Course Learning Outcomes for Unit V

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

5. Analyze the impact foreign aggression had on American civilian morale.
   5.1 Describe civilian morale in wake of the War of 1812.

8. Discuss the evolution of American philosophies or ideals.
   8.1 Explain Jefferson’s intended goals with his message of unity.
   8.2 Explain how and why the Era of Good Feelings developed out of Jeffersonian America.
   8.3 Describe the impact of Republican Motherhood on United States culture.

Reading Assignment

In order to access the following resources, click the links below:


The articles cited in the unit lesson are required reading. You may be tested on your knowledge and understanding of that material as well as the information presented in the unit lesson.

Unit Lesson

Jay’s Treaty was an agreement passed during the closing years of the Washington administration that attempted to guarantee a lasting peace with the still formidable and neighboring British. However, this idea for lasting peace led the nation into a new political divide.

In tone, this “agreement” was overwhelmingly supportive to the British and directly affected American economic potential. From this arose a steep political divide that threatened to tear the new nation apart. On one side were the Federalists, focused largely in the North and supporting industry, British interests, and elites controlling the government (not to be confused with the ratification group of the same name a decade prior). Those who did not support Jay’s Treaty formed a competing party under the leadership of Jefferson.
and Madison, called the Democratic Republicans. In the 1796 election, George Washington’s Vice President and Federalist John Adams was elected the second chief executive just in time for the nation’s first national crisis.

Republican Motherhood

With America being so new to European culture (in comparison to the mainland), it was culturally still a blank slate that opened itself to new cultural opportunities and ideas. Chief among these ideas was a revolutionary spirit known as “Republican Motherhood,” briefly discussed in the last unit. The prevailing idea behind this was of women as the moral and supportive core of the American family. Women were the key cog that kept church attendance consistent, the home livable, the family fed, and the men supported. For many families, especially among the higher class, women were not expected to work, fight, or make social waves. This ideal, which had originated many decades before and would last roughly until the early twentieth century, found its peak directly before, during, and after America’s Revolutionary period. Many parallels have been made to the idea of Republican Motherhood and the limited opportunities for women of the time to be able to escape from perceived social walls.

Interestingly, however, even with the steep limitations on women during this period, the young nation would prove to successfully foster a generation of female leaders to whom the United States owes a great reverence. Most schools today teach a general history of the founding fathers, and occasionally even include some noted women, such as Betsy Ross. Her legend, even though historically scrutinized, was highly sensationalized near the nation’s centennial. It was intended as a motivator for young girls and women. Fittingly, this was during the revival of the women’s suffrage movement.

There is evidence, however, of a great tradition of American women who emerged during this pivotal part of the nation’s history. With good reason, one of the most celebrated figures is Abigail Adams, wife of the new President John Adams. Abigail’s correspondence with her husband John during and after the war and throughout the Presidential Administration provides for historians an intimate look into the unfiltered realities of the perils of the chief executive and also to his often forgotten efforts to secure European support during the war.

In addition, Abigail Adams would become a source of civility and reason during the feud that would erupt between John Adams and their longtime close family-friend-turned-political-rival, Thomas Jefferson. The study of history is often most clear from a secondary point of view, and in an age before cameras and phones, having such wonderful resources is an essential part of the national record. As this unit progresses into the following topics, it should be noted that letters such as Abigail’s, among other sources introduced in the readings, were quite beneficial in capturing the tone and emotion of these events. They are a staple to the national collection.

Troubled Administration

The end of the American Revolution gave many on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean the understanding of a French-U.S. alliance based on a common enemy. With the signing of this new policy, that alliance did not stop just on paper. Less than two years after Jay’s Treaty was signed, the French were sending privateers (essentially pirates hired as mercenaries) to intercept American ships and seize goods bound for England. Federalists saw these actions as a declaration of war.

