

1793

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) served as secretary of state in George Washington’s first presidential administration. In this letter to Thomas Pinckney (1750–1828), minister to Great Britain, Jefferson discusses negotiations with native peoples in the northwestern frontier and the efforts of Edmond-Charles Genet (1763–1834), who had been sent by France to enlist US support for the French revolutionary government. When this letter was written, Great Britain was at war with revolutionary France.

Our negotiations with the North-Western Indians have completely failed, so that war must settle our difference. We expected nothing else, and had gone into negotiations only to prove to all our citizens that peace was unattainable on terms which any one of them would admit.

You have probably heard of a great misunderstanding between Mr. Genet and us. On the meeting of Congress it will be made public. . . . We have kept it merely personal, convinced his nation [France] will disapprove him. To them [the French] we have with the utmost assiduity given every proof of inviolate attachment. We wish to hear from you on the subject of Marquis de La Fayette, though we know that circumstances [the increasing violence of the French Revolution, which put the lives of moderates like Lafayette in danger] do not admit sanguine [optimistic] hopes.

H. A. Washington, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being His Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and Other Writings, Official and Private*, vol. 4 (New York: Taylor & Maury, 1854), 85–86.

PRACTICING Historical Thinking

Identify: How does Jefferson—as secretary of state of the United States—relate the actions of Genet and the tribes in the Northwest?

Analyze: What are Jefferson’s reasons for informing Thomas Pinckney, minister (or ambassador) to Great Britain, about these two issues?

Evaluate: What can you infer that Jefferson believes are the interests of the United States regarding these two issues? Use evidence from this letter to support your inference.

DOCUMENT 4.13

THOMAS JEFFERSON, Letter to James Monroe

1795

Thomas Jefferson wrote the following letter to political ally James Monroe (1758–1831) regarding the public reaction to Jay’s Treaty. The treaty was intended to maintain US neutrality between France and Great Britain but was perceived by many Americans to be a pro-British treaty.

. . . Mr. Jay’s treaty has at length been made public. So general a burst of dissatisfaction never before appeared against any transaction. Those who understand the particular articles of it, condemn these articles. Those who do not understand them minutely, condemn it generally as wearing a hostile face to France. This last is the most numerous class, comprehending the whole body of the people, who have taken a greater interest in this transaction than they were ever known to do in any other. It has in my opinion completely demolished the monarchical party here. The Chamber of Commerce in New York, against the body of the town, the merchants in Philadelphia, against the body of their town, also, and our town of Alexandria have come forward in . . . [its] support. Some individual champions also appear. *Marshall, Carrington, Harvey, Bushrod Washington, Doctor Stewart*. A more powerful one is *Hamilton*, under the signature of *Camillas*. *Adams* holds his tongue with an address above his character. We do not know whether the President has signed it or not. If he has it is much believed the H. of representatives will oppose it as constitutionally void, and thus bring on an embarrassing and critical state in our government.—

Thomas Jefferson, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 7, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: G. P. Putnam’s, 1896), 27–28.

PRACTICING Historical Thinking

Identify: Describe Jefferson’s response to the public outcry against Jay’s Treaty.

Analyze: What political risk does Jefferson take in writing this letter to James Monroe?