1816

James Monroe vs Rufus King

A 75-minute lesson on the 1816 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, background reading with primary source, 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 + overview
2. Lesson plan (instructor, 75 min)
3. Background: key terms + primary source
4. Student worksheet (7 questions)
5. Answer key + discussion prompts

1816: James Monroe vs Rufus King

Standards alignment

NCSS · D2.His.4.9-12 (chronological reasoning) · D2.His.14.9-12 (causation in U.S. history). CCSS · CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 (key ideas/details in primary sources).

Materials

One copy of the student worksheet per student. Optional: the 1816 map at theamericanvote.com/elections/-1816 projected, or printed as a handout.

Timing

5 min	**Warm-up**	Identify two structural conditions in U.S. politics by 1816 that would have produced a one-party period regardless of the specific candidates. For each, identify the specific 1812-1816 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1816 election was the seventh U.S. presidential election. It was held two years after the Hartford Convention had destroyed the Federalist Party and 18 months after the Treaty of Ghent had ended the War of 1812. The election was simultaneously the formal end of the First Party System (founded 1791) and the inaugural cycle of the one-party Era of Good Feelings (1817-1825) that would last until the Adams-Jackson realignment of 1828. The Democratic-Republican coalition's structural advantages had been building since the Federalist collapse of 1800. By 1816 the party controlled the presidency, both houses of Congress, the federal bureaucracy, and most state governments. The April 1816 chartering of the Second Bank of the United States and the 1816 Tariff (the first explicitly protective U.S. tariff) marked the party's adoption of formerly Federalist economic policies - a structural absorption of Federalist program that made the residual Federalist Party redundant as well as politically tainted. President James Madison was finishing his second term. The Democratic-Republican congressional caucus met in Washington on March 16, 1816, to nominate the party's candidate. The two leading contenders were Secretary of State James Monroe and Secretary of War William H. Crawford of Georgia. Crawford represented Southern resistance to the Virginia Dynasty's continued grip on the presidency; he was 44, the youngest serious presidential candidate to that point, and widely regarded as the party's future. The caucus nominated Monroe by 65-54 - a margin much narrower than expected. The narrow margin reflected genuine intra-party tension that would resurface in the 1824 four-way election. Daniel D. Tompkins of New York was selected as Monroe's running mate.

Monroe was 58 and had the most accomplished resume of any U.S. presidential candidate. He had been a Revolutionary War officer (wounded crossing the Delaware with Washington in December 1776 and present at Valley Forge), served three terms in the Continental Congress (1783-86), two terms in the U.S. Senate (1790-94), four terms as governor of Virginia (1799-1802, 1811), U.S. minister to France (1794-96, 1803, during which he and Robert Livingston negotiated the Louisiana Purchase), U.S. minister to Britain (1803-07, during which he tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a Jay Treaty replacement and the 1807 Monroe-Pinkney Treaty that Jefferson rejected), Secretary of State (1811-17), and briefly Secretary of War (October 1814 - February 1815, during the British burning of Washington and the Battle of New Orleans). He was the last member of the founding generation to seek the presidency.

The Federalist Party nominated Rufus King of New York, 61. King had been a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, Federalist senator from New York (1789-96, 1813-25), U.S. minister to Britain (1796-1803), and the party's vice presidential candidate in both 1804 and 1808. King's nomination was a formality. The Federalist Party had no national organization, no coherent policy platform, and no broad-based support outside its New England residual base. The Hartford Convention had destroyed the party's national standing. King privately doubted he could win and conducted essentially no campaign.

The electoral count was 183 Monroe to 34 King. Monroe carried 16 of 19 states; King carried Connecticut (9 EV), Delaware (4), and Massachusetts (22) - 35 EV minus one not cast. The 1816 result was the formal death of the Federalist Party as a national force. They would never field another presidential candidate. Monroe was inaugurated March 4, 1817 outdoors at the East Portico of the U.S. Capitol - the first presidential inauguration held outdoors and the first held at the East Portico (the customary location for the next century).

Monroe's 1820 re-election would produce one of the most one-sided results in U.S. history: 231 electoral votes to 1 (New Hampshire elector William Plumer voted for John Quincy Adams, allegedly to preserve Washington's unanimous-electoral-vote distinction). The 1820 result confirmed what 1816 had begun: the one-party Era of Good Feelings.

