

# Do Now #15

## Before the War of 1812: The Alien and Sedition Acts

Directions: Using the toolbar above, **BOLD any important information** and UNDERLINE any unknown words//phrases.

“The Alien and Sedition Acts were passed by Congress in 1798 in preparation for an anticipated war with France. Interpreting the participation of immigrants in the Republican opposition party as evidence of a relationship between foreigners and disloyalty, Federalists championed tighter restrictions for foreigners and critics of their policies.

The Naturalization Act of 1798 increased the residency requirement for American citizenship from five to fourteen years, required aliens [foreigners] to declare their intent to acquire citizenship five years before it could be granted, and made persons from ‘enemy’ nations ineligible for naturalization. The act consequently deprived Republicans of an important source of political support. Aliens were specifically affected by two other acts, which authorized their deportation if they were deemed ‘dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States’ and their wholesale incarceration or expulsion by presidential executive order during wartime.

Under the Sedition Act, even the rights of American citizens were curtailed by prohibiting assembly ‘with intent to oppose any measure ... of the government’ and made it illegal for any person to ‘print, utter, or publish ... any false, scandalous, and malicious writing’ against the government. Armed with these statutes, Federalists attempted to suppress Republican opposition. The Acts provoked the first examination of the constitutional limits on free speech, the press, and the rights of an organized political opposition. When Thomas Jefferson became president, enforcement of the Alien and Sedition Acts ended. The sedition and incarceration provisions of the acts, however, were resurrected during later wars.”

~ *The Reader’s Companion to American History*

Directions: **BOLD the correct answer to each question.**

1. The Alien and Sedition Acts were aimed primarily at
  - A. Illegal aliens
  - B. British radicals
  - C. Political opposition
  - D. French radicals
2. The Sedition Act
  - A. Threatened First Amendment freedoms.
  - B. Established criteria for deporting dangerous foreigners.
  - C. Changed naturalization requirements for new citizens.
  - D. Was never enforced.
  - E. Was found by the Supreme Court to be unconstitutional.
3. The main purpose of the Alien and Sedition Acts was to
  - A. Capture French and British spies.
  - B. Control the Federalists.

- C. Silence and punish critics of the Federalists.
  - D. Keep Thomas Jefferson from becoming president.
  - E. Provide support for the Democratic-Republican party.
4. How would the Alien Acts apply today?
- A. The Acts would allow unlimited immigration
  - B. The Acts would end all immigration
  - C. The Acts would deport immigrants suspected of anti-government views
  - D. The Acts would create harsher penalties for illegal immigrants