Adams, trying to hold the nation together, opted instead on continued negotiation. He sent three negotiators to Paris who were unceremoniously refused entry and an appearance before anyone in authority—a direct symbol of retaliation. France instead sent three negotiators to the U.S. with the goal of aggressively trying to barter funds upwards of $12 million from the U.S. treasury to buy back their civility. These negotiators, known only as “X, Y, and Z,” were granted a response similar to that received by the American negotiators. Furious commissioners alerted Adams to the French attempt to secure a bribe.
Upon hearing news of this incident, known simply as the “XYZ Affair,” Republicans were not able to justify the French actions, and the Federalists demanded a war. By 1798, twenty American warships were parked in the French Caribbean, and though war was not declared, this was clearly an invitation to hostilities. The tense standoff would become dubbed the “Quasi-War” in reference to its informal status. It would result in massive collections by the U.S. of French vessels.

Stateside, the battle was in print. Papers in support of the Republicans publicly attacked U.S. actions and Adams’ leadership. In the North, aggressive and violent retaliation to these papers was not uncommon. On both sides, there was genuine fear that war would break out—not between the U.S. and France, but among the American people. So divided were these tensions that political measures were taken to calm the print. The Sedition Act was the 1798 censoring of seditious (insurrection against established government or order) content from public eyes. In addition, the borders were closed to select immigrants to America.

The two Alien Acts strikingly increased the amount of time required to gain citizenship and gave the President the power to deport immigrants without trial if he deemed them a threat. It was clearly evident that these were directed attacks. The Federalists argued that they were intended to halt potential French terror, but the real victims were the Republicans who were out-muscled in the executive, judicial, and legislative branches. In addition to the Federalist grip on the executive branch, their demands for a trial on the basis of the Bill of Rights were ignored in court and failed to pass in Congress. Those in power wanted to squash any potential threat and return the nation to a one-party system by any means possible.

The last Republican voice left was on the state level: Kentucky and Virginia. These two major agricultural states would man the helm for the Republicans, taking resolutions directly to the federal government, arguing that the states have the right to nullify the Constitutionality of federal laws. Although a failure in stopping the Alien and Sedition Acts, this debate between the powers of federal and state were not taken lightly. Largely due to Adams’ limited enforcement of the Sedition Act and outright refusal to go to war, those who did speak out were not punished, and this question over power would reemerge again later.

In January 1799, the French, unwilling to fight both their longtime rival British and the U.S., confirmed an end to hostilities and welcomed American ambassadors back to Paris. Adams had avoided a war the U.S. did not want against an ally he did not want to lose, but at great cost.

His party, now firmly in the hand of the outspoken Hamilton, was furious with his refusal of hostilities, and the Republicans, having been silenced, threatened, and outright attacked, had not forgiven their treatment during the scare. Perhaps worst of all for Adams, the actions of the Federalists against the common man only decreased their support. Vice President Jefferson, having four busy years to accelerate the anger of his supporters, and still little responsibilities in the capitol, did Adams no favors—Adams had lost his re-election before it was even held. Jefferson won soundly, a victory he dubbed the “revolution of 1800,” and his inaugural address famously became a call to the nation to reunify, just under a different leader. Little did Jefferson know, his sentiments would become real, even as America continued to evolve.

**Jefferson Inaugurated**

“We are all republicans, we are all federalists.” – Thomas Jefferson

In the short history of the young nation, there were a few odd occurrences. First, a republic born out of war had not, in its first twelve years, officially been involved in a formal conflict (the War for Independence ended under the Articles of Confederation, and the Quasi-War was never officially declared).

Second, and even more surprising, Jefferson constituted the third leader from a third distinct platform (party), and both exchanges of power, though passionate, were bloodless. In his first public comments at his inauguration, Jefferson, however, would make it clear that one of his main goals echoed Washington and Adams in that the nation was at its strongest when it was unified. Jefferson saw how quickly his party had toppled their opposition, and he knew he would need to reach across the aisle to be successful.

