K-2 EDITION · CLASSROOM

1792

George Washington vs John Adams

A 20-minute lesson on the 1792 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA First Party System	ELECTORAL VOTES 264 total
WINNER George Washington (Independent) · 132 EV	RUNNER-UP John Adams (Federalist) · 77 EV
KEY ISSUE Maintaining national unity amid rising partisan divisions	TURNOUT 6.3%

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3. Three questions
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1792

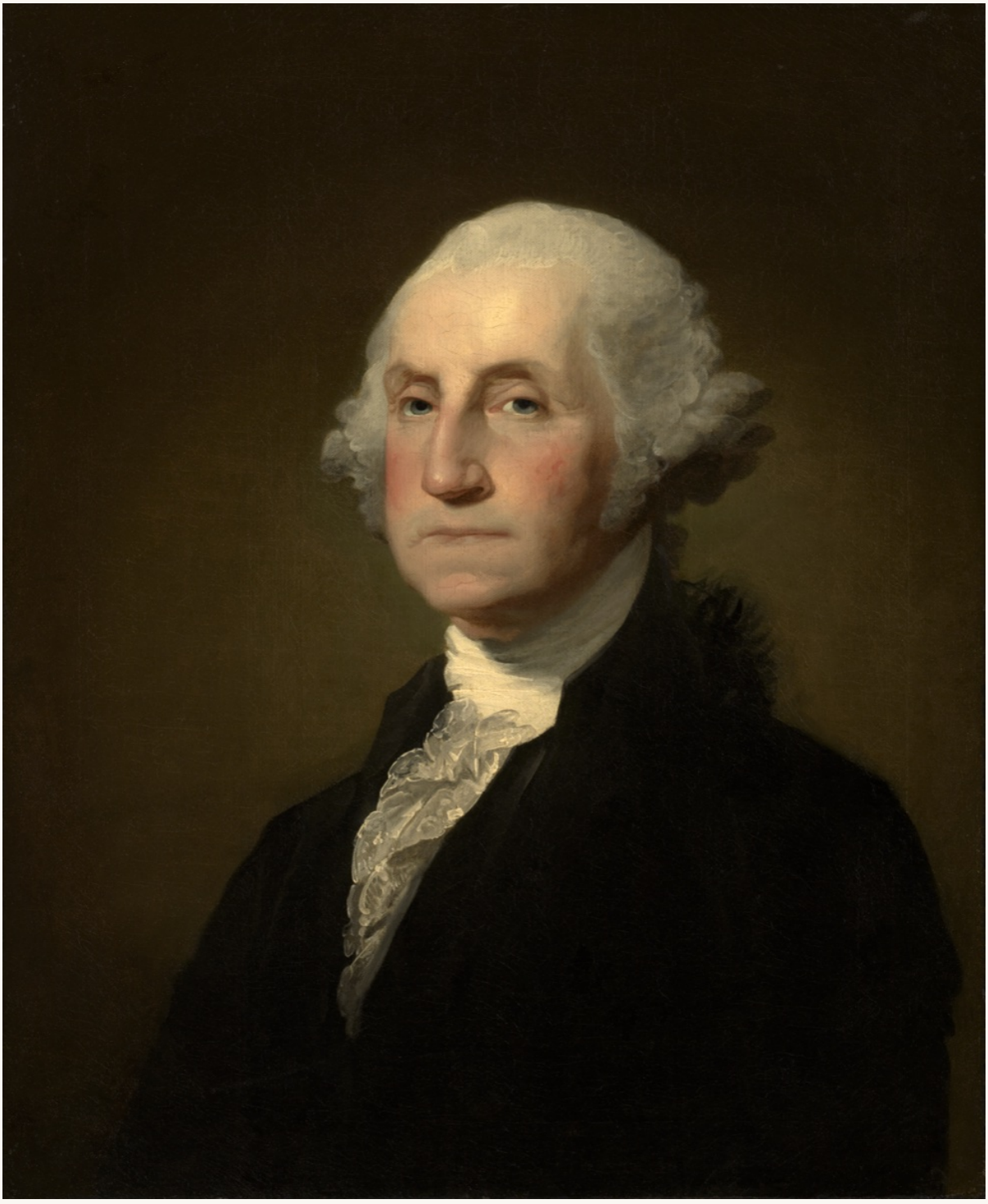
George Washington had already been president for four years. The country was new and Mr. Washington had worked very hard. He had even helped start the city we now call Washington, DC.

In 1792 it was time to choose a president again. Two new states had joined the country: Vermont and Kentucky. So there were now 15 states. Each state picked grown-ups called electors.

Every single elector picked George Washington again. That had also happened the first time, in 1789. People still trusted him to lead the new country.

Mr. Washington did not really want to be president for four more years. He wanted to go home to his farm in Virginia. But his friends told him the country still needed him. So he said yes one more time.

In the picture, you can see his serious face. After his second four years as president, he chose to go home. He could have stayed forever, but he did not. That decision taught everyone that in America a president is not a king.



George Washington was re-elected in 1792 with every single electoral vote, just like in 1789.
GILBERT STUART (1755-1828), VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Let's talk about the story

1.

Who won the 1792 presidential election?

2.

How many states voted in 1792? Use your fingers to count.

3.

Why is choosing to stop being president after eight years an important choice?

Warm-up (5 min)

Look at the man in the picture. His name is George Washington. He was the first president. In 1792 it was time to pick a president again. Should he keep his job?

Answer key

1.

George Washington won the 1792 election. Just like in 1789, every elector picked him.

Washington remains the only president ever elected unanimously - and he did it twice.

2.

15 states. The original 13 plus Vermont and Kentucky.

Vermont joined the Union in 1791; Kentucky in 1792, just before the election.

3.

It teaches the country that a president is not a king. The people decide who leads, and the leader goes home when the people's turn is over.

Washington's precedent of voluntarily leaving after two terms became an unwritten rule for 144 years and was codified by the Twenty-Second Amendment in 1951.