

Thomas Jefferson

Name: _____

Thomas Jefferson was the third president of the United States, but he played many political roles throughout our nation's history. His political life influenced the country in many ways, from the founding documents to the shape of our nation on the map. His contributions include the Declaration of Independence, America's two-party political system, and the Louisiana Purchase, which added territory to our nation.



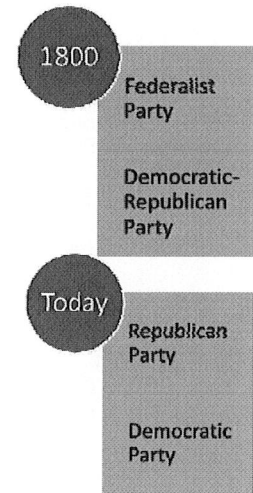
It's Time for a Revolution

Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, which informed Great Britain that the American colonies were breaking away. Jefferson argued that King George, the leader of Great Britain, had broken an agreement between the people and the government. The Declaration said that since the king failed to protect everyone's rights, the colonies could revolt and demand a new government. Jefferson's draft listed the Americans' complaints against British rule and was signed by 55 other delegates from the colonies. The document shocked the world and led to the Revolutionary War.

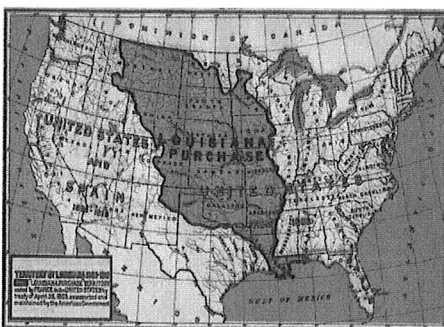
Come Join the Party

Jefferson had very clear ideas about how he wanted the government to work. He believed in a small government with limited powers. People who agreed with his views came together and formed our first **political party** — an organized group of people with similar political views. This party was called the **Democratic-Republican Party**. Another Founding Father, Alexander Hamilton, believed in a stronger national government. Hamilton and his supporters created the **Federalist Party**.

As the new government made decisions, people took sides and the political parties grew. Political parties are important because when people with similar views act together, they have a better chance to influence the government. When Jefferson won the presidential election in 1800, it was the first time a government changed power from one party to another because of a democratic election. Jefferson would later call it the "revolution of 1800."



A lot has changed since the 1800s, but most elections still come down to two parties.



Expanding Westward

As president of the United States, Jefferson doubled the size of the country with the **Louisiana Purchase** in 1803. France had claimed the land between the Mississippi River and Rocky Mountains for its own empire but had to change plans. Jefferson took advantage of this and made France an offer that they accepted. This was a little tricky, since the Constitution didn't give instructions for expansion. Eventually the purchase gained enough support, and Congress approved the deal.

Fulfilling His Vision for the Country

Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, established the two party system in United States politics, and oversaw the expansion of our young nation. And because he stuck to his vision for the country, he was able to lead the colonies to independence and to a political system that allows for different points of view. Jefferson's lasting impact can be seen in our founding documents and on the map of the United States.

