

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

The Convictions of Thomas Jefferson DBQ

To what extent did Jefferson live up to his ideals and beliefs?



Historical Background: Thomas Jefferson was elected to be the 3rd President in 1800. Prior to serving as President he was an influential in helping the U.S. secure its independence from Britain. Among other things he is famous for writing the Declaration of Independence which helped determine the ideals and beliefs America would frame its government on.

Task: Evaluate the documents and determine if you think Jefferson lived up to his ideals and beliefs.

Part A: The documents below discuss the life and presidential decisions of Thomas Jefferson. Examine each document carefully, and then complete the chart on the next page. These answers will help you in part B.

Part B: Paragraph Response:

Using the documents above, your answer to the questions in Part A, and your knowledge of social studies, write a well-developed paragraph that includes...

- Thesis statement with the selected choice
- Body of the paragraph that includes at least three pieces of specific, important information from the documents (cited) studied that supports your argument
- A concluding statement that connects back to the thesis statement at the beginning

In your paragraph you will state whether or not you think Jefferson lived up to his ideals and beliefs.

Jefferson's Core Beliefs: *Below each quotation, put Jefferson's statement in your own words.*

1. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable Rights"
In your words:
2. "That government is best which governs least."
In your words:
3. "I consider the foundation of the Constitution as laid on this ground: That "all powers not delegated to the United States, by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States or to the people."
In your words:
4. Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government.
In your words:

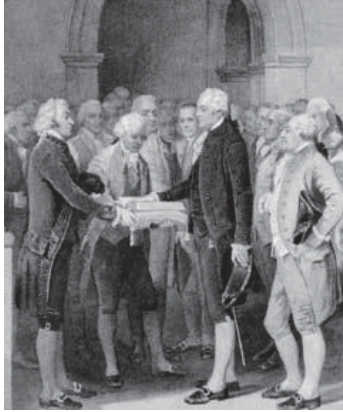
Jefferson Document sheet

Directions: Working with your partner, carefully read the documents provided. For each document, summarize what it tells you about Jefferson. Then, reflect on whether the document provides an example of Jefferson upholding his beliefs or betraying them.

Document	What did you learn about Jefferson from this document?	Does this document provide an example of Jefferson upholding his beliefs or betraying them? Explain why.
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Document 1: Reporter's Account of Jefferson's Inauguration

The weather was mild and beautiful. Jefferson's dress was, as usual, that without any distinctive badge of office. He broke precedent by walking to and from his swearing-in ceremony, rather than riding in a carriage as Washington and Adams did. A simple man of the people—he was even seen without his powdered wig at the Inaugural Ball.



Document 2: Letter from Jefferson on Slaves

To Edward Coles [Monticello Aug. 25. 1814]

Man, probably of any colour, but of this color (black) we know, brought up from their infancy without necessity for thought or forecast, are by their habits rendered (made) as incapable as children of taking care of themselves. In the meantime they are pests in society by their idleness (being without a job)... Their combination with the other colour (white) produces a disgrace which no lover of this country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently approve of...

Document 3: Jefferson's Proposal for a Bill

“My bill proposes: Elementary schools in every county, which shall place every householder within three miles of a school...To all of which is added a selection from the elementary schools of subjects of the most promising genius, whose parents are too poor to give them further education, to be carried at the public expense...The object is to bring into action that mass of talents which lies buried in poverty in every country...”

Document 4: Slaves on Jefferson's Plantation

Jefferson lived in Virginia on a plantation called Monticello. About eighty slaves lived and worked at Monticello. They plowed the fields, planted the wheat, and drove the wagons. They cared for the hogs and cows. Household slaves fixed food for Thomas Jefferson and his family. They washed his clothes and cared for his children. The lives of Jefferson and his family were linked with the lives of his enslaved workers.

By law, Jefferson's slaves were his property. That meant he could buy and sell them. He could give them away. He could hire them out to other farmers. Slaves who didn't obey were punished. And Jefferson granted freedom to only seven slaves.



