AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1824

John Quincy Adams vs Andrew Jackson

A 105-minute lesson on the 1824 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, DBQ pairing, 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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3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1824: John Quincy Adams vs Andrew Jackson

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 1824 that would produce the breakup of the Democratic-Republican coalition into multiple regional candidates. For each, identify the specific 1815-1824 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1824 election is the structural inflection point between the Era of Good Feelings (1817-1825) and the Second Party System (1828-1854). The one-party Democratic-Republican coalition fragmented into four regional candidates, none of whom reached an Electoral College majority. The resulting House contingent election produced the Corrupt Bargain that mobilized the Jacksonian movement and reshaped American political organization for the next thirty years. The structural conditions had been building since 1819. The Panic of 1819 had produced widespread economic distress without a partisan vehicle for blame, leaving popular grievance attached to whoever could organize it. The Missouri Crisis of 1819-1820 had exposed sectional divisions over slavery extension that the Democratic-Republican coalition could not resolve. The 1819 McCulloch v. Maryland decision had constitutionalized federal implied powers, drawing strict-construction opposition. The Second Bank of the United States had become a target of populist resentment over its tight credit policies during the Panic. The expansion of white-male suffrage (most states had moved to near-universal white male suffrage by 1824) had created a mass electorate that the elite-driven caucus nomination system could not effectively engage. The Adams-Onis Treaty's territorial acquisitions had created new states (Mississippi 1817, Illinois 1818, Alabama 1819, Maine 1820, Missouri 1821) whose political alignments were not yet fixed. The four candidates: (1) General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee, 57, hero of New Orleans, framed as the people's champion against Eastern political elites. Nominated by the Tennessee state legislature in 1822, two years before the election. (2) Secretary of State John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, 57, son of the second president, last Secretary of State, popular in New England and among former Federalists. Nominated by the Massachusetts legislature. (3) Secretary of Treasury William H. Crawford of Georgia, 52, the official Democratic-Republican congressional caucus nominee, popular among Southern strict-construction Republicans. Partially incapacitated by a September 1823 stroke that left him unable to travel and

barely able to speak. (4) Speaker of the House Henry Clay of Kentucky, 47, architect of the Missouri Compromise and the 1824 American System. Vice President John C. Calhoun initially ran for president but withdrew in March 1824, accepting the vice presidency on whichever winning ticket would have him.

The Democratic-Republican congressional caucus met February 14, 1824 in the Capitol's House chamber. Only 66 of 240 eligible members attended - a sign that the caucus system's legitimacy had collapsed. The caucus nominated Crawford. The other three candidates rejected the caucus's authority and ran anyway, drawing their nominations instead from state legislatures. After 1824, no major-party presidential candidate would ever again be nominated by a congressional caucus. The replacement mechanism was the national party convention, first used by the Anti-Masonic Party in 1831 and adopted by the Democrats in 1832. The convention system would dominate U.S. presidential nominations until the modern primary system's emergence in the 1970s.

The campaign was conducted through partisan newspapers, regional political organizations, and increasingly through public events. Jackson's campaign emphasized populism: he was the people's champion against the Washington establishment of caucus politicians. His "military chieftain" image was both an asset (mass popular appeal) and a liability (elite concerns about his temperament and his disregard for legal niceties during the First Seminole War). Adams's campaign emphasized his diplomatic credentials and continuity with Monroe. Crawford's campaign was hampered by his September 1823 stroke - he never recovered and was carried into Senate sessions to be sworn in for his eventual return to Cabinet service. Clay's campaign emphasized the American System framework (protective tariff + federal internal improvements + Second Bank), positioning him as the candidate of economic development.

The popular vote in 18 of 24 states (the other six still used legislative selection) went to Jackson 151,271 (41.4%), Adams 113,122 (30.9%), Clay 47,531 (13.0%), Crawford 40,856 (11.2%). The electoral count was Jackson 99, Adams 84, Crawford 41, Clay 37. The 131 EV needed for a majority was unreached. Jackson's 99 was structurally concentrated in the South, the West, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Adams's 84 was concentrated in New England plus New York. Crawford's 41 came from Virginia, Georgia, Delaware, and parts of North Carolina. Clay's 37 came from Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri.