Still working on the balloting process, there was some concern over if the incumbent Federalist candidate Adams was even on every ballot, but it was unlikely that was the only reason he was not reelected. The man to become Jefferson’s Vice President, Aaron Burr, also a Republican, had a reputation for being high-strung and potentially corruptible. Even for a Federalist-dominated Congress, he was a dangerous choice to lead the unsteady republic. Jefferson had proven to be a seasoned politician, but was practical in his action and
speech. He knew that his greatest support was from the common agrarian man, and his frugal tendencies while in office made him appealing to that demographic, which had often been overlooked by the previous administration.

**Landmark Administration**

Jefferson had two early goals. First, he wanted to balance the budget to avoid the potential for corruption that Alexander Hamilton had proposed during their time in his cabinet. Second, as part of his frugality and unification of the nation, he (pressured by the now Republican Congress) encountered a series of events that would lead to the first landmark decision by the Supreme Court.

In the case of *Marbury v. Madison*, Jefferson would refuse the appointments of numerous last-minute appointees by Adams in the twilight of his administration. Marbury, one of the refused appointees, would sue for his position.

Chief Justice John Marshall, often considered the greatest justice to ever serve on the nation's highest court, himself a Federalist and appointee by Adams, would make the decision. What he decided, however, would come as a shock to many. He found that while Marbury was entitled to the position, the court did not have the legal right to overrule the executive decision. Though an immediate loss for the Federalists, this decision was ingenious and would guarantee some degree of longstanding Federalist influence in the government. Not only had the judicial branch nullified an executive order (by Adams), but Marshall had secured the process of judicial review. This means that only the court, led and dominated by pro-centralizing and Federalist figures, could interpret the law, and with this power, it became a substantial influence in the checks and balances system.

Unlike his predecessors, Jefferson was unable to keep the U.S. out of a formal conflict. The monarch of Tripoli, who had control over a popular trading spot along the Barbary Coast in West Africa, demanded “tribute” for safe passage—essentially a bribe. Jefferson refused to pay this extortion, leading to the capture of 300 American sailors who had run aground and burned their frigate, the USS *Philadelphia*, to keep the ship out of Barbary hands. The incarceration of these men led to a direct U.S. attack on the African king's navy. Even after the successful recovery of these men, random attacks continued until 1815 when the U.S. Navy, under the direction of President Madison and Captain Decatur, overwhelmed the kingdom with superior power and demanded an end to the demands for tributes and reparations from previous encounters. Though this incident was an unwanted show of force to resolve a political matter, perhaps Jefferson's most notable accomplishments were as much patience as planning. History remembers Jefferson as a diplomat, not as a soldier, and never would that prove more true than how he would successfully expand the world influence of the U.S., both figuratively and geographically.

**Louisiana Purchase**

By 1801, the U.S. was using the Mississippi River as a major shipping hub for goods from territories as far north as Canada and as far inward as the Great Lakes. This land, formally controlled by Spain, but realistically in the hands of Native American tribes since the French exodus after the Seven Years' War, was essential for U.S. commerce, especially the southernmost port of New Orleans.

Spain could not afford to defend this region from the ever-increasing western expansion threat of the U.S., and in a show of political compromise, sold its North American holdings back to France, now under the control of Napoleon Bonaparte. France had never lost its interests in an American empire. However, during its revolutionary years, the French could ill-afford to station any formal assault against either Spain or the U.S. Spain simply requested a sturdier buffer between the U.S. and Spain's Central American and Western territories, and France was eager to rebuild its forces closer to its sugar plantation holdings in Haiti. A series of unexpected events would begin to unfold, providing the U.S. with a never-expected outcome.

