3-5 EDITION · CLASSROOM

1816

James Monroe vs Rufus King

A 35-minute lesson on the 1816 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA First Party System	ELECTORAL VOTES 217 total
WINNER James Monroe (Democratic-Republican) · 183 EV	RUNNER-UP Rufus King (Federalist) · 34 EV
KEY ISSUE Post-war nationalism; decline of the Federalist Party	TURNOUT 23.5%

CONTENTS

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

1816: James Monroe vs Rufus King

Timing

5 min	Warm-up	When a war ends and a country wins, voters often feel proud and want to keep the leaders who won the war. How might this affect a presidential election?
15 min	Reading	The 1816 election was the seventh U.S. presidential election. The War of 1812 had ended in February 1815 with the Treaty of Ghent and Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans. The Federalist Party - which had opposed the war - had been politically devastated by its December 1814 Hartford Convention. The convention had secretly discussed New England secession just as news of the war's victorious end reached Washington. The party never recovered. James Madison was finishing his second term. The Democratic-Republican congressional caucus met in Washington on March 16, 1816, to choose the party's nominee. The leading candidates were Madison's Secretary of State James Monroe (the Madison-Jefferson preference) and Secretary of War William H. Crawford of Georgia. The caucus chose Monroe by 65 to 54 - a narrow margin reflecting Southern resentment of the Virginia Dynasty's continued grip on the presidency. Daniel D. Tompkins of New York was selected as Monroe's running mate. Monroe was 58 years old. His credentials were extraordinary. He had been a Revolutionary War officer - wounded crossing the Delaware River with Washington in December 1776. He had served three terms in the Continental Congress, two terms in the U.S. Senate, four terms as governor of Virginia, U.S. minister to France (negotiating the 1803 Louisiana Purchase), U.S. minister to Britain, Secretary of State (1811-17), and Secretary of War (briefly, 1814-15, during the British burning of Washington). He was the last of the founding generation to seek the presidency. The Federalist nominee was Rufus King of New York, 61. King had been a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, a Federalist senator from New York, and U.S. minister to Britain. He had been Federalist vice presidential candidate in 1804 and 1808. King's nomination was a formality - the Federalist Party had no national organization and no policy platform beyond the residue of opposition to the War of 1812. King privately doubted he could win and conducted essentially no campaign. The electoral count was 183 Monroe to 34 King. Monroe carried 16 states; King carried 3 (Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts). The Federalist popular vote share was below 25 percent. The 1816 result was the death of the Federalist Party as a national force. They would never field another presidential candidate. Monroe's presidency would be remembered for the Era of Good Feelings, the 1820

		Missouri Compromise, the 1820 Florida Purchase from Spain, the 1823 Monroe Doctrine warning European powers against further colonization of the Americas, and the consolidation of one-party Democratic-Republican government. The Era of Good Feelings was a misnomer - serious disputes over banking, tariffs, internal improvements, and slavery extension emerged throughout the 1817-1825 period - but the formal two-party competition that had defined American politics since 1796 was gone. It would not return until the 1828 Adams-Jackson contest produced the Second Party System.
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 1816 Election

The 1816 election was the seventh U.S. presidential election. The War of 1812 had ended in February 1815 with the Treaty of Ghent and Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans. The Federalist Party - which had opposed the war - had been politically devastated by its December 1814 Hartford Convention. The convention had secretly discussed New England secession just as news of the war's victorious end reached Washington. The party never recovered.

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Monroe was 58 years old. His credentials were extraordinary. He had been a Revolutionary War officer - wounded crossing the Delaware River with Washington in December 1776. He had served three terms in the Continental Congress, two terms in the U.S. Senate, four terms as governor of Virginia, U.S. minister to France (negotiating the 1803 Louisiana Purchase), U.S. minister to Britain, Secretary of State (1811-17), and Secretary of War (briefly, 1814-15, during the British burning of Washington). He was the last of the founding generation to seek the presidency.

The Federalist nominee was Rufus King of New York, 61. King had been a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, a Federalist senator from New York, and U.S. minister to Britain. He had been Federalist vice presidential candidate in 1804 and 1808. King's nomination was a formality - the Federalist Party had no national organization and no policy platform beyond the residue of opposition to the War of 1812. King

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The electoral count was 183 Monroe to 34 King. Monroe carried 16 states; King carried 3 (Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts). The Federalist popular vote share was below 25 percent. The 1816 result was the death of the Federalist Party as a national force. They would never field another presidential candidate.