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 election votes by state delegation - each state casts one vote, with 13 of 24 state delegations needed to win. Clay was still Speaker of the House. He had personal reasons to oppose Jackson (the 1819 First Seminole War House inquiry) and policy reasons to support Adams (both supported the American System framework).

Clay threw his support to Adams. The House voted February 9, 1825. Adams won on the first ballot with 13 state delegations to Jackson's 7 and Crawford's 4. The 13 included three delegations - New York, Maryland, and Kentucky - where Jackson had won the popular vote but where Clay's influence shifted the state-delegation vote to Adams. Three days later, Adams announced his Cabinet. Clay would be Secretary of State - the position that had become a traditional stepping stone to the presidency (every Secretary of State since 1801 had become president: Madison, Monroe, Adams). Jackson's supporters immediately denounced the appointment as a "corrupt bargain." Jackson himself wrote to friends that the country had witnessed "the Judas of the West" (Clay) sell his support for personal advancement.

Whether Adams and Clay had explicitly negotiated the arrangement remains contested. Modern historians generally agree that no explicit private deal was made before the House vote - but they also generally agree that both men understood the State Department appointment was a natural consequence of Clay's House support. The appearance of explicit quid pro quo was politically devastating regardless of literal truth.

The Corrupt Bargain charge dominated U.S. politics for the next four years. Jackson and his supporters - including Senator Martin Van Buren of New York, who would emerge as the country's most sophisticated political organizer - built a new party around opposition to the Adams administration. The new party formally adopted the name "Democratic" in 1828. The 1828 rematch produced Jackson's 178-83 electoral landslide, the formal end of the Era of Good Feelings, and the Second Party System (Democrats vs. National Republicans / Whigs) that would dominate American politics until 1854. Adams's ambitious 1825 annual message - proposing federal funding of internal improvements, a national university, a federal astronomical observatory, scientific exploration, and uniform federal weights and measures - was widely mocked by Jacksonians and produced almost no enacted legislation. Adams would return to Congress in 1830 and serve there until his 1848 death; his post-presidential career as an antislavery advocate would be more politically consequential than his actual presidency.

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

Corrupt Bargain

The name Jackson's supporters gave to the 1824-25 arrangement in which Speaker Henry Clay helped John Quincy Adams win the House contingent election. Adams then named Clay Secretary of State - the position that had become a traditional stepping stone to the presidency. Adams and Clay both denied any explicit deal; the charge nevertheless dominated U.S. politics for four years.

American System

Henry Clay's 1824 economic-development framework. Combined a protective tariff (1824 Tariff), federal internal improvements (roads, canals), and the Second Bank of the United States. Adopted by the National Republican / Whig Party tradition. Opposed by Jacksonian Democrats.

Contingent election

When no candidate wins an Electoral College majority, the U.S. House of Representatives picks the president from the top three candidates. The House votes by state delegation - each state gets one vote regardless of population. Used in 1800 (Jefferson over Burr) and 1824 (Adams over Jackson).

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 Democratic-Republican caucus nominated Crawford but only 66 of 240 members attended. Effectively died after 1824.

National party convention

The U.S. presidential-nomination mechanism that replaced the congressional caucus after 1824. First used by the Anti-Masonic Party in 1831 and adopted by the Democrats in 1832. Opened nomination to wider party membership and dominated U.S. presidential nominations until the modern primary system's emergence in the 1970s.

Jacksonian Democracy

The political movement organized by Jackson and his supporters between 1824 and 1828. Emphasized expanded white-male suffrage, rotation in office (the spoils system), opposition to the Second Bank, and Indian removal. Founded the modern Democratic Party.

Adams's annual message

John Quincy Adams's December 6, 1825 first annual message to Congress. Proposed federal funding of internal improvements, a national university, a federal astronomical observatory ("lighthouses of the skies"), federal scientific exploration, and uniform federal weights and measures. Widely mocked by Jacksonians; none of the proposals passed.