Jefferson was always fascinated with the American West, even remarking openly to his trusted advisors about his interest in mapping the Western territories. When he received notice of the sale, or more appropriately, when the Port of New Orleans was closed to further American shipments, Jefferson immediately sent negotiators to Paris as the first rumblings of war filled Congressional chambers. This call for war, mostly from the remaining Federalists, did serve a purpose—if Napoleon, a military general, could not be persuaded by money, perhaps the hint of an escalated conflict would change his mind.
Robert R. Livingston was the chief negotiator sent to Paris to organize this sale, but this was a tricky proposition. Jefferson, a fervent constitutionalist, did not interpret the Constitution as providing the executive office the right to purchase land. He knew that if the New Orleans port remained closed, however, that war was likely to erupt and American commerce would suffer. It was for this reason that he felt the transaction was justified.

Upon arriving in Paris, Napoleon was not interested in selling his newly acquired territory. Early settlements along the Mississippi River had already provided a French presence in North America, and he was eager to expand. Tragedy struck, however. An outbreak of Yellow Fever made quick work of that settlement, and a slave uprising in sugarcane-rich Haiti removed the strongest French presence in the Caribbean. Faced with the potential for war over a land that was now diminished in value, Napoleon had no choice but to sell and use the profits to prepare for rising hostilities with longtime foe, Britain. The final cost would be $15 million, a far cry from the original offer of $2 million for the port alone. Without the official approval of Jefferson (as it would have taken several weeks), with this exchange and some careful negotiation about the Western border, the U.S. doubled in size overnight.

The map above shows the outline of the land acquired through the Louisiana Purchase. (Bond, 1912)

Even though Jefferson was openly enthusiastic about the potential for growth, he too was a strict Constitutionalist, and the purchase of land, especially to this extent, was not defined in the powers of the executive branch. While his initial offer for the port could be justified as a measure to ensure that the nation avoided a war for which they were unprepared, the final sale far exceeded such justification. As the deal was done, the precedent was set, and there was little pressure from the Republican-dominated Congress to retract the sale. Interestingly, this purchase would have few immediate consequences, but in the years following would be instrumental in further expansion throughout the world in what many would argue as being almost imperial ambitions.

Still, in the wake of the sale, Jefferson jumped at this turn of events and immediately sent out Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to lead an expedition to map this new territory. The pair’s tasks included scouting for future development, potential hostilities, and shipping routes to the West. With the aid of Sacajawea, a Native American linguistics prodigy, the expedition reached the Pacific Ocean in 1807 and returned in 1808. Future expeditions would follow into different parts of the new territory, prompting formal gatherings with less than permanent treaties. The Osage nation that was immediately friendly with the American President, would eventually become the first tribe forced to settle in present-day Oklahoma.
1807 would also prompt yet another military trial for the fledgling nation. With France and Britain now at war (again), the U.S. was warned by both sides not to trade with the opposition. Of course, trade would not stop, and starting in 1806, the British started making good on their threat. The most famous example was the fate of the Chesapeake, as it would prompt the doomed Embargo Act of 1807, and for the first time since the XYZ Affair, the Federalist supporters grew in number. Jefferson would follow Washington's lead and step down after his two terms, and Madison would win his seat. Though Madison would continue the Republican (and Virginian) streak, it was not unanimous. The Federalist candidate, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, who had previously run in 1800, was able to pick up 47 electoral votes (5 states), an improvement from 1800 (2 states).

The Madison White House

Madison was a President with many firsts of his own. His wife, Dolly, traditionally spelled "Dolley", was one of the first openly influential First Ladies. Martha Washington had reserved herself to small affairs. Jefferson, who lost his wife well before his presidency, used his frugality as an excuse to not entertain. However, Abigail Adams was a political savant, although she stayed largely in her husband's shadow—on purpose. Mrs. Madison, the "presidentress," was the first real example of the Republican mother in the White House, with weekly events meant to ensure support for her husband among the D.C. community. As separate as the U.S. had attempted to become, one key piece of British Common Law, feme covert, kept women in the shadows of their husbands, especially in the political arena. The only major change would be the legalization of divorce in almost every state. Despite this limitation, reform was occurring in slow doses; education, religion, and leadership began to embrace women. However, despite the initiative of states like New Jersey, the victory of universal suffrage was still 100 years away.

