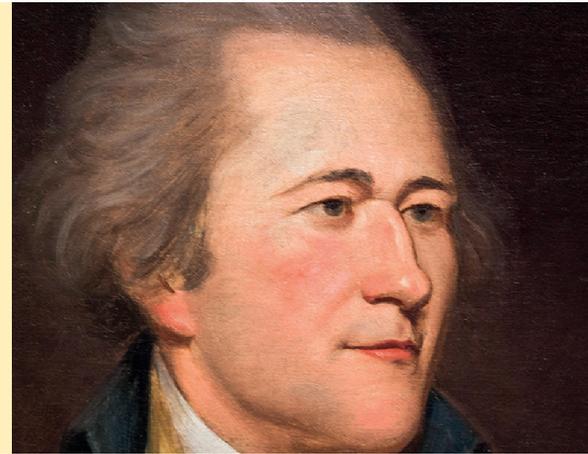


Hamilton and Madison Disagree

Alexander Hamilton and James Madison were both federalists, but they had differing views about government “by the people.” Read the excerpts from the writings of each man.

► Alexander Hamilton believed that the people were the power behind government.



1) Alexander Hamilton expressed his faith in the people when he wrote the following:

“The fabric of American empire ❶ ought to rest on the solid basis of THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE. The streams of national power ought to flow from that pure, original fountain of all legitimate authority.” ❷

—Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist No. 22*

2) Madison expressed his fear of majority tyranny in an October 17, 1788, letter to Thomas Jefferson:

“Wherever the real power in a Government lies, there is the danger of oppression. In our Governments, the real power lies in the majority of the Community, and the invasion of private rights is chiefly to be apprehended, not from acts of Government contrary to the sense of its constituents, but from acts in which the Government is the mere instrument of the major number of the constituents. ❸ This is a truth of great importance, but not yet sufficiently attended to. ... Whenever there is an interest and power to do wrong, wrong will generally be done, and not less readily by [a majority of the people] than by a ... prince.”

—James Madison, Letter to Thomas Jefferson (1788), *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison*, Volume 3

Analyzing Primary Sources

Cite specific evidence from the documents to support your answers.

1. What common ground did Hamilton and Madison share in their points of view?
2. Do you think Madison had faith in people? Why or why not?

Reading and Vocabulary Support

- ❶ Hamilton did not literally mean an empire.
- ❷ The consent of the governed was one of the ideas the founders took from the work of John Locke.
- ❸ What do you think Madison means by this statement?