AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1828

Andrew Jackson vs John Quincy Adams

A 105-minute lesson on the 1828 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, DBQ pairing, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Second Party System	ELECTORAL VOTES 261 total
WINNER Andrew Jackson (Democratic) · 178 EV	RUNNER-UP John Quincy Adams (National Republican) · 83 EV
KEY ISSUE Revenge for the 'Corrupt Bargain'; democratic reform; tariff policy	TURNOUT 57.3%

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2. Lesson plan (105 min) + framework alignment
3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1828: Andrew Jackson vs John Quincy Adams

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 U.S. political organization by 1828 that would have produced a Jackson victory regardless of his specific personal qualities. For each, identify the specific 1819-1828 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1828 election is the structural inflection point between the Era of Good Feelings (1817-1825) and the Second Party System (1828-1854). It produced Andrew Jackson's landslide victory over John Quincy Adams, the formal founding of the modern Democratic Party, the structural transformation of U.S. presidential campaigning, and the institutional consolidation of universal white-male suffrage and popular electoral selection. The election's consequences would shape American political organization for the next thirty years. The Jacksonian movement had been organizing since the February 1825 Corrupt Bargain. The principal political architect was Senator Martin Van Buren of New York, perhaps the most sophisticated political organizer of the nineteenth century. Van Buren combined four constituencies into the new Democratic Party: (1) Jackson's 1824 base of Southern and Western voters who had felt cheated by the House contingent election; (2) the Albany Regency political machine Van Buren personally controlled in New York; (3) Pennsylvania manufacturing interests opposed to the 1828 Tariff but supportive of Jackson personally; (4) Southern strict-construction Democratic-Republicans including Vice President John C. Calhoun, who switched from running under Adams to running under Jackson - the only person in U.S. history to serve as vice president under two consecutive presidents from opposing factions. The Democratic Party emerged with a national organization including state-level committees, partisan newspaper networks in every major city, and precinct-level campaign workers. It was the first U.S. mass political party. Van Buren's organizational innovations were structural. He created the formal party structure (state committees coordinated through a national committee); the partisan press infrastructure (the Globe in Washington as the party's organ, with affiliated papers in every state capital); the spoils-system promise of federal jobs as political reward; the systematic precinct-level voter mobilization; and the integration of populist rhetoric with elite political coordination. The Democratic Party in 1828 invented the template that every subsequent U.S. mass political party would follow.

The political environment had transformed dramatically since 1824. Universal white-male suffrage had been substantially achieved between 1820 and 1828, with most states dropping property requirements for voting. The presidential popular vote roughly tripled between 1824 and 1828 - from 365,833 to 1,148,018. Most states had also moved from legislative selection to popular election of presidential electors; by 1828 only South Carolina and Delaware still used legislative selection. The new mass electorate transformed campaigning: mass rallies, partisan newspapers, parades, badges, songs, and slogans replaced elite-caucus politics. Jackson's common-man populism was the campaign style most adapted to the new electorate.

Adams ran as the candidate of the National Republican Party - the new name for the faction that had supported him in 1824. The party included Adams, Clay, former Federalists, and supporters of the American System framework. The party had no real chance of winning. The Corrupt Bargain charge had dominated four years of political coverage. Adams's ambitious 1825 annual message - proposing federal funding of internal improvements, a national university, a federal astronomical observatory, federal scientific exploration, and uniform federal weights and measures - had been mocked relentlessly by Jacksonians and produced almost no enacted legislation. Adams's personal style was cold, intellectual, and aloof.

The Tariff of 1828 (the Tariff of Abominations) was the year's dominant policy issue. The Tariff raised duties on imported manufactured goods to historic highs, protecting Northeastern manufacturing at the expense of Southern agricultural exporters. Vice President Calhoun secretly drafted the South Carolina Exposition and Protest in late 1828, arguing that states could nullify federal laws they considered unconstitutional. The Tariff and the resulting Nullification Crisis would consume Jackson's first term.