Monroe's presidency would be remembered for the Era of Good Feelings, the 1820 Missouri Compromise, the 1820 Florida Purchase from Spain, the 1823 Monroe Doctrine warning European powers against further colonization of the Americas, and the consolidation of one-party Democratic-Republican government. The Era of Good Feelings was a misnomer - serious disputes over banking, tariffs, internal improvements, and slavery extension emerged throughout the 1817-1825 period - but the formal two-party competition that had defined American politics since 1796 was gone. It would not return until the 1828 Adams-Jackson contest produced the Second Party System.

Key words

Era of Good Feelings	The 1817-1825 period of one-party Democratic-Republican government following the Federalist collapse. James Monroe was president the entire time. The "good feelings" referred to the absence of formal two-party competition rather than to actual political agreement.
Hartford Convention	The December 1814 - January 1815 secret New England Federalist meeting in Hartford, Connecticut. Considered secession over the War of 1812. Destroyed the Federalist Party as a national force just before the war ended victoriously.
Congressional caucus	A meeting of a party's congressional members to choose the party's presidential nominee. The 1816 Democratic-Republican caucus nominated Monroe by 65-54 over William Crawford.
Monroe Doctrine	The December 1823 announcement (in Monroe's annual message to Congress) declaring the Americas closed to further European colonization. The first U.S. claim of regional hemispheric leadership.

Virginia Dynasty	The 1801-1825 succession of Virginia-born Democratic-Republican presidents: Jefferson, Madison, Monroe. The longest single-state presidential run in U.S. history.

Four questions

QUESTION 1 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many electoral votes did James Monroe win in 1816?

( ) A. 142
( ) B. 167
( ) C. 183
( ) D. 231

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Why was 1816 the last presidential election in which the Federalist Party ran a candidate?

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

What was James Monroe's background before becoming president? Identify three specific previous jobs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Why is the period 1817-1825 called the Era of Good Feelings? Is the name accurate?

Answer key

QUESTION 1

183. Monroe 183; King 34. Monroe carried 16 of 19 states; King carried 3 (Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts).

The 1816 result was the death of the Federalist Party as a national force. They would never field another presidential candidate.

QUESTION 2

The Federalist Party had opposed the War of 1812. The December 1814 Hartford Convention - where some Federalist leaders discussed New England secession - happened just as news of the Treaty of Ghent and Jackson's New Orleans victory reached Washington. The Federalists were seen as unpatriotic and disloyal. The party had no national organization, no policy platform, and no real chance of winning. 1816 was their last attempt; they never ran another presidential candidate.

The Federalist Party formally dissolved as a national organization between 1816 and 1820. Some Federalists ran in state and local races into the 1820s, but the national party was dead after 1816.

QUESTION 3

Accept any three of: (1) Revolutionary War officer (wounded crossing the Delaware with Washington in December 1776). (2) Three terms in the Continental Congress. (3) Two terms in the U.S. Senate. (4) Four terms as governor of Virginia. (5) U.S. minister to France (negotiated the 1803 Louisiana Purchase). (6) U.S. minister to Britain. (7) Secretary of State (1811-17). (8) Secretary of War (briefly, 1814-15, during the British burning of Washington).

Monroe was the last of the founding generation to seek the presidency. His resume was unmatched: military, legislative, gubernatorial, diplomatic, and cabinet experience.

QUESTION 4

It is called the Era of Good Feelings because there was only one big political party left in America - the Democratic-Republican Party. The Federalists had collapsed after 1816 and never ran another presidential candidate. The "good feelings" referred to the absence of formal two-party competition. The name is not fully accurate because serious disputes emerged during the period: the 1820 Missouri Compromise over slavery extension, debates over the Second Bank of the United States, debates over the tariff, and debates over federal funding of internal improvements. The political feelings were not always good - they were just within a single party rather than between two.

The Era of Good Feelings phrase was coined by a Boston newspaper in 1817. AP-level historiography emphasizes that the era was conflict-rich; the "good feelings" applied only to the absence of two-party competition.