**Alien and Sedition Acts**

**Characters:**

Narrator

 Group of Federalists

**Script:**

\*\* Note: There are 8 Federalist lines in this act. Simply assign them randomly, but make sure that each Federalist has a line.

**Narrator:** Back home, the High Federalists were creating another crisis. They introduced a series of acts in Congress, supposedly to prepare the nation for war. When passed by Congress, these laws were the most repressive ever adopted in the United States.

**Federalist 1**: It seems in this time of preparing ourselves for war (wink, wink), we should introduce some laws in Congress which would protect this great nation.

**Federalist 2**: I wholeheartedly agree! By chance, I have been thinking that we should increase the number of years you must live here to be a citizen. Not only could we protect ourselves from traitors, but most of those scoundrels vote Republican anyway!

**Federalist 3 :**Agrand idea! While we are at it, Presidents should surely be able to deport or imprison foreigners during war time.

**Federalist 4**: A sensible idea! Let's propose those measures right away! Weql call it the Alien Act!

**Federalist 5 :** Wait! Wait! I have an even better idea that will serve the interests of the Federalists. We should imprison or fine anyone who speaks against the government or criticizes U.S. officials! That way - we can curb Republican criticism!

**Federalist 6 :**Wait - doesn't that kind of violate our right to free speech guaranteed in the Constitution?

**Federalist 7 :** Don't be a ninny! This is a perfectly good idea! We can even make the law expire on the day of the next presidential inauguration. Then, if we lose the election, we will be free to criticize our Republican government. If we win, we can reenact the law. We can call it the Sedition Act.

**Federalist 8 :** Excellent. Let's draw these plans up and get them to Congress. Long live the Federalists!

**All:** Long live the Federalists!!

**Narrator:** While the Sedition Act was in effect, the government indicted fifteen Republican newspaper editors, convicting ten.

**The End.** ( all actors come out and take a bow)

**The Election of 1800**

**Characters:**

Narrator

Alexander Hamilton

Thomas Jefferson

Aaron Burr

Chairman of the Electoral College

**Narrator:** Vice President Thomas Jefferson and President John Adams ran against each other for President in the election of 1800. Adams was the incumbent, but had faced criticism from his own party and the Democratic Republicans.   Aaron Burr was Jefferson’s running mate and Thomas Pinckney was Adams’.  After the election, the electoral college gathered to cast their ballots and elect a President.  In those days, each elector had two votes they could cast.

**Electoral College Chair:**  Order, order!  Could the body please come to order!  The electoral ballots have been cast and counted.  I will read the results.  (He pauses, opens the note from which he reads) I am afraid we have rendered a tied vote. . .

**Jefferson:**  a tie vote?  Adams and I tied?

**Chair:** Actually, it is a tie between Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Burr.

**Burr:**  a tie between us?! How can it be?

**Chair:**  Well, I suppose each of your electors cast one vote for each of you.  They each have two votes.  That would make the votes you received even in number.

**Hamilton:**  (superciliously) Had you been wise, you would have told a few of your electors to cast one blank ballot instead of voting for Burr.  Then Jefferson would have come in first, and Burr second.  What a pity for you both.

**Burr:**  I’m sure you are just smarting from your own party’s crushing defeat. Do try and be a more gracious loser.

**Hamilton:**  Speaking of losers, aren’t you in line to be the next Vice President.  The big #2?  Or are you reconsidering that decision?

**Jefferson:**  Gentlemen!  Please!  This will be an easy problem to solve.  The vote will go to the House of Representatives.

**Burr:** Wait, in the House they will choose between the two of us, right?

**Hamilton:** That’s right.  Now it’s a race between the two of you for President.

**Jefferson:**   In no time, they'll be calling you Mr. Vice President, eh Burr?  Well,  I must go thank my supporters.

**Hamilton:**    and I must go console dear Mr. Adams . . . (The two men exit)

(Burr stands alone, thinking.  He nods to himself and craftily smiles.  )

**Burr:**  Perhaps I should go consult my closest advisors.  Why settle for being second best?    Only a fool would pass up this opportunity! Perhaps I am destined to be president after all.  It has a nice ring to it - "President Burr".   (he laughs heartily and exits)

**Narrator:**  To Jefferson's shock and amazement, Burr did in fact begin campaigning to be elected as President, not Vice President.  The House of Representatives cast 35 ballots before Alexander Hamilton convinced two people to cast blank ballots, making Jefferson victorious.  Hamilton, quite simply, chose between the lesser of the two evils.  While he disliked Jefferson's political views, he hated Burr more.  Jefferson became the first Republican president.  Aaron Burr grudgingly became Vice President. Years later, Burr would shoot Hamilton in a duel.

**The Judiciary Act of 1801**

**Characters:**

Narrator

John Adams

2 Federalist Assistants

( John Adams is seated at desk working)

**Narrator:** The last major accomplishment of the Adams administration was the hurried passage of the Judiciary Act of 1801. By appointing all the judges it required, he could ensure that the Federalists would maintain control of the courts while the Republicans were in office.

(Both assistants run in breathless)

**Assistant 1:** Good news! Good news! We finally got that Judiciary act pushed through Congress!

**Adams:** Excellent. What does it provide?

**Assistant 2**: A new system of 16 circuit courts, and a reduction in the number of the Supreme Court Justices from 6 to 5.