Another big change came with the early settlement into the newly purchased U.S. lands, where local tribes, most notably the Shawnee, were aggressively fighting the expansion into their tribal lands. Much to the dismay of the new President, he would find himself on the cusp of yet another military conflict. This time it was a complicated entry—disputes with the Native American tribes melded with British settlements in the North and their ongoing conflict with France. America was forced into a war with three hostile nations all eager to regain lost American lands.
A Second American Revolution

“The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.” – Thomas Jefferson

The War of 1812 has been nicknamed by some as America’s second revolution. Although there is some truth to this claim, especially considering the location and participants of the conflict, the situation surrounding the fight was arguably even worse than that experienced by the Patriots.

The Americans could not keep two secret alliances any more than they could fight a three-front war. They had to pick a side. With the South and West’s support, the U.S. formally declared war on Britain in June of 1812. This was a split decision, with many in the North fearing the French more than their ancestral home country. The loudest advocates for war, nicknamed War Hawks, would get their way, however, and this also better fed into the growing population of expansionists hoping the outcome of the war would bring new territories for potential settlement. The war, however, was difficult on the U.S. and contained continued split alliances and political posturing. A great majority of the fighting would be along the Atlantic coast where Britain’s superior navy could continuously shell the American installations and block major shipping ports from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

The interior war, however, would be even more eventful. The U.S. capital city of Washington D.C. would literally come under fire by British advances in 1814. Even the newly named White House would be scorched by British torches before they turned north to Baltimore. It was at Baltimore that America would score arguably its greatest moment of propaganda in history: the defense of Ft. McHenry.

Off the shores of Maryland, a young poet named Francis Scott Key was held captive on a British ship of war watching the bombardment that, from a distance, looked like a modern fireworks show. Baltimore had no chance of surviving the night with the constant bombing, troops invading from D.C., and another regiment entering from the north. In the morning, however, what Key saw would motivate him to author one of America’s most treasured works, the “Defense of Fort McHenry.” (To read the Defense of Fort McHenry, a required reading, please view http://www.mdhs.org/digitalimage/defence-sic-fort-mhenry.)

Through the mist, a massive American flag, nicknamed “Mary Pickersgill’s Masterpiece” after its tailor, showed clearly over the fort. Somehow, the defense withstood impossible odds and remained to hoist the flag. This selection of nationalist prose would be a testament of Key’s faith in the United States to stand against European powers, and its empowering message would eventually be transformed into a national anthem.

Key’s contribution would not be unique in influencing American culture, though some others would be on the local level. Such is the legacy of Ft. Moultrie. A strategically located fort off the coast of Sullivan’s Island, near Charleston, South Carolina, Ft. Moultrie would prove to have a unique advantage—specifically, Palmetto trees, whose logs would fortify and protect the fort from the British onslaught. This was such an advantage that the state would adopt the tree as a state symbol, which is commonly seen on its flag and in other, similar state propaganda.

Shortly following would be yet another American miracle, orchestrated by a young General from Tennessee named Andrew Jackson. In January 1815, on the outskirts of New Orleans, Jackson would use his knowledge of the terrain and dedicated forces to outwit and outgun a larger British army in a series of battles. Unbeknownst to Jackson, his men, and the British invaders was that the war had ended two weeks prior—Jackson, however, became a legend, a status that proved very helpful in his political ambitions a few years down the road.