The campaign was the nastiest in U.S. history to that point. Jacksonians attacked Adams as a corrupt elitist via the Corrupt Bargain charge and falsely claimed he had procured a young American woman as a prostitute for the Russian tsar during his time as U.S. minister to Russia. National Republicans counterattacked by calling Jackson a murderer (the 1806 Charles Dickinson duel; the Creek War deserter executions, depicted in the Coffin Handbills), an adulterer (Rachel Donelson had married Jackson in 1791 before her divorce from Lewis Robards was finalized; she was technically a bigamist at the time of her marriage to Jackson, though both believed in good faith that the divorce had been completed), and a slave trader. The personal attacks on Rachel Jackson were particularly cruel.

Jackson won 178 electoral votes to Adams's 83. The popular vote was 642,553 (56%) to 500,897 (44%) - the largest popular-vote margin since 1820. Turnout reached 57.6% of eligible voters (up from 26.9% in 1824). The geographic map was the founding map of the Second Party System: Jackson swept the South, the West, Pennsylvania, New York (with Van Buren's machine), and parts of Maine. Adams held New England plus New Jersey, Delaware, and 5 of Maryland's 11 electors.

Two weeks after the election, Rachel Jackson died of a heart attack at age 61. Jackson blamed her death on the National Republican attacks and never forgave Adams or Clay personally. Adams refused to attend Jackson's March 4, 1829 inauguration - the third time in U.S. history a sitting president had refused to attend his successor's ceremony. The famous open-house reception at the White House drew an estimated 20,000 supporters; furniture was broken, china smashed, and Jackson reportedly escaped through a back window. The image of common-people government replacing elite politics became central to Jacksonian mythology.

Jackson's first term would deliver the spoils system (federal jobs awarded to political supporters), the 1830 Indian Removal Act (forcing the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations west of the Mississippi - the Trail of Tears), the 1832 veto of the Second Bank of the United States (the Bank War), and the 1832-33 Nullification Crisis (in which South Carolina nullified the federal tariff and Jackson threatened military force). The 1832 re-election would consolidate Jackson's coalition; the 1834 emergence of the Whig Party would formally complete the Second Party System. The 1828 election was the structural inflection point that made all of these possible.

Historians treat 1828 as a critical realignment in the technical sense: a presidential election that produces durable shifts in partisan coalitions, lasting one or more generations. The Jacksonian coalition built in 1828 would deliver Democratic presidencies in 1828, 1832, 1836, 1844, 1852, and 1856 (six of eight cycles through 1856). The National Republican / Whig coalition would win only in 1840 (Harrison) and 1848 (Taylor). The Second Party System would not break down until the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act produced the Republican Party's emergence and the 1860 election produced secession and the Civil War.

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

Democratic Party

The political party Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren built between 1825 and 1828. The first U.S. mass political party with state-level committees, partisan newspaper networks, and precinct-level campaign workers. The direct ancestor of today's Democratic Party.

Whig Party

The political party formed in 1834 from the National Republicans and other anti-Jackson factions (former Federalists, anti-Masons, Southern states-righters opposed to Jackson). Named for the British anti-monarchist tradition. Won the presidency in 1840 (Harrison) and 1848 (Taylor); collapsed over slavery extension in the 1850s.

Tariff of Abominations

The 1828 Tariff Act raising duties on imported manufactured goods to historic highs. Protected Northeastern manufacturing at the expense of Southern agricultural exporters. Triggered the South Carolina Exposition and Protest and the 1832-33 Nullification Crisis.

Albany Regency

The Democratic Party political machine controlled by Martin Van Buren in New York between approximately 1820 and 1840. The first organized U.S. state-level political machine; the model for subsequent machines.

Critical realignment

A presidential election that produces durable shifts in partisan coalitions, lasting one or more generations. 1828 is the textbook case: it built the Jacksonian coalition that would deliver Democratic presidencies in six of eight cycles through 1856.