Historians treat the 1816 result as the formal terminus of the First Party System and the inaugural cycle of the one-party Era. The party system's reemergence in 1828 (with the new Democratic Party of Jackson facing the National Republican Party of John Quincy Adams) confirmed that two-party competition was the structural norm of American politics, but the 1816-1828 interregnum demonstrated that the constitutional order could function under one-party government for over a decade. The Era's political conflicts (the Missouri Compromise, the Panic of 1819, the tariff debates, the internal improvements debates) all occurred within the Democratic-Republican coalition rather than between competing parties. Then review the Key Terms on the background page so students share vocabulary before the primary-source work.

15 min	**Primary source**	Read the excerpt aloud once. Students annotate individually (3 min), then pair-share on worksheet questions 6 and 7 (5 min).
15 min	**Discussion**	Small groups (3–4). Pick one of the three prompts at the back of this packet (or assign one). Each group reports back two sentences.
20 min	**Assessment**	Student worksheet. Seven questions, mixed format (5 about the reading, 2 about the primary source). Answer key in the instructor section at the back.
5 min	**Closure**	One-sentence exit ticket — see Closure section below.

Closure

One-sentence exit ticket: "What is one thing the 1816 election tells you about the First Party System era that the textbook didn't?"

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

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 phrase was coined by a Boston newspaper in 1817. The "good feelings" referred to the absence of formal two-party competition rather than to actual political agreement; serious disputes over banking, tariffs, slavery, and internal improvements emerged throughout the period.

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. Monroe's 1816 caucus contest (65-54 over Crawford) reflected Southern resistance to its continuation.

Second Bank of the United States

The federal national bank chartered April 1816 by President Madison's Democratic-Republican Congress. Modeled on Hamilton's First Bank (which Jefferson and Madison had originally opposed). A signal of Democratic-Republican adoption of formerly Federalist economic policies.

Monroe Doctrine

The December 1823 announcement (in Monroe's annual message to Congress) declaring the Western Hemisphere closed to further European colonization. The first U.S. claim of regional hemispheric leadership. Drafted primarily by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams.

Hartford Convention

The December 1814 - January 1815 secret New England Federalist meeting that 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 dominant nomination mechanism from 1796 to 1824. The 1824 caucus nominated Crawford but most Democratic-Republicans refused to accept its authority, producing the four-way 1824 election.

Tariff of 1816

The first explicitly protective U.S. tariff. Raised duties on imported manufactured goods to protect American industries that had grown during the wartime blockade. A Democratic-Republican adoption of formerly Federalist economic policy.

First Inaugural Address

JAMES MONROE, MARCH 4, 1817

Monroe took the oath outdoors at the East Portico of the U.S. Capitol - the first presidential inauguration held outdoors and the first held at this location (which became customary for the next century). The address was strikingly nationalist and confident. Monroe positioned the United States as a successful constitutional experiment that had matured into a stable republic. The contrast with Madison's wartime 1813 Second Inaugural was deliberate. The "flourished beyond example" framing claimed structural success that the Federalist remnant could not credibly contest.

> *"During a period fraught with difficulties and marked by very extraordinary events the United States have flourished beyond example. Their citizens individually have been happy, and the nation prosperous. Under this Constitution our commerce has been wisely regulated with foreign nations and between the States. New States have been admitted into our Union. Our territory has been enlarged by fair and honorable treaty, and with great advantage to the original States; the States, respectively protected by the National Government under a mild paternal system against foreign dangers, and enjoying within their separate spheres, by a wise partition of power, a just proportion of the sovereignty."*

Monroe, "First Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1817). Public domain.

The 1816 Election

Read the background page (key terms and primary source), then answer the seven questions below. Questions 6 and 7 ask you to quote from the primary source.

QUESTION 1 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many electoral votes did James Monroe win in 1816?

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

QUESTION 2 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many electoral votes would Monroe win in his 1820 re-election?

( ) A. 189
( ) B. 212
( ) C. 231
( ) D. 247

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Why was the 1816 Democratic-Republican caucus contest between Monroe and Crawford closer than expected (65-54)?

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify three of James Monroe's previous positions before becoming president.

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Monroe says in his inaugural that the U.S. has "flourished beyond example." Identify two specific 1814-1816 developments that supported this framing.

SOURCE ANALYSIS — QUESTIONS 6 AND 7 REFERENCE THE PRIMARY SOURCE ON THE BACKGROUND PAGE.

QUESTION 6 · SHORT-ANSWER

How did the April 1816 chartering of the Second Bank of the United States and the 1816 Tariff signal a structural Democratic-Republican adoption of formerly Federalist economic policies?