Despite once again facing the world’s most formidable navy and an army stationed just north of the national border, the U.S. was once again able to successfully fend off the British threat, though not without significant damage to Washington D.C., including the White House, which was nearly a casualty of the invading British. With new economic and border agreements, both nations signed a peace, ending the fight in 1815. One lasting impact of the war would be a drastic update of U.S. forces. The militia was no longer a realistic wartime force. The nation would need to dedicate itself to building a strong standing army if it was to defend itself against future threats.
The Era of Good Feelings

With the successful end of the war and news of the Hartford Convention becoming public, Madison’s administration was at its highest mark, and the Federalist dissenters were all but silenced to history. James Monroe’s succession of Madison in 1815 is generally understood to be the beginning of the “Era of Good Feelings.” This term would be officially coined in 1817 in reference to this Republican (and Virginian) and predecessors Madison and Jefferson. The reelection of Monroe in 1820 was almost unanimous in the Electoral College, but there were cracks in the united party in the shape of imperialistic tendencies and European encroachment in neighboring Latin America.

The electoral game would change completely with growing desire to increase the number of eligible voters to all men, not just those of sufficient means. In some states, this even began the discussion of ending segregation in voting, but it gained little support. What is perhaps Monroe’s most significant contribution would come from the highly debated topic of slavery. With populations now growing in regions from the Louisiana Purchase, new states were propping up, and with each came the question of slavery. Even though many states in the North had little need for labor, the Southern states were booming with King Cotton. The question became not so much about who could have slaves, but about how much influence did slave-owning states have in Congress compared to free states.

This led to the Missouri Compromise, so named for the 1820 decision to set Missouri’s southern border as the northermost mark of slave territory, with the condition that Maine be admitted as a free state for balance. Politics now also changed, with a need for every party to ensure support in both halves of the nation. With this line, a clear obstacle to unity was already creating division.

The Election of 1824

Further division would emerge as the nation once again grew divided over economic and social differences. By 1817, Jefferson’s Democratic-Republican Party had successfully held onto the executive office even in the wake of war and economic highs and lows. However, the leaders to emerge from his mold were due to vacate the office, and in what would become largely controversial ways. Going into the election of 1824, there were numerous candidates, including some from a very diverse presidential cabinet collected by Monroe. The Secretary of State (and son of former president), John Quincy Adams, had the ear of northern industrialists, Congressman Henry Clay was Speaker of the House, Treasury Secretary William H. Crawford was probably the most traditional with his pro local agenda, and then there was the hero of New Orleans, General Andrew Jackson.

It would be Jackson’s reputation that spread fear among those who opposed him. His brash actions against two British soldiers on Spanish lands could have led to another international conflict, but instead led to the annexation of Florida for the relatively unpopulated Texas and Cuba regions. It was this conflict that would lead out of the Jeffersonian era with the controversial election of the first non-Virginian since Jefferson, John Quincy Adams.

Known as the “Corrupt Bargain” when the election failed to deliver a majority, as was the law of the time, the top two vote getters, Adams and Andrew Jackson, went before the House of Representatives—just as they had in 1800. With fear of Jackson in office, the now ousted candidate Henry Clay offered his blessing (and votes) to John Quincy Adams in exchange for the position of Secretary of State—a position that had previously fostered several presidents, including Jefferson and Madison. So despite earning more popular and electoral votes, 99 to only 84 for Adams, Jackson was on the outside looking in, and like Jefferson, this position left Jackson in a dangerous position for the newly inaugurated President Adams.

In his one term, Adams did his best to follow in the footsteps of his Democratic-Republican predecessors, but his Federalist upbringing was clearly evident in his interests and decisions. Some of these employed a controversial use of federal power and had limited success as a significant voice in front of the Congress. In 1828, the presidency would once again change hands within the Republican family and without bloodshed, but the executive office would never again be the same.
References


Suggested Reading

To view a video regarding the War of 1812 and the defense of Fort McHenry, please view link below:


In order to locate the articles below, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the America: History and Life with Full Text database within the CSU Online Library.

To read letters from Abigail Adams to her husband to better understand the insight from this highly positioned first lady to matters with her family, society, and politics, please view either, or both, of the articles below.