Second Party System

The 1828-1854 era of competition between the Democratic Party (Jackson, Van Buren) and the National Republican / Whig Party (Adams, Clay, eventually Webster and Lincoln). Built on Jacksonian populism vs. American System economic development. Broke down over slavery extension in the 1850s.

Universal white-male suffrage

The expansion of voting rights to all adult white men regardless of property holding. Most U.S. states had

moved to near-universal white-male suffrage by 1824. The expanded electorate is one of the structural causes of the caucus system's collapse and the Jacksonian movement's emergence.

Inaugural Address

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, MARCH 4, 1825

Adams took the oath at the East Portico of the U.S. Capitol just three weeks after the House contingent election. The address was politically constrained: Adams faced four years of Jacksonian opposition built around the Corrupt Bargain charge. The opening passage of explicit self-doubt was strategically necessary - Adams could not claim the ordinary mandate of a popular-vote winner - but politically inadequate to defuse the Jacksonian opposition that would dominate his term.

> *"Less possessed of your confidence in advance than any of my predecessors, I am deeply conscious of the prospect that I shall stand more and more in need of your indulgence as I proceed. I can promise nothing but justice in my purposes, integrity in my pursuit of them, and a continual exertion to discharge the duties of the high station to which the will of the people has called me. To the same Divine power who, in the course of His providence, has made me the instrument of conferring this distinction upon me, I commit my future course."*

Adams, "Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1825). 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

Inaugural Address

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, MARCH 4, 1825

“Less possessed of your confidence in advance than any of my predecessors, I am deeply conscious of the prospect that I shall stand more and more in need of your indulgence as I proceed. I can promise nothing but justice in my purposes, integrity in my pursuit of them, and a continual exertion to discharge the duties of the high station to which the will of the people has called me. To the same Divine power who, in the course of His providence, has made me the instrument of conferring this distinction upon me, I commit my future course.”

Adams, "Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1825). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Letter to William B. Lewis (the Judas of the West letter)

ANDREW JACKSON, FEBRUARY 14, 1825

“So you see, the Judas of the West has closed the contract and will receive the thirty pieces of silver. His end will be the same. Was there ever witnessed such bare faced corruption in any country before? When the people, the only sovereigns recognized by our Constitution, have spoken in the only legitimate way, by their suffrages at the ballot box, that their will has been thwarted by the management of demagogues and intrigue, can the people any longer hold the helm of government with safety? The Judas of the West has been bought; the people have been betrayed.”

Jackson, "Letter to William B. Lewis" (Washington, DC, February 14, 1825). Public domain.

The 1824 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 (Adams's Inaugural) that acknowledges his weak political mandate. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Jackson's letter) that frames the House contingent-election result as a betrayal of popular sovereignty. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources address the 1824-25 outcome, but they make incompatible claims about its legitimacy. Identify the specific claim each source makes.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source B was written on February 14, 1825 - five days after the House contingent election and three days after Adams named Clay Secretary of State. What does the timing tell you about how rapidly the Corrupt Bargain framing crystallized as political mobilization?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source B calls Henry Clay "the Judas of the West." Identify the biblical reference and explain why Jackson chose it specifically.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

What replaced the congressional caucus as the dominant U.S. presidential nomination mechanism after 1824?

( ) A. Direct primary elections
( ) B. National party convention
( ) C. State-legislature appointment
( ) D. Open primary

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

In the 1828 rematch, Andrew Jackson defeated John Quincy Adams by an electoral count of:

( ) A. 114 to 73
( ) B. 147 to 90
( ) C. 178 to 83
( ) D. 212 to 56

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the Corrupt Bargain controversy structurally inevitable, specifically contingent, or the founding moment of Jacksonian Democracy? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Adams's 1825 Inaugural (Source A) acknowledges his weak political mandate but frames his presidency as a constitutional servant's exercise of legitimate authority. Jackson's February 1825 letter (Source B) characterizes the same House contingent-election result as bare-faced corruption that has betrayed "the only sovereigns recognized by our Constitution." Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1819-1832 period, evaluate the extent to which the Corrupt Bargain controversy was (a) a structural inevitability of the 1824 four-way fragmentation and the Twelfth Amendment's contingent-election design, (b) a specific political consequence of Clay's individual decision to throw his House support to Adams, or (c) the founding political event of the Jacksonian movement that would have emerged in some form regardless of the 1824 specifics. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the inevitable-vs-specific-vs-founding axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Panic of 1819, the Missouri Compromise, universal white-male suffrage, the caucus system's collapse, the 1832 nullification crisis. 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: "Less possessed of your confidence in advance than any of my predecessors", "I am deeply conscious of the prospect that I shall stand more and more in need of your indulgence", "I can promise nothing but justice in my purposes, integrity in my pursuit of them". The "less possessed of your confidence" phrase is the cleanest acknowledgment.

Adams's explicit acknowledgment of weak mandate is one of the most-discussed inaugural passages.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "the people, the only sovereigns recognized by our Constitution, have spoken in the only legitimate way", "their will has been thwarted by the management of demagogues and intrigue", "the Judas of the West has been bought; the people have been betrayed". The "the only sovereigns recognized by our Constitution" phrase is the cleanest popular-sovereignty framing.

Jackson's framing of the people as constitutional sovereigns is one of the founding statements of Jacksonian Democracy. AP students should recognize it as ideologically constructed rather than literal.

QUESTION 3

Source A claims constitutional legitimacy through proper procedure - Adams was selected through the Twelfth Amendment's contingent-election mechanism, however weak his mandate. Source B claims that procedural legitimacy is overridden by popular-vote legitimacy - the people had spoken for Jackson and Clay's House manipulation betrayed their will. The two framings are politically incompatible: the first prioritizes constitutional procedure; the second prioritizes popular sovereignty. The Jacksonian movement would build its political identity around the second framing.

AP students should recognize that the 1824 dispute was simultaneously a procedural-vs-popular legitimacy debate. The Jacksonian framing won out in 1828 and shaped American political identity through the 1850s.

QUESTION 4

The 1825 timing tells you that the Jacksonian movement's ideological framework crystallized almost instantly after the House vote. Jackson and his allies did not need months to organize the Corrupt Bargain charge - it was a ready-made political instrument the moment Clay's State Department appointment was announced. The rapidity reflects two structural conditions: (1) Jackson's grievance was preexisting (the 1819 First Seminole War House inquiry; the 1822 Tennessee nomination); (2) the Corrupt Bargain framing was politically obvious given the appearance of explicit quid pro quo. The Jackson movement therefore had a coherent organizing principle from February 1825 through the November 1828 election - 45 months of single-issue political mobilization built around one episode.

AP students should be able to articulate how a single political event can crystallize an ideological movement when preconditions are favorable.

QUESTION 5

The biblical reference is to Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver (Gospel of Matthew 26:14-15). Jackson chose the reference for three reasons: (1) it framed Clay's support for Adams as betrayal of the popular vote winner (Jackson) for personal advancement (the State Department appointment). (2) it implied that Clay was selling out the people's trust for material reward - the political equivalent of Judas's thirty silver coins. (3) The "Judas's end" reference (Judas hanged himself in the biblical account) implied Clay's political career would also end badly. The reference was both ideologically powerful (drawing on widely shared Protestant biblical literacy) and personally devastating (associating Clay permanently with the most famous betrayal in Christian tradition). Clay was indeed never elected president, despite running in 1832, 1840, and 1844 - some historians attribute his political failures partly to the Judas association.

AP students should recognize that the Judas reference was rhetorically constructed and historically consequential. The biblical literacy of the 1820s audience made it especially powerful.

QUESTION 6

National party convention.

The national party convention replaced the congressional caucus after 1824. First used by the Anti-Masonic Party in 1831 and adopted by the Democrats in 1832. Opened nomination to wider party membership and dominated U.S. presidential nominations until the modern primary system's emergence in the 1970s.

QUESTION 7

178 to 83.

Jackson won 178 electoral votes to Adams's 83 in 1828 - a 95-vote landslide that produced the formal end of the Era of Good Feelings and the Second Party System.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the inevitable-vs-specific-vs-founding 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.