National Republican Party

The 1828 name for the political faction that supported John Quincy Adams. Included Adams, Clay, former Federalists, and supporters of the American System framework. Lost the 1828 election; merged with the Whig Party in the 1830s.

Universal white-male suffrage

Voting rights for all adult white men regardless of property ownership. Substantially achieved across the U.S. between 1820 and 1828. The presidential popular vote roughly tripled between 1824 and 1828.

Spoils system

The Jacksonian practice of awarding federal jobs to political supporters after winning an election. The phrase comes from Senator William Marcy's 1832 remark "to the victor belong the spoils." Replaced civil-service appointments based on experience. Lasted until the 1883 Pendleton Civil Service Act.

South Carolina Exposition and Protest

The document secretly drafted by Vice President John C. Calhoun in late 1828 in response to the Tariff of Abominations. Argued that states could nullify federal laws they considered unconstitutional. Articulated the theoretical foundation for the 1832-33 Nullification Crisis.

First Inaugural Address

ANDREW JACKSON, MARCH 4, 1829

Jackson took the oath at the East Portico of the U.S. Capitol before an estimated 15,000 spectators - the largest inauguration crowd to that point. The address was strikingly brief by inaugural standards. Jackson's political stance was that the 1828 result had restored constitutional government by returning power to the people from whom Adams and Clay had stolen it in 1824. The "choice of a free people" framing was deliberate.

> *"About to undertake the arduous duties that I have been appointed to perform by the choice of a free people, I avail myself of this customary and solemn occasion to express the gratitude which their confidence inspires and to acknowledge the accountability which my situation enjoins. While the magnitude of their interests convinces me that no thanks can be adequate to the honor they have conferred, it admonishes me that the best return I can make is the zealous dedication of my humble abilities to their service and their good."*

Jackson, "First Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1829). 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

First Inaugural Address

ANDREW JACKSON, MARCH 4, 1829

“About to undertake the arduous duties that I have been appointed to perform by the choice of a free people, I avail myself of this customary and solemn occasion to express the gratitude which their confidence inspires and to acknowledge the accountability which my situation enjoins. While the magnitude of their interests convinces me that no thanks can be adequate to the honor they have conferred, it admonishes me that the best return I can make is the zealous dedication of my humble abilities to their service and their good.”

Jackson, "First Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1829). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Bank Veto Message

ANDREW JACKSON, JULY 10, 1832

“It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth can not be produced by human institutions. In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society - the farmers, mechanics, and laborers - who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government.”

Jackson, "Bank Veto Message" (Washington, DC, July 10, 1832). Public domain.

The 1828 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 (Jackson's 1829 Inaugural) that frames his presidency as legitimate through popular sovereignty. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Bank Veto Message) that extends popular-sovereignty ideology to economic policy. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources are Jackson documents, but they apply Jacksonian ideology to different policy domains. Identify the specific domain each source addresses.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source A was delivered in March 1829; Source B in July 1832. What does the three-year gap tell you about how Jacksonian Democracy evolved from a procedural critique of the Corrupt Bargain into a substantive economic-policy framework?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source B says government should not "make the rich richer and the potent more powerful." Identify two specific Jackson administration policies that operationalized this framing in 1829-1833.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

The political party that emerged in 1834 to oppose Jackson was the:

( ) A. Free Soil Party
( ) B. Whig Party
( ) C. Anti-Masonic Party
( ) D. Liberty Party

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

The 1830 federal law forcing the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations west of the Mississippi was the:

( ) A. Indian Removal Act
( ) B. Compromise of 1830
( ) C. Trail of Tears Act
( ) D. Western Lands Act

