3-5 EDITION · CLASSROOM

1824

John Quincy Adams vs Andrew Jackson

A 35-minute lesson on the 1824 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Era of Good Feelings	ELECTORAL VOTES 261 total
WINNER John Quincy Adams (Democratic-Republican) · 84 EV	RUNNER-UP Andrew Jackson (Democratic-Republican) · 99 EV
KEY ISSUE Sectional rivalries; tariff policy; internal improvements	TURNOUT 26.9%

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

1824: John Quincy Adams vs Andrew Jackson

Timing

5 min	**Warm-up**	When four people run for one job, what happens if everyone gets some votes but no one gets enough? How do you think a country should decide?
15 min	**Reading**	The 1824 election was the most chaotic in U.S. history to that point. The one-party Era of Good Feelings (1817-1825) had finally split apart. Four different Democratic-Republicans ran for president, each with their own regional base. The candidates: General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee (the hero of the 1815 Battle of New Orleans, popular across the South and West); Secretary of State John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts (son of the second president, popular in New England); Secretary of Treasury William H. Crawford of Georgia (the official Democratic-Republican congressional caucus nominee, popular in the South); and Speaker of the House Henry Clay of Kentucky (architect of the Missouri Compromise, popular in the West). Vice President John C. Calhoun decided not to run and accepted the vice presidency under whoever won. The Democratic-Republican congressional caucus met in February 1824. Only 66 of 240 eligible members attended. The caucus nominated Crawford. The other three candidates rejected the caucus's authority and ran anyway. The caucus system - which had nominated every Democratic-Republican president since 1804 - was effectively dead. The popular vote went to Jackson (151,271 votes, 41.4%), then Adams (113,122, 30.9%), then Clay (47,531, 13.0%), then Crawford (40,856, 11.2%). But the popular vote did not directly elect anyone - 6 of 24 states still used legislative selection for electors. The electoral count was Jackson 99, Adams 84, Crawford 41, Clay 37. Nobody had a majority (131 was needed). Under the Twelfth Amendment, when no candidate has an Electoral College majority, the U.S. House of Representatives picks the president from the top three candidates. Clay was eliminated. The House contingent vote happens by state delegation - each state casts one vote, with a majority of state delegations (13 of 24) needed to win. Clay was still Speaker of the House. He could not vote for himself, but he could influence the votes of others. Clay hated Jackson (Jackson had publicly criticized Clay's ambition). Clay also distrusted Jackson's military background as dangerous to constitutional government. Clay threw his support to Adams. On February 9, 1825,

		the House elected Adams president on the first ballot, with 13 state delegations to Jackson's 7 and Crawford's 4. Three days later, Adams announced his Cabinet. Henry Clay would be Secretary of State - the position that had become a traditional stepping stone to the presidency. Jackson's supporters immediately denounced the appointment as a "corrupt bargain." They argued that Adams and Clay had made a private deal: Clay's House influence in exchange for the Secretary of State job. Adams and Clay both denied any explicit deal. Modern historians remain divided. The Corrupt Bargain charge would dominate U.S. politics for the next four years. Jackson and his supporters built a new party - the Democratic Party - around opposition to the Adams administration. The 1828 rematch would produce Jackson's landslide victory and the formal end of the Era of Good Feelings.
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 1824 Election

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The candidates: General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee (the hero of the 1815 Battle of New Orleans, popular across the South and West); Secretary of State John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts (son of the second president, popular in New England); Secretary of Treasury William H. Crawford of Georgia (the official Democratic-Republican congressional caucus nominee, popular in the South); and Speaker of the House Henry Clay of Kentucky (architect of the Missouri Compromise, popular in the West). Vice President John C. Calhoun decided not to run and accepted the vice presidency under whoever won.

The Democratic-Republican congressional caucus met in February 1824. Only 66 of 240 eligible members attended. The caucus nominated Crawford. The other three candidates rejected the caucus's authority and ran anyway. The caucus system - which had nominated every Democratic-Republican president since 1804 - was effectively dead.

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state casts one vote, with a majority of state delegations (13 of 24) needed to win.

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The Corrupt Bargain charge would dominate U.S. politics for the next four years. Jackson and his supporters built a new party - the Democratic Party - around opposition to the Adams administration. The 1828 rematch would produce Jackson's landslide victory and the formal end of the Era of Good Feelings.

Key words

Contingent election	When no candidate wins an Electoral College majority, the U.S. House of Representatives picks the president from the top three candidates. Each state gets one vote in the House contingent election.
Corrupt Bargain	The name Andrew Jackson's supporters gave to the 1824-25 deal in which Speaker of the House Henry Clay helped John Quincy Adams win the House contingent election. Adams then named Clay Secretary of State. Adams and Clay both denied any explicit deal.

Congressional caucus	A meeting of a party's congressional members to choose the party's presidential nominee. The 1824 Democratic-Republican caucus nominated Crawford but only 66 of 240 members attended. Three other candidates rejected the caucus's authority. The caucus system effectively died after 1824.
Twelfth Amendment	Ratified 1804. Requires electors to cast separate ballots for president and vice president. When no candidate has an Electoral College majority, the House contingent election uses the top three candidates.
Battle of New Orleans	Andrew Jackson's January 8, 1815 victory over British forces near New Orleans. The lopsided U.S. victory made Jackson a national hero and the most popular general of his generation.

Four questions

QUESTION 1 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many electoral votes did Andrew Jackson win in 1824?

( ) A. 67
( ) B. 84
( ) C. 99
( ) D. 131

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify all four candidates in the 1824 election and the region or state each represented.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Why did the election go to the U.S. House of Representatives?

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Why did Andrew Jackson's supporters call the 1824-25 result a "Corrupt Bargain"?

Answer key

QUESTION 1

99. Jackson 99; Adams 84; Crawford 41; Clay 37. Nobody had a majority (131 needed).

Jackson won the most electoral votes AND the most popular votes but did not become president - one of only five times in U.S. history that the popular-vote leader did not win.

QUESTION 2

(1) General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee (hero of the Battle of New Orleans, popular in the South and West). (2) Secretary of State John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts (son of the second president, popular in New England). (3) Secretary of Treasury William H. Crawford of Georgia (the official caucus nominee, popular in the South). (4) Speaker of the House Henry Clay of Kentucky (architect of the Missouri Compromise, popular in the West).

The four candidates were all Democratic-Republicans. The 1824 election is the only U.S. presidential election in which four candidates from the same party seriously competed for the presidency.

QUESTION 3

Under the Twelfth Amendment, when no candidate has an Electoral College majority, the U.S. House of Representatives picks the president from the top three candidates. In 1824 no candidate had a majority (131 EV needed; Jackson topped out at 99). The House contingent election took place on February 9, 1825. Each state delegation cast one vote.

The 1824 contingent election was the second in U.S. history. The first was 1800 (Jefferson-Burr).

QUESTION 4

Speaker of the House Henry Clay was eliminated (only the top three go to the House). Clay used his influence as Speaker to help John Quincy Adams win on the first ballot (Adams 13 state delegations to Jackson 7, Crawford 4). Three days later, Adams named Clay Secretary of State - the position that had become a traditional stepping stone to the presidency. Jackson's supporters argued this was a private deal: Clay's House influence in exchange for the cabinet job. Both Adams and Clay denied any explicit bargain.

The Corrupt Bargain charge dominated U.S. politics for the next four years. Jackson's 1828 campaign was built almost entirely around it.