QUESTION 7 · MAP-READ

On the 1816 election map, identify the three states King carried. What pattern do they share, and what does the pattern tell you about the Federalist Party's residual coalition?

Answer key

QUESTION 1

183. Monroe 183; King 34. Monroe carried 16 of 19 states.

The 1816 result was the formal death of the Federalist Party as a national force.

QUESTION 2

231. Monroe won 231 electoral votes to a single defector's 1 EV (New Hampshire elector William Plumer voted for John Quincy Adams). The 232-1 result is one of the most one-sided in U.S. history.

The 1820 result confirmed the Era of Good Feelings. Plumer's defection may have been intended to preserve Washington's unanimous-electoral-vote distinction.

QUESTION 3

The narrow margin reflected genuine intra-party tension. Southern Democratic-Republicans, especially in Georgia and the Carolinas, were tired of Virginia presidents. Monroe would be the third consecutive Virginia president (after Jefferson and Madison) - the so-called Virginia Dynasty. William Crawford of Georgia represented the alternative: a Southern non-Virginian. Crawford was 44 (youngest serious candidate to that point) and widely seen as the party's future. The Madison-Jefferson preference for Monroe carried the caucus, but the underlying factional split would resurface in 1824 in a four-way election.

The 1816 caucus split is one of the earliest signs of the intra-Democratic-Republican factionalism that would produce the 1824 collapse of the caucus system. AP students should recognize it as a structural foreshadowing.

QUESTION 4

Accept any three of: (1) Revolutionary War officer. (2) Three terms in the Continental Congress (1783-86). (3) Two terms in the U.S. Senate (1790-94). (4) Four terms as governor of Virginia (1799-1802, 1811). (5) U.S. minister to France (1794-96, 1803, during which he negotiated the Louisiana Purchase with Livingston). (6) U.S. minister to Britain (1803-07). (7) Secretary of State (1811-17). (8) Secretary of War (October 1814 - February 1815).

Monroe's resume was unmatched. AP students should be able to identify multiple specific positions.

QUESTION 5

Accept any two of: (1) The February 1815 Treaty of Ghent ending the War of 1812. (2) Andrew Jackson's January 1815 victory at New Orleans. (3) The April 1816 chartering of the Second Bank of the United States. (4) The 1816 Tariff (first explicitly protective U.S. tariff). (5) The 1815 commercial treaty with Britain. (6) Postwar economic recovery and Western migration. (7) Admission of Louisiana (1812), Indiana (1816), and Mississippi (1817 in progress) as states.

Monroe's "flourished beyond example" framing was historically defensible. AP students should be able to identify the supporting evidence.

QUESTION 6

The Second Bank of the United States was modeled directly on Hamilton's First Bank, which Jefferson and Madison had originally opposed on strict-construction grounds. The 1816 Tariff was the first explicitly protective tariff in U.S. history, raising duties to shield American industries that had grown during the wartime blockade. Both policies had been core Federalist commitments in the 1790s. The Democratic-Republican coalition adopting them in 1816 represented an absorption of the Federalist economic program rather than its defeat. The structural consequence was that Federalists had no remaining policy distinctiveness; their opposition to Democratic-Republican governance had been reduced to opposition to specific personalities and the residual partisan loyalty of the New England commercial elite.

The 1816 Democratic-Republican adoption of formerly Federalist policies is one of the clearest examples of one party absorbing another's program. AP students should recognize the structural significance.

QUESTION 7

King states: Connecticut (9), Delaware (4), Massachusetts (22). Pattern: Two are New England commercial-shipping states (Connecticut and Massachusetts); one is a small mid-Atlantic state with strong Federalist organization (Delaware). The pattern tells you the Federalist Party had been reduced to a tiny regional rump by 1816, concentrated in commercial-seaboard areas with the strongest historical Federalist organizations. The party had not retained even all of its 1812 strength: Rhode Island and New Hampshire (both Federalist in 1812) had flipped to Monroe. The 1816 coalition was the Federalist Party's minimum sustainable footprint - and it was not sustainable as a national party.

The 1816 map is the structural snapshot of the First Party System's death. AP students should be able to read it analytically.

Discussion prompts

1 The 1816 result formally ended the First Party System. Identify two structural conditions and one specific event that made the Federalist collapse irreversible, and explain why the one-party period that followed (1817-1825) nevertheless contained intense political conflict.

2 Monroe's caucus nomination was contested 65-54 by Southern Democratic-Republicans tired of the Virginia Dynasty. Identify two specific intra-party factions visible in 1816 that would become organized national parties by 1828.