AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1812

James Madison vs DeWitt Clinton

A 105-minute lesson on the 1812 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, DBQ pairing, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA First Party System	ELECTORAL VOTES 217 total
WINNER James Madison (Democratic-Republican) · 128 EV	RUNNER-UP DeWitt Clinton (Federalist) · 89 EV
KEY ISSUE War of 1812 against Britain; trade and maritime rights	TURNOUT 40.4%

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1812: James Madison vs DeWitt Clinton

AP framework alignment

AP US History · Period varies by cycle · Reasoning skills: contextualization, comparison, causation, sourcing. CCSS · CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2 (central ideas), RH.11-12.6 (point of view), RH.11-12.7 (multiple sources). NCSS · D2.His.5.9-12, D2.His.14.9-12, D2.His.16.9-12.

Timing

5 min	**Warm-up**	Identify two structural features of the U.S. political system by 1812 that would constrain both candidates' campaign options during a wartime election. For each, identify the specific 1789-1812 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1812 election is the only U.S. presidential cycle held entirely during a major war until the 1864 Civil War cycle. It tested whether the constitutional order could accommodate organized partisan competition under conditions of active military conflict. The Democratic-Republican coalition's structural advantages survived the test, but the Federalist Party's response to wartime constraint - culminating in the 1814 Hartford Convention's secret consideration of secession - destroyed it as a national force. President James Madison had asked Congress for a war declaration on June 1, 1812. The war message catalogued five British actions justifying war: impressment of approximately 6,000 American sailors since 1803; British shipping interference under the 1807 Orders in Council; British support for Native American resistance on the western frontier, especially Tecumseh's confederation; British harassment of American ships off the U.S. coast; and a long pattern of insults to American sovereignty. Congress declared war June 18, 1812, by the most partisan war vote in U.S. history: 79-49 House (Democratic-Republican for, Federalist against, with the only cross-party defections being five Northern Democratic-Republicans who voted against), 19-13 Senate. The vote's strict partisan structure was itself a political signal: the war was a Democratic-Republican policy choice that the Federalist Party would not own. The War Hawks - a faction of young Democratic-Republican congressmen including Speaker Henry Clay of Kentucky (then 34), John C. Calhoun of South Carolina (then 30), Felix Grundy of Tennessee, and Peter B. Porter of New York - had pushed Madison toward war during the 1811-12 Twelfth Congress. Their motivations combined frontier security concerns (especially after the November 1811 Battle of Tippecanoe between William Henry Harrison and Tecumseh's brother Tenskwatawa), commercial frustrations with British shipping interference, and territorial ambitions toward Canada and Spanish Florida. The War Hawks' political success in pushing the cautious Madison toward war is one of the most-cited examples of congressional

war-making power overriding executive reluctance.

The war began catastrophically. Three U.S. invasions of Canada in 1812 - at Detroit (August, General William Hull), Niagara (October, General Stephen Van Rensselaer), and Lake Champlain (November, General Henry Dearborn) - all failed. Hull surrendered Detroit without firing a shot. The U.S. Navy won several single-ship duels but the Royal Navy imposed an effective blockade. By the November 1812 election, the U.S. had captured nothing of strategic importance, lost the Northwest Territory back to British and Native American forces, and suffered devastating economic damage in coastal New England.

The Federalist Party did not formally hold a national nominating convention. Instead, the Federalist Council (a quiet September 1812 New York City conference of party leaders) agreed to support DeWitt Clinton, the Democratic-Republican mayor of New York City and nephew of the late Vice President George Clinton. DeWitt Clinton had broken with Madison over the war. The fusion strategy was structurally innovative: it allowed Federalists to back a candidate who could attract anti-war Democratic-Republican voters no formal Federalist nomination could reach. The strategy nearly worked - Clinton came within 39 electoral votes of victory - but the South and West's wartime mobilization for Madison made it ultimately unsuccessful.

The electoral count was 128 Madison to 89 Clinton. Clinton carried Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and 5 of Maryland's 11 electors. Madison carried Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Louisiana (newly admitted), and 6 of Maryland's electors. The geographic pattern tracked the Royal Navy blockade's economic damage with extraordinary precision: every Clinton state was a commercial-shipping state whose economy depended on Atlantic trade. The 1812 map is one of the most precise examples of economic-damage politics in U.S. history.

