K-2 EDITION · CLASSROOM

1812

James Madison vs DeWitt Clinton

A 20-minute lesson on the 1812 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, 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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2. Story (with a picture)
3. Three questions
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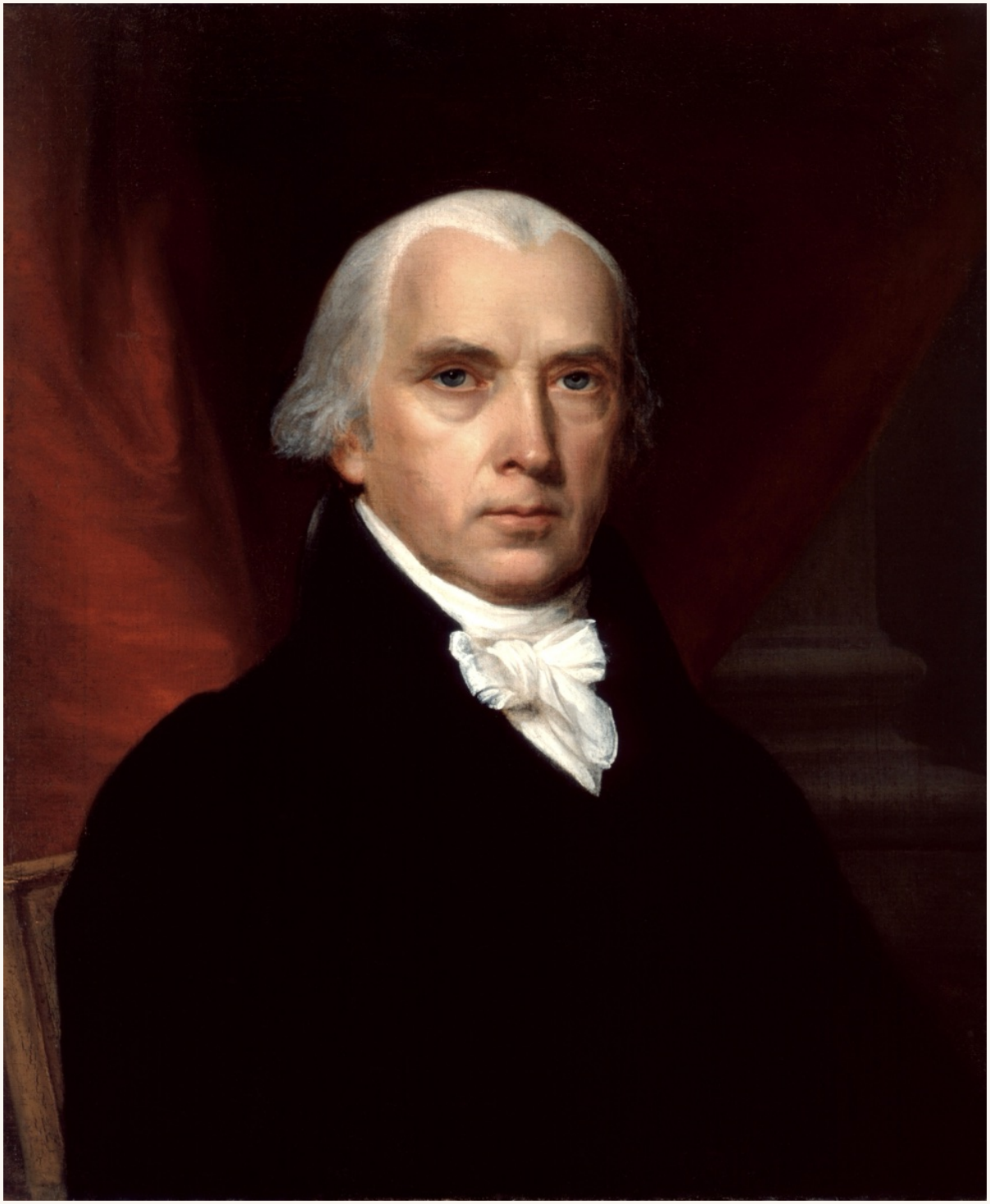
1812

By 1812 something big had happened. The United States was at war with Britain again. President Madison had asked Congress to declare war in June 1812. Congress said yes.

The war did not start well. American soldiers tried to invade Canada and failed. British ships blocked American ports. Many Americans were unhappy. The Federalist Party - which had not won an election in a long time - thought maybe people would vote them back into power.

Look at the picture. That's President Madison again. He was running for re-election even though the war was going badly. The Federalists picked DeWitt Clinton, who was the mayor of New York City. Clinton was actually a Democratic-Republican himself. But he was angry about the war, and the Federalists agreed to support him.

The election was much closer than four years earlier. People in New England - where ships could not sail because of the British blockade - voted against Madison. People in the South and West - where everyone wanted to defeat Britain - voted for Madison. In the end, Madison won 128 electoral votes to Clinton's 89.



James Madison, the fourth U.S. president, was re-elected in 1812 during the War of 1812. He led the country through the entire war.
JOHN VANDERLYN (1775-1852), VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Let's talk about the story

1.

Who won the 1812 presidential election?

2.

What war was being fought during the 1812 election?

3.

Why did people in New England vote differently from people in the South and West?

Warm-up (5 min)

In 1812 the United States went to war with Britain again. Look at the picture - that's President James Madison. The country had to vote for a new president right in the middle of a war.

Answer key

1.

James Madison won re-election. He was the fourth U.S. president and led the country through the entire War of 1812.

Madison won 128 electoral votes to DeWitt Clinton's 89. The closest re-election margin to that point in U.S. history.

2.

The War of 1812. The United States was fighting Britain. Congress had declared war just five months before Election Day, in June 1812.

The War of 1812 lasted from June 1812 to February 1815. Madison was president for the entire war.

3.

New England voters were hurt by the war because British warships blocked their ports and stopped their trade. They voted against Madison. People in the South and West wanted to defeat Britain and felt strongly about U.S. honor. They voted for Madison.

The sectional split is one of the clearest examples of how war affects different regions differently. New England Federalists' opposition to the war would lead to the December 1814 Hartford Convention.