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was Jacksonian Democracy ideological, personal, or structural? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Jackson's 1829 Inaugural (Source A) frames his presidency as legitimate through "the choice of a free people" - the founding statement of Jacksonian Democracy as popular-sovereignty ideology. Jackson's 1832 Bank Veto Message (Source B) extends the same ideological framework to economic policy, claiming that government must protect "the humble members of society" against concentrated economic power. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1819-1840 period, evaluate the extent to which Jacksonian Democracy was (a) a coherent political ideology built around popular sovereignty and equal protection that the 1828 mass-party organization could mobilize at scale, (b) a contingent personal-political coalition built around Jackson's individual appeal that depended on his specific qualities, or (c) an inevitable structural consequence of universal white-male suffrage and the mass electorate that would have produced similar movements regardless of Jackson's individual leadership. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the ideology-vs-personality-vs-structural axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Panic of 1819, universal white-male suffrage, the Corrupt Bargain, the Indian Removal Act, the 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: "by the choice of a free people", "the gratitude which their confidence inspires", "the accountability which my situation enjoins". The "choice of a free people" phrase is the cleanest articulation.

Jackson's framing positions his presidency as legitimate through popular sovereignty rather than congressional procedure. The contrast with Adams's 1825 inaugural ("less possessed of your confidence in advance than any of my predecessors") is direct.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes", "the humble members of society - the farmers, mechanics, and laborers - who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government", "when the laws undertake to add ... artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful". The "rich and powerful bend the acts of government" phrase is the cleanest framing.

The Bank Veto Message is one of the founding documents of American economic populism. AP students should recognize the ideological structure.

QUESTION 3

Source A applies Jacksonian ideology to constitutional and procedural legitimacy - the president derives authority from popular sovereignty rather than congressional procedure. Source B applies the same ideology to economic policy - government must protect "the humble members of society" against concentrated economic power. The two sources together show Jacksonian Democracy operating across both political and economic domains.

AP students should recognize Jacksonian Democracy as a coherent ideological framework rather than a personal political identity.

QUESTION 4

The 1829 framing was procedural and abstract - Jackson was claiming legitimacy through popular sovereignty without specifying what substantive policies that legitimacy would justify. The 1832 framing operationalized the abstract principle into concrete economic policy: government should protect "the humble members of society" against "the rich and powerful." The three-year gap covered the spoils system (1829 onward), the 1830 Indian Removal Act, the 1832 Nullification Crisis, and the Bank War. Each policy translated the abstract popular-sovereignty principle into specific applications. The Bank Veto Message represents the substantive maturation of Jacksonian Democracy from a procedural critique into a substantive program. By 1832, "Jacksonian Democracy" meant not just opposition to elite procedural manipulation but active government protection of common citizens against concentrated economic power.

AP students should be able to trace the ideological development across Jackson's first term.

QUESTION 5

Accept any two of: (1) Bank Veto Message itself - the July 1832 veto of the Second Bank recharter. (2) The 1830 Indian Removal Act - which Jackson framed as protecting white settlers and small farmers against Native American land monopolies. (3) The 1832-33 Nullification Crisis - in which Jackson resisted South Carolina's nullification of the federal tariff in part by framing the dispute as between agrarian farmers and Southern planter elites. (4) The Specie Circular of 1836 - requiring payment for federal lands in gold or silver rather than paper money issued by state banks. (5) The dismantling of the spoils-system's appearance of elite continuity - replacing professional federal civil servants with party loyalists.

AP students should be able to identify the policy program that operationalized Jacksonian ideology.

QUESTION 6

Whig Party.

The Whig Party was formed in 1834 from the National Republicans and other anti-Jackson factions (former Federalists, anti-Masons, Southern states-righters opposed to Jackson). Named for the British anti-monarchist tradition. Won the presidency in 1840 (Harrison) and 1848 (Taylor); collapsed over slavery extension in the 1850s.

QUESTION 7

Indian Removal Act.

The May 28, 1830 Indian Removal Act authorized the federal government to force the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations west of the Mississippi River. The resulting forced removal of the Cherokee in 1838-39 is known as the Trail of Tears. Approximately 4,000 of the 16,000 Cherokee removed died on the journey.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the ideology-vs-personality-vs-structural 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.