas Jefferson gradually began to stray away from his Democratic-Republican views. Prior to his presidency, Jefferson, along with his Republican followers, practiced ideas including a strict interpretation of the Constitution, a weak central government while obtaining strong state governments, and a separation of powers. When he came to office, he proved to the citizens of the United States that one's views may easily be swayed when crucial political decisions are needed to be made. Thomas Jefferson contradicted his previous views as a Democratic-Republican by his decisions made through a loose interpretation of the Constitution, his failure to act in the best interest of the majority, and his violation of the separation of powers, proving to the people of the United States that even a highly respected politician can make unethical choices once given the power. Despite his original advocating of a strict interpretation of the Constitution, Thomas Jefferson's actions during his presidency opposed his original ideas. According to a speech given by Jefferson on his opinion of a National Bank, he states that the incorporation of a centralized bank has not " been delegated to the United States, by the Constitution, " as referred to in the tenth amendment (Document C). The dispute between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, the Democratic-Republicans and the Federalists, concerning how the Constitution should be construed, was a huge controversy between the two political parties in their premature age. In 1803, Jefferson executed an action that rather resembled that of a Federalist; he found a loophole in The Constitution in order to purchase the territory of Louisiana. Nowhere in the Constitution did it state that this was

an acceptable act done by the president and the Federal government, so Jefferson created a treaty in order to purchase this land so his act would not be deemed Unconstitutional. This contradictory action in the early years of Jefferson's presidency was not the last of his controversial decisions. After years of impressment by the British on US ships, Thomas Jefferson decided that a stop to all trade, to and from Europe, was the only way to protect American vessels. According to Jefferson in his Seventh Annual Message to Congress, an American vessel, the USS Chesapeake, was " attacked by one of those [British] vessels which had been lying in our harbors under the indulgences of hospitality" (Document F). Jefferson felt that actions needed to be taken in order to restore peaceful seas. This came to be known as the Embargo Act of 1807 (Document H). Though Jefferson may have believed that this was in the best interest of the people, the majority of Americans were unsatisfied by the decision. Shortly after the Embargo Act began, the US economy plummeted, causing inflation, recession and depression, caused by a lack of European industry in which to sell and trade goods. A political cartoon based on this act illustrates a smuggler attempting to trade his goods with the British, while a snapping turtle, representing the Embargo Act, is holding him back (Document D). It was evident that this was unpopular amongst the people of the United States, demonstrating a contrast in the views and actions of Thomas Jefferson before and after his presidency. In his First Inaugural Address, Jefferson emphasizes an importance of pleasing the whole nation; " the majority is in all cases to prevail" (Document B) Before he took office, he supported whatever decision was in the greatest interest of the majority, though now, the majority was

unpleased by his actions. An aphorism of a devout Democratic-Republican is that the central government should never gain too much power, and a separation of powers is necessary in order to avoid a monarchy. In the past, Thomas Jefferson felt that the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches should not be directly involved in certain issues. A case involving the threatening of the impeachment of an Associate Justice, Samuel Chase, intertwined the executive branch with matters for which the judicial branch held responsibility. Thomas Jefferson, a man formerly preaching the importance of a separation of these three branches, was now violating this separation of powers by attempting to impeach a man through the House of Representatives. In 1805 in the Journal of the Senate of the United States, shows the details of the trial of Samuel Chase. It reads, " HIGH CASE OF IMPEACHMENTS- The United States vs. Samuel Chase" (Document G). Since this was meant to be a judicial case, it is questionable that the case title does not read, " The Supreme Court vs. Samuel Chase. " One may observe that an action such as this performed by any other politician previous to his presidency would have infuriated Thomas Jefferson. Even after he is no longer in office, Jefferson recites his pre-presidency beliefs to Joseph C. Cabell, stating the responsibilities of " the state governments with the civil rights, laws, police" (Document E). It is suggested that this proves Jefferson's hunger for power, only during his presidency. A Democratic-Republican is generally expected to believe in certain views, such as maintaining strong state governments with a small and less powerful federal government, a separation of powers, and a strict interpretation of the United States Constitution. After a few decisions he made in office, it was clear that

Jefferson's former promotion of the Democratic-Republican Party was not evident in his presidency. Thomas Jefferson's actions contradictory to his previous views as a Democratic-Republican were exemplified through his decisions made through a loose interpretation of the Constitution, his failed attempt to act in the best interest of the majority, and his violation of the separation of powers, showing that even a well-esteemed leader is capable of making corrupt decisions once power has been put into their hands.