Madison's second term saw the war's difficult middle phase: the August 1814 British burning of Washington (which forced the federal government to flee and destroyed the Capitol, the White House, and the Library of Congress); the September 1814 defense of Baltimore at Fort McHenry that inspired Francis Scott Key's "Star-Spangled Banner"; Andrew Jackson's September 1814 victories over the Creek Confederation in Alabama; the December 24, 1814 Treaty of Ghent ending the war; and Jackson's January 8, 1815 lopsided victory over British forces at New Orleans (fought after the treaty was signed but before news crossed the Atlantic).

The Hartford Convention (December 15, 1814 - January 5, 1815) was the Federalist Party's self-destruction. New England Federalists met in secret at Hartford, Connecticut, and considered secession over the War of 1812. They settled on demands for constitutional amendments restricting federal war powers: two-thirds congressional majorities for declarations of war; two-thirds majorities for new states' admission; abolition of the three-fifths clause counting Southern slaves toward

		congressional representation; a single-term presidency; and a prohibition against successive presidents from the same state (aimed directly at the Virginia Dynasty). The convention's commissioners traveled to Washington in February 1815 to present the demands. Their arrival coincided exactly with celebrations of the Treaty of Ghent and Jackson's New Orleans victory. The Federalist Party was politically destroyed as a national force; it would never win another presidential election. The 1812 election's structural legacies were three: it demonstrated that the constitutional order could survive a wartime election; it consolidated the Democratic-Republican coalition's political dominance through the 1820s; and it destroyed the Federalist Party as a national alternative, opening the one-party Era of Good Feelings that would last until the 1824 four-way election broke it apart.
20 min	**Source A**	Read aloud once; students annotate individually for tone, evidence, and audience.
20 min	**Source B**	Compare/contrast against Source A. Pair-share on the DBQ comparison question.
20 min	**Worksheet**	Eight questions: 5 short-answer, 2 stimulus-based MCQ, 1 long-essay framing.
20 min	**LEQ planning**	Students sketch a thesis + outline for the LEQ comparison prompt. Submit for next-day full essay.
5 min	**Closure**	Exit ticket: one sentence summarizing the comparison.

Background

Before the worksheet, review the key terms below and then read the primary source carefully. The two source-analysis questions on the worksheet (questions 6 and 7) ask you to quote from the excerpt.

Key terms

War of 1812
The 1812-1815 war between the United States and Britain. Causes: impressment, shipping interference, Native American resistance support, territorial ambitions toward Canada. Ended with the December 24, 1814 Treaty of Ghent and Andrew Jackson's January 8, 1815 victory at New Orleans.

Battle of Tippecanoe
The November 7, 1811 battle in Indiana Territory between William Henry Harrison's federal forces and Tecumseh's brother Tenskwatawa (the Prophet). Provided Madison's casus belli for naming British-supported Native American resistance as a war justification.

Hartford Convention
The December 15, 1814 - January 5, 1815 secret New England Federalist meeting in Hartford, Connecticut. Considered secession over the War of 1812; demanded constitutional amendments restricting federal war powers and limiting the Virginia Dynasty. Destroyed the Federalist Party.

Treaty of Ghent
The December 24, 1814 treaty ending the War of 1812. Negotiated by John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Albert Gallatin, James Bayard, and Jonathan Russell. Restored prewar boundaries; did not address impressment or shipping rights (both moot after Napoleon's 1815 defeat).

Era of Good Feelings
The 1817-1825 period of one-party Democratic-Republican government following the Federalist collapse. James Monroe was re-elected in 1820 with 231 EV to a single defector's 1 EV. The Era ended with the 1824 four-way election.

War Hawks
The 1811-12 faction of young Democratic-Republican congressmen (Clay, Calhoun, Grundy, Porter) who pushed Madison toward war with Britain. The Twelfth Congress was their political base. Their leadership made the war declaration politically possible despite Madison's caution.

Royal Navy blockade
British warships preventing American ships from foreign trade during the War of 1812. Crippled American shipping; exports fell from $61M (1811) to $7M (1814). Damage concentrated in New England commercial states.

Three-fifths clause
Article I, Section 2, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution, counting enslaved persons as three-fifths of a person for purposes of congressional representation and direct taxation. The Hartford Convention demanded its abolition because it gave Southern states (especially Virginia) disproportionate congressional power.