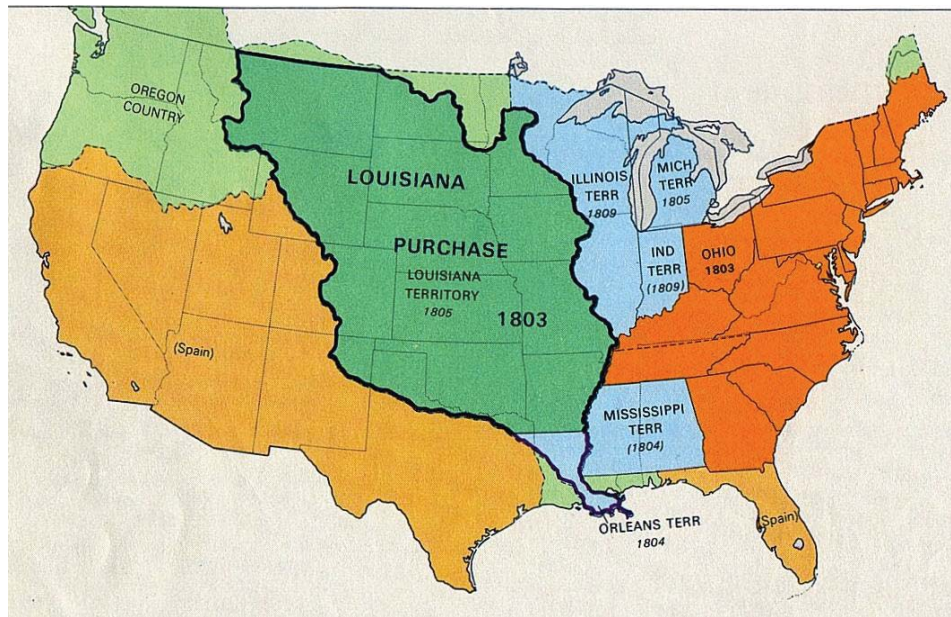
Document 5: Memoirs of Madison Hemings [1873]

About the time of [Thomas Jefferson's appointment as minister to France] and before he was ready to leave the country his wife died, and soon after her burial...he left for France, taking his eldest daughter with him. My mother [Sally Hemings] accompanied Jefferson's daughter as a servant...Their stay was about eighteen months. But during that time my mother became Mr. Jefferson's lover, and when she was called back home she was *enceinte* [i.e. pregnant] by him. He desired to bring my mother back to Virginia with him but she objected. She was just beginning to understand the French language well, and in France she was free, while if she returned to Virginia she would be re-enslaved. So she refused to return with him. To induce her to do so he promised extraordinary privileges, and made a solemn pledge that her children should be freed at the age of twenty-one years. In consequence of his promise...she returned with him to Virginia. Soon after their arrival, she gave birth to a child, of whom Thomas Jefferson was the father. It lived but a short time. She gave birth to four others, and Jefferson was the father of all of them. Their names were Beverly, Harriet, Madison (myself), and Eston--three sons and one daughter. We all became free agreeably to the treaty entered into by our parents before we were born. We all married and have raised families....

Document 6: Louisiana Purchase

Finalizing the deal with France had no Constitutional precedent. Nowhere in the Constitution could Jefferson find mention of the purchase of land from foreign powers. Jefferson struggled over whether to suggest an amendment or whether to finalize the deal without constitutional approval. In a letter to Wilson Cary Nicholas in 1803, Jefferson summarizes his internal conflict:

“When an instrument admits two constructions, the one safe, the other dangerous, the one precise, the other indefinite, I prefer that which is safe & precise. I had rather ask an enlargement of power from the nation where it is found necessary, than to assume it by a construction which would make our powers boundless.”



Eventually, Jefferson was convinced by advisers, including Thomas Paine (*Common Sense*) that the transaction was not beyond the scope of the Constitution. Jefferson purchased the land from France in 1803 and effectively doubled the size of the U.S.

Document 7: Historian's Account of Jefferson's Presidency

Jefferson tried to shrink the government and cut costs wherever possible. He reduced the size of the army, halted a planned expansion of the navy, and lowered expenses for government social functions. He also rolled back Hamilton's economic program by eliminating all internal taxes and reducing the influence of the Bank of the United States. Jefferson favored free trade rather than government-controlled trade and tariffs.