**Chapter 6**

The Constitution and the New Republic

*Reviewing Objectives*

**A thorough study of Chapter Six should enable the student to understand:**

1. The groups that advocated a stronger national government and how they, probably a minority, were able to achieve their objective.
2. The origin of the Constitutional Convention, who the delegates were, how well they represented the people, and how they were able to achieve a consensus.
3. The historical debate concerning the motives of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention.
4. Federalism and how the Constitution is designed to make it work.
5. The importance of The Federal Papers in the ratification struggle, and their significance in the years since.
6. The effectiveness of George Washington’s solutions to the problems of the presidency, and how Washington, as its first occupant, affected the office and the nation.
7. The financial program of Alexander Hamilton, and its contribution to the success of the new government.
8. The ways in which the weak new nation coped with international problems, and the importance of such events as Washington’s decision for neutrality and the “quasi-war” with France.
9. The emergence of political parties, their political philosophies, and their influence through the election of 1800.

Pertinent Questions

Chapter Six

**Framing a New Government**

1. Who were the advocates of centralization, and why did they want to abolish the Articles of Confederation?
2. What did those who favored centralization see as the most serious problem of the Articles, and how would they have changed them? What had prevented any changes?
3. What were the characteristics of the men who met at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia? Whose presence was essential to the meeting’s success? Why?
4. What were the two major points of view that divided the convention? What plans Did each side propose to carry its view?
5. How were the differences between the “large-states” and “small-states” plans resolved?
6. What was the role of the various branches of government under the new Constitution?
7. Why did the supporters of the new Constitution call themselves “Federalists”? Were they actually Federalists or did their philosophy of government reveal them to be something else? If so what?
8. What methods did the Federalists employ to get their views across to the people? What were their arguments and how did the “Antifederalists” respond?
9. What was the process by which the Constitution was finally ratified? Which states supported it, by what margins, and which states did not? What objections were raised by the states?
10. What was the process by which the new government set up its operations? What were the initial matters discussed, and how were they resolved?
11. In what ways did Congress continue the work of the Constitutional Convention? What “gaps” in the Constitution did Congress fill?
12. Who were the men Washington selected for his cabinet, and why did he pick these men?

**Federalists and Republicans**

1. How did the divisions in the 1790’s reflect the differences of philosophy that were at the heart of the debate over the Constitution?
2. What was the view of society and politics held by Hamilton? Who did he feel should govern, and why? Which county’s political system did Hamilton most admire?
3. What was Hamilton’ plan for paying the nation’s debt and restoring credit on a sound basis? To what social-economic-political group would this have appealed?
4. How did Hamilton propose to enact his programs? Who opposed him, and to what degree was he successful?
5. How did political parties arise as a result of Hamilton’s progress?
6. What was the political philosophy of Jefferson and Madison? How did it differ from that of Hamilton?
7. How did the French Revolution highlight the differences between the Federalists and the Republicans?

**Establishing National Sovereignty**

1. How did Washington’s reaction to the Whiskey Rebellion underscore the difference between the Constitution and the Articles of Confederation?
2. How did the government under the Constitution guarantee that people on the frontier would be loyal to it? What was the impact of Native Americans?
3. What diplomatic problem did the French Revolution and the war that followed pose for the United States? How did Washington and Congress deal with this problem?
4. What was the French reaction to the policy in question 22, and what resulted from this?
5. What were the circumstances that sent John Jay to England, and what were the results of his mission?
6. How did Jay’s treaty affect America’s relations with Spain?

## The Downfall of the Federalists

1. Why was John Adams selected as the Federalist candidate in 1796?
2. What circumstances led to an administration with a Federalist president and a Republican Vice President?
3. What caused the “quasi war” with France during the Adams administration? What was the result of this struggle?
4. How did the Federalists attempt to silence those who opposed the undeclared war, and what groups did these attempts most affect?
5. What gave rise to the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, and what attitude towards the nature of the federal government did these resolutions reveal?
6. What were the issue do the election of 1800, and what strategy did each party employ to get elected?
7. What was the outcome of the election of 1800, and what were the reactions of the losers and the victors?

# **Summary**

The period between 1785 and 1800 was one of the most politically productive in American history. During these fifteen years, the nation, guided by some of the most talented men in history, reorganized itself under a new framework of government and then struggled to define (for itself as well as for others) just what had been created. It was a period marked by the rise of a party that called itself Federalist, although the philosophy it espoused was, as its opponents were quick to point out, more "nationalist" in emphasis. Arguing that to prosper, the United States had best follow the economic and political example of Great Britain, these Federalists, led by Hamilton, interjected foreign policy into domestic differences and set the stage for one of the earliest and most serious government assaults on individual civil liberties. Seeing their less elitist, pro-agriculture, Republican opponents as supporters of France in an undeclared conflict between that nation and the United States, the Federalists set out to suppress dissent and those who promoted it. This assault brought a swift response and so heightened tensions that many feared that the nation could not survive. It was against this background that a shift of power occurred, and by the end of the decade, the Federalists, who had been the moving force for so many years, were clearly losing ground to the Republicans. This meant that if wounds were to be healed and divisions mended, it would have to be done by the man many believed to be the personification of all that separated the two groups--Thomas Jefferson.