Battle of New Orleans
Andrew Jackson's January 8, 1815 victory over British forces near New Orleans. Fought after the Treaty of Ghent had technically ended the war. American casualties: 71. British casualties: 2,037. The lopsided victory made Jackson a national hero and reshaped the war's political legacy.

Second Inaugural Address

JAMES MADISON, MARCH 4, 1813

Madison took the oath in the chamber of the House of Representatives in Washington, DC. The Second Inaugural was delivered in the middle of the War of 1812, after the disastrous 1812 campaigns. The address defended the war as just and necessary while acknowledging the difficulties of the first year. Madison framed the war as a vindication of American sovereignty against British insults dating back two decades. The "unrequited friendship and forbearance" framing was the central rhetorical move.

> *"In assuming the responsibilities devolved by the trust which I am about for the second time to assume, I find no resource so consoling as that which presents itself in the safe results of our public councils and the experience of our country, which, like that of all republics, has its periods of severe trial. The war in which we are engaged was forced upon us by every consideration of duty to ourselves and to our country, after a long course of unrequited friendship and forbearance under wrongs which would have justified hostilities long before they were resorted to. To these wrongs the present war must be a vindication."*

Madison, "Second Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1813). Public domain.

Document-based question

Source A is on the Background page; Source B is below. Use both as evidence for the worksheet's source-analysis questions and the LEQ.

SOURCE A

Second Inaugural Address

JAMES MADISON, MARCH 4, 1813

“In assuming the responsibilities devolved by the trust which I am about for the second time to assume, I find no resource so consoling as that which presents itself in the safe results of our public councils and the experience of our country, which, like that of all republics, has its periods of severe trial. The war in which we are engaged was forced upon us by every consideration of duty to ourselves and to our country, after a long course of unrequited friendship and forbearance under wrongs which would have justified hostilities long before they were resorted to. To these wrongs the present war must be a vindication.”

Madison, "Second Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1813). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Report of the Hartford Convention

NEW ENGLAND FEDERALIST COMMISSIONERS, JANUARY 5, 1815

“The events of the war have been such as could not be reasonably expected by those who had been confident that an immediate appeal to force would compel Great Britain to a respectful and accommodating regard to the rights and welfare of this country. The war has been waged with various but uniform disappointment; and it is now manifest that none of the principal objects of the war have been or can be obtained by military operations. The losses of the navy, the disasters of the army, the embarrassments of the treasury, the increase of public debt, and the depreciation of public credit, present a state of things which calls for the serious deliberation of those whose powers are alone competent to apply the necessary remedies.”

Report of the Hartford Convention (Hartford, CT, January 5, 1815). Public domain.

The 1812 Election

Answer the eight questions below. Source A is on the Background page; Source B is on the DBQ Pair page.

QUESTION 1 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source A (Madison's Second Inaugural) that frames the War of 1812 as defensive vindication. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Hartford Convention Report) that names the war as a catastrophic failure. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources address the War of 1812, but they make incompatible claims about it. Identify the specific claim each source makes.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source A was delivered in March 1813; Source B was published in January 1815. What does the 22-month gap tell you about how the political situation around the war evolved?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source B says "none of the principal objects of the war have been or can be obtained by military operations." Identify two specific 1812-1815 military events that bear on this claim, one supporting and one undermining it.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

The faction of young Democratic-Republican congressmen who pushed Madison toward war in 1811-12 were called:

( ) A. Quids
( ) B. War Hawks
( ) C. Old Republicans
( ) D. Federalists

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

The treaty that ended the War of 1812 was the:

( ) A. Treaty of Paris
( ) B. Treaty of Ghent
( ) C. Treaty of Bordeaux
( ) D. Treaty of Brussels

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the Federalist collapse structural, contingent, or ideological? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Madison's 1813 Second Inaugural (Source A) frames the War of 1812 as a just vindication of American sovereignty against long-suffered British wrongs. The Hartford Convention Report (Source B) frames the same war as a catastrophic failure that demonstrates the need for constitutional restraints on federal war powers. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1810-1816 period, evaluate the extent to which the political destruction of the Federalist Party was caused by (a) the structural Democratic-Republican coalition advantages that had been building since 1800, (b) the specific 1814 Hartford Convention's timing relative to the Treaty of Ghent and the New Orleans victory, or (c) the Federalist Party's ideological inability to articulate a sovereign-equality theory of federal authority that could compete with the Democratic-Republican wartime mobilization. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the structural-vs-contingent-vs-ideological axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the War Hawks, the Royal Navy blockade, the burning of Washington, the Treaty of Ghent, the Battle of New Orleans. Evidence (2 pts): must quote at least one phrase from each source. Analysis (1 pt): must explicitly evaluate the extent rather than treating the three framings as equivalent. Total 5 points.

