8.37 Explain the controversies that plagued the administration of John Adams, including the conflicts with England and France and the Alien and Sedition Acts. (H,P)
From Mr. Nussbaum’s site, read and watch about the Presidency of John Adams.

http://mrnussbaum.com/presidents/john-adams/

Brain Pop is provided for TCS students and teachers by Tullahoma City Schools.

https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/famoushistoricalfigures/johnadams/

The Adams Presidency

(Pictured Above: John Marshall, delegate to France during the XYZ Affair in 1797, became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1801.)

Would the meddlesome Alexander Hamilton undermine his own Federalist party and the administration of newly elected John Adams?

The Adams administration faced several severe tests. It was a mixed administration. Adams was a Federalist. Jefferson, the vice-president, was a Democratic-Republican. Federalists were increasingly divided between conservatives such as Hamilton and moderates such as Adams who still saw himself as above party politics. Hamilton opposed Adams as the Federalist candidate. This helped create the circumstances whereby Jefferson slipped past the Federalist candidate, Thomas Pickney, to become vice president. Although Hamilton resigned from the cabinet in 1795, he remained influential and his advice was sought and followed by many Federalists — even some who remained in Adams’ cabinet.

Beyond these considerable problems in his own party, Adams also faced a major international crisis. The French were outraged by what they viewed as an Anglo-American Alliance in Jay’s Treaty. France suspended diplomatic relations with the U.S. at the end of 1796 and seized more than 300 American ships over the next two years.
Abigail Adams was one of John Adams’ most trusted counsels. During the years prior to American independence, the two kept up a consistent letter-writing where Abigail spoke of equality for all women as well as men.

Adams responded by sending a diplomatic mission to France. When it arrived in Paris, three agents of the French foreign minister explained that to enter into negotiations America would have to loan the French government money and pay a bribe to the agents themselves. This became known in the United States as the "XYZ AFFAIR." The French rebuff was seen as a blow to American honor and became a major rallying issue for Federalists, who were generally anti-French.

Link to additional information — http://www.apstudynotes.org/us-history/topics/john-adams/

In this 1798 caricature of fledgling America’s relations with France, French directors try to trick America (represented by the woman) into giving them all her money. European sympathizers, bemoaning France’s plundering of their own riches, look on.
John Adams Presidency

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCYbhHxI_H4

American popular support for France weakened dramatically as the Federalists effectively used the slogan "MILLIONS FOR DEFENSE, BUT NOT ONE CENT FOR TRIBUTE" to strengthen their political position. Federalists who controlled the Congress as well as the presidency raised new taxes, dramatically enlarged the army and navy, and generally increased the power of the central government in preparation for a war against France that seemed inevitable.

The Adams administration entered a "quasi-war" with France from 1798 to 1800. Although no official declaration of war had been made, the United States clearly acted as an unofficial ally of Great Britain. Only 15 years since the end of the Revolutionary War, a dramatic transition in American international alliances had occurred.

While royal France had supported colonial America in its revolutionary fight against the British, republican America now joined with Britain, its former Revolutionary enemy, to challenge the French. In spite of this dramatic change, Adams' anti-French policies were extremely popular and significantly enhanced his public standing.

The Alien and Sedition Acts

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The Alien and Sedition Acts
http://www.history.com/topics/alien-and-sedition-acts

(Pictured Above: L.F. Tantillo’s Return of the Experiment records the arrival of the Experiment in Albany, New York, after its trip to China. It was only the second American ship to journey to Asia.)


The strong steps that Adams took in response to the French foreign threat also included severe repression of domestic protest. A series of laws known collectively as the ALIEN AND SEDITION ACTS were passed by the Federalist Congress in 1798 and signed into law by President Adams. These laws included new powers to deport foreigners as well as making it harder for new immigrants to vote. Previously a new immigrant would have to reside in the United States for five years before becoming eligible to vote, but a new law raised this to 14 years.

(Pictured Above: Charles Willson Peale was one of the great artists of early America. Here, John Adams is captured by Peale’s paintbrush.)

Clearly, the Federalists saw foreigners as a deep threat to American security. As one Federalist in Congress declared, there was no need to "invite hordes of Wild Irishmen, nor the turbulent and disorderly of all the world, to come here..."
with a basic view to distract our tranquillity.” Not coincidentally, non-English ethnic groups had been among the core supporters of the Democratic-Republicans in 1796.

The most controversial of the new laws permitting strong government control over individual actions was the SEDITION ACT. In essence, this Act prohibited public opposition to the government. Fines and imprisonment could be used against those who "write, print, utter, or publish . . . any false, scandalous and malicious writing" against the government.

Under the terms of this law over 20 Republican newspaper editors were arrested and some were imprisoned. The most dramatic victim of the law was representative Matthew Lyon of Vermont. His letter that criticized President Adams’ "unbounded thirst for ridiculous pomp, foolish adulation, and self avarice" caused him to be imprisoned. While Federalists sent Lyon to prison for his opinions, his constituents re-elected him to Congress even from his jail cell.

The Sedition Act clearly violated individual protections under the first amendment of the Constitution; however, the practice of "JUDICIAL REVIEW," whereby the Supreme Court considers the constitutionality of laws was not yet well developed. Furthermore, the justices were all strong Federalists. As a result, Madison and Jefferson directed their opposition to the new laws to state legislatures. The Virginia and Kentucky legislatures passed resolutions declaring the federal laws invalid within their states. The bold challenge to the federal government offered by this strong states’ rights position seemed to point toward imminent armed conflict within the United States.

Enormous changes had occurred in the explosive decade of the 1790s. Federalists in government now viewed the persistence of their party as the equivalent of the survival of the republic. This led them to enact and enforce harsh laws. Madison, who had been the chief architect of a strong central government in the Constitution, now was wary of national authority. He actually helped the Kentucky legislature to reject federal law. By placing states rights above those of the federal government, Kentucky and Virginia had established a precedent that would be used to justify the secession of southern states in the Civil War.
4c. Federalists and Anti-Federalists
4d. U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights
4e. Political Events of the New Republic

Primary Documents and Supporting Tests to Read:

- excerpts from The Articles of Confederation
- the U.S. Constitution
- The Federalists Paper #10 and #51
- The Bill of Rights
- Washington’s Farewell Address
- excerpts from The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions
- Thomas Jefferson
- James Madison
- Patrick Henry’s arguments against ratification