3-5 EDITION · CLASSROOM

1804

Thomas Jefferson vs Charles C. Pinckney

A 35-minute lesson on the 1804 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA First Party System	ELECTORAL VOTES 176 total
WINNER Thomas Jefferson (Democratic-Republican) · 162 EV	RUNNER-UP Charles C. Pinckney (Federalist) · 14 EV
KEY ISSUE Louisiana Purchase and westward expansion; declining Federalist influence	TURNOUT 23.8%

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1. Cover
2. Lesson plan (35 min)
3. Reading + key words
4. Worksheet (4 questions)
5. Answer key

1804: Thomas Jefferson vs Charles C. Pinckney

Timing

5 min	**Warm-up**	When a leader gets a chance to do something huge - like add lots of new land to a country - voters often feel proud and want to keep them in office. Why do you think that happens?
15 min	**Reading**	The 1804 election was the fourth U.S. presidential election. It was also the first one held under the new Twelfth Amendment, which had been added to the Constitution that summer. The new rule required electors to cast separate ballots for president and vice president, ending the two-ballot system that had caused the 1796 split-party administration and the 1800 Jefferson-Burr tie. The Democratic-Republican incumbent was Thomas Jefferson, 61 years old. Jefferson had been a popular president. During his first term, he had cut federal taxes, reduced the national debt, and made the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803 for $15 million. The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the United States. Jefferson had also sent Lewis and Clark on their famous expedition to explore the new territory and reach the Pacific Ocean. The Federalist nominee was Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina. Pinckney had been a delegate to the Constitutional Convention and a former U.S. ambassador to France. The Federalist Party was struggling. Alexander Hamilton had been killed in a duel by Vice President Aaron Burr on July 11, 1804 - just four months before the election. Hamilton had been the party's organizing genius. Without him, the Federalists had no clear strategy. The campaign was quiet by modern standards. Neither candidate gave speeches. The Democratic-Republicans had organized state-by-state electoral committees that mobilized voters. The Federalists ran a much weaker national operation. The issues that mattered were the Louisiana Purchase (popular except in pro-Federalist New England), Jefferson's tax cuts (popular almost everywhere), and the Burr-Hamilton duel (a national scandal that hurt Federalist morale). Jefferson chose Governor George Clinton of New York as his new running mate, replacing Burr. The result was a landslide. Jefferson won 162 electoral votes to Pinckney's 14 - a 92 percent share of the Electoral College. Jefferson carried every state except Connecticut, Delaware, and two of Maryland's 11 electors. The Federalist Party would never win another presidential election; their last credible candidate would lose decisively in 1816.

10 min	**Worksheet**	Four questions: one matches key words, three are short answers.
5 min	**Closure**	One sentence: what surprised you about this election?

The 1804 Election

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Key words

Louisiana Purchase	The 1803 deal in which the United States bought 828,000 square miles of land from France for $15 million. It doubled the size of the country and added all or part of 15 future states.
Twelfth Amendment	The 1804 constitutional change requiring electors to cast separate ballots for president and vice president. Replaced the original two-ballot rule that had caused the 1796 split-party administration and the 1800 Jefferson-Burr tie.
Burr-Hamilton duel	The July 11, 1804 duel in which Vice President Aaron Burr killed Alexander Hamilton, the Federalist Party's organizing genius. The scandal hurt Federalist morale just four months before the election.
Lewis and Clark Expedition	The 1804-1806 exploration team Jefferson sent to map the Louisiana Purchase and find a route to the Pacific Ocean. Their expedition is one of the most famous in American history.
Landslide	An election won by a huge margin. Jefferson's 162 to 14 victory in 1804 is one of the biggest landslides in U.S. presidential history.

Four questions

QUESTION 1 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many electoral votes did Thomas Jefferson win in 1804?

( ) A. 89
( ) B. 123
( ) C. 162
( ) D. 193

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

How did the Louisiana Purchase change the United States?

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

What was the Twelfth Amendment, and why was it added to the Constitution?

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Why was the Federalist Party so weak by the 1804 election?

Answer key

QUESTION 1

162. Jefferson won 162 electoral votes; Pinckney won 14 - one of the biggest landslides in U.S. history. Jefferson won 92 percent of the Electoral College.

Jefferson carried every state except Connecticut, Delaware, and two of Maryland's 11 electors.

QUESTION 2

The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the United States. France sold the U.S. 828,000 square miles of land for $15 million. The new territory eventually became all or part of 15 states. It also gave the U.S. control of the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans.

The Louisiana Purchase is one of the largest land deals in history. It transformed the United States from an Atlantic seaboard nation into a continental power.

QUESTION 3

The Twelfth Amendment was a new rule requiring electors to cast separate ballots for president and vice president. It was added because the original two-ballot rule had caused the 1796 split-party administration and the 1800 Jefferson-Burr tie. The amendment was ratified June 15, 1804.

The Twelfth Amendment is the first constitutional amendment written to address specific recent electoral failures. It is still the rule used today.

QUESTION 4

Alexander Hamilton, the Federalist Party's organizing genius, had been killed in a duel by Vice President Aaron Burr on July 11, 1804 - just four months before the election. Hamilton's death left the Federalists without their key strategist. The party also could not match Jefferson's popularity, the Louisiana Purchase, and the tax cuts. The Federalists would never win another presidential election.

The Federalist Party effectively collapsed as a national party after 1804. Their last credible national campaign was in 1816; after that they disappeared.