Answer key

QUESTION 1

Accept any of: "the war in which we are engaged was forced upon us by every consideration of duty", "a long course of unrequited friendship and forbearance under wrongs which would have justified hostilities long before they were resorted to", "to these wrongs the present war must be a vindication". The "long course of unrequited friendship" phrase is the cleanest.

Madison's framing positions the U.S. as a long-suffering victim and Britain as the aggressor. The strategic political function (defending an unpopular war by framing it as forced) is central.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "the war has been waged with various but uniform disappointment", "none of the principal objects of the war have been or can be obtained by military operations", "the losses of the navy, the disasters of the army, the embarrassments of the treasury, the increase of public debt, and the depreciation of public credit". The "uniform disappointment" phrase is the most direct catastrophic-failure framing.

The Hartford Convention's framing of the war as catastrophic failure was politically calibrated for an audience that already opposed the war. The framing's timing was its fatal flaw.

QUESTION 3

Source A claims the war is a just vindication of American sovereignty that history will validate regardless of immediate military difficulties. Source B claims the war is a catastrophic failure that demonstrates the federal government's inability to manage international crisis. The two framings are politically incompatible: the first justifies continued prosecution of the war; the second demands constitutional restraints to prevent similar wars in the future. The framings imply opposite policy responses.

AP students should be able to identify the two framings as ideologically distinct rather than merely tactical.

QUESTION 4

The 22-month gap covers the entire active war: the 1813 Lake Erie and Thames victories; the 1814 burning of Washington; the September 1814 defense of Baltimore (inspiring the Star-Spangled Banner); Andrew Jackson's September 1814 Creek victories; and the December 24, 1814 Treaty of Ghent. Source A was delivered when the war was in its difficult middle phase but its outcome was uncertain. Source B was delivered when the war's outcome appeared definitively negative from the Federalist perspective. The temporal ordering tells you that the political character of the war was contested in real time, and that the Hartford Convention's framing was politically credible at the moment it was written. The framing became politically catastrophic only when news of Ghent and New Orleans arrived weeks later, validating Madison's vindication framing and discrediting the Hartford Convention's catastrophic-failure framing.

The timing analysis is structurally important. AP students should be able to identify that the Hartford Convention's problem was not its framing but its timing.

QUESTION 5

Supporting (war was failure): the August 1812 surrender of Detroit; the August 1814 burning of Washington and destruction of the Capitol, White House, and Library of Congress; the collapse of American shipping under the Royal Navy blockade; the failed 1812-1813 invasions of Canada. Undermining (war achieved aims): Perry's September 1813 Lake Erie victory; Harrison's October 1813 Thames victory and the death of Tecumseh; Macdonough's September 1814 Plattsburgh victory; Jackson's September 1814 victories over the Creek Confederation in Alabama; Jackson's January 1815 New Orleans victory; the December 1814 Treaty of Ghent (which restored prewar boundaries and avoided territorial loss). The Treaty of Ghent itself is the strongest single piece of evidence both ways: it ended the war without securing the original objectives (impressment, shipping rights) but also without losing any territory.

AP students should be able to engage the catastrophic-failure claim analytically rather than accept or reject it wholesale.

QUESTION 6

War Hawks.

The War Hawks were a 1811-12 faction of young Democratic-Republican congressmen (Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Felix Grundy, Peter B. Porter) who pushed Madison toward war with Britain. Speaker Clay led the faction in the House.

QUESTION 7

Treaty of Ghent.

The Treaty of Ghent (December 24, 1814) ended the War of 1812. Negotiated in Ghent, Belgium by John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Albert Gallatin, James Bayard, and Jonathan Russell. Restored prewar boundaries.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the structural-vs-contingent-vs-ideological axis, (2) avoid treating them as equivalent, (3) signal at least one piece of evidence from each source. Award credit for any defensible thesis that meets these three conditions.

The thesis sketch is preparatory. The LEQ rubric evaluates the full essay.