**Assistant 1:** You know, with some quick work, we could get these appointments done by midnight.

**Assistant 2:** So?

**Assistant 1:** So, dummy, we could pack the courts with Federalist judges. Wouldn't that burn old Thomas Jefferson.

**Adams:** Very true, and sneaky, but ifs already past dinner time. We will never have enough time to write and sign the commissions. Perhaps this court packing plan just isn't meant to be.

**Assistant 1:** Nonsense! Get out the pens, (begins scrambling around to find these things) get out the paper, we can beat the clock. President Adams, get your writing hand warmed up ... ifs gonna be a long night.

**Narrator:** 5 hours later ....

(Adams can barely lift his ann to write, assistant are sprawled over their desks)

**Adams:** finally.., the .. last., one...

**Assistant 2:** What say we leave the last of these for the new administration to deliver?

**Adams:** fine, fine... Long live the Federalists...

**Assistants:** (weakly) Long live the Federalists...

**The End.** (all actors take a bow)

**The Kentucky and Virginia Resolves**

**Characters:**

Narrator

James Madison

Thomas Jefferson

**Narrator:** To the Republicans, the Alien and Sedition Acts seemed to be a clear abuse of governmental power. Since Federalists controlled the federal courts, Republicans turned to state governments in an attempt to end the persecution stemming from the acts.

In 1798, the KY and VA legislatures decided they would nullify, or declare invalid, any law the federal government passed. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison helped shape this legislation by actually writing the resolutions.

(Thomas and James enter)

**Thomas:**I say, James, those Alien and Sedition acts are a preposterous breech on our freedom. James: Yes, yes, I agree. But what can be done?

**Thomas:** As I've said before - it seems we've created a monster by allowing such a strong federal government.

**James:** Why Tom - do you realize what you have stumbled upon? The states created the nation.

**Thomas:**Yes. And so?

**James:**Having created the federal government, surely it is within reason that we could nullify those laws we don't agree with.

**Thomas:**You mean overrule bad laws made on the federal level?

**James: Yes!**

**Thomas:**James, that's brilliant, l will draw up some resolutions about that theory as soon as possible. I know Kentucky is debating what to do about these unfair laws.

**James:**So is Virginia. I'll see what I can do there. (they exit)

**Narrator:** And so, Thomas and James led Kentucky and Virginia in approving resolutions which allowed them to nullify federal laws. Unfortunately, they had little effect because no other states followed, and the Alien and Sedition Acts eventually expired. Still, nullification of federal laws would be a continuing debate in our nation.

**The End.** ( all actors come out and take a bow)

**The XYZ Affair**

**Characters:**

**N**arrator

"Pierre"

"Gaston"

"Frances"

John Marshall

Elderidge Gerry

Charles Pinckney

**Narrator:**The French government did not like the Jay Treaty because they felt we favored Great Britain. In return, they began seizing our merchant ships sailing to England. President Adams decided to send a mission of three men to France to bring an end to this activity.

(The Americans enter, and begin to greet the Frenchmen) **All**: Good day, nice to meet you, my name is it is an honor

**Marshall:**It is probably not a surprise to you that our delegation is here. As you know, our President is quite in a twitter about the way your country has been viciously attacking American ships on the high seas.

**Pierre:**I assure you that this news of the alleged attacks is just as much a surprise to us, as was news of your country's recent treaty with Britain.

**Charles Pinckney:**Well, we look forward to meeting foreign minister Talleyrand so we can work towards a solution which is acceptable to us all. The United States hopes to establish good relations with all the civilized countries of the world.

**Gaston:** There is one request we would like to make before taking you to meet out honorable foreign minister.

**Gerry:**I'm sure we will be happy to fulfill it, what would it be?

**Frances:**We would like to request a one time payment for the honor of meeting with our esteemed officials. They are very busy men as you know.

**Marshall:** A payment? Did you say a payment?

**Pinckney:** How absurd? A payment of what amount?

**Pierre:**A mere $250,000.

**Marshall:**$250,000! Surely this is a jest! Why would we pay an outrageous sum such as that to merely speak to Talleyrand?

**Gaston:**I'm sure you do not want to appear ungrateful - why your country would not even exist without the loyalty of the French. Have you forgotten our past kindness?

**Frances:**I suppose so, considering Washington's Proclamation of Neutrality.

**Pierre:**Our foreign minister is very occupied, dealing with the concerns of the nation and our allies. Neutral nations must recognize our generosity in making time for diplomatic negotiation to addresses your country's concerns. We do insist upon payment.

**Gerry:** If you are under any impression that we shall be disrespected in this way, you are gravely mistaken! Might I remind you that the Federalists in America are already eager to go to war with France over this shipping issue.

**Marshall:** This diplomatic insult may be just the incentive they need to act on their inclinations !

**Gaston:** You may threaten us all you like, we do not fear threats of upstart nations. Our request still stands. If you want to see Tallyrand, you will have to meet our demands.

**Pinckney:** We will not waste our time further. Inform your foreign minister that we have declined his attempt at bribery, and we will return to our country and spread news of this indignity to our good people.

**Pierre:** He will be most disconcerted, I am sure.

(The three American men exit quickly and haughtily. The French laugh heartily at their pouting)

**Narrator:** When the American delegation returned with the news of the bribery scheme, they identified the three Frenchman as X,YandZ. The federalists were outraged and demanded war. Adams resisted their pressure and proposed that we strengthen our naval forces. He eventually sent another delegation to France, and the French finally promised the seas would be free for American ships. Meanwhile, Adams was criticized by his party for backing down from the French insult.