1832

Andrew Jackson vs Henry Clay

A 75-minute lesson on the 1832 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, background reading with primary source, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Second Party System	ELECTORAL VOTES 286 total
WINNER Andrew Jackson (Democratic) · 219 EV	RUNNER-UP Henry Clay (National Republican) · 49 EV
KEY ISSUE Bank of the United States; nullification crisis; tariff policy	TURNOUT 57.0%

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

1832: Andrew Jackson vs Henry Clay

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 1832 map at theamericanvote.com/elections/-1832 projected, or printed as a handout.

Timing

5 min	**Warm-up**	Identify two structural conditions in U.S. politics by 1832 that would consolidate Jackson's 1828 landslide rather than reverse it. For each, identify the specific 1829-1832 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1832 election was the 12th U.S. presidential election. It was the first in which all three major parties chose their candidates through national conventions rather than congressional caucuses. The election's central issue was Andrew Jackson's war against the Second Bank of the United States. Jackson's landslide consolidated the Democratic Party's national dominance and set the policy template for Jacksonian Democracy. Jackson's first term had been politically dominant. The 1828 spoils-system transformation of federal employment, the 1830 Indian Removal Act, the 1832-33 Nullification Crisis (in which South Carolina nullified the federal tariff and Jackson threatened military force), and the Bank War defined his presidency. The December 1832 Force Bill (authorizing Jackson to use military force against South Carolina) and the 1833 Compromise Tariff (resolving the Nullification Crisis through gradual tariff reduction) would follow in his second term. The Second Bank of the United States had been chartered in 1816 for 20 years. Its president, Nicholas Biddle of Philadelphia, ran the bank effectively but was politically arrogant. The Bank served as federal depository, issued the most stable paper currency in the U.S., and regulated state-bank credit by demanding redemption in specie. Jackson had distrusted banks since the 1790s. His December 1829 first annual message had recommended against Bank recharter. Biddle and Henry Clay made the fateful decision to push for early Bank recharter in 1832 - four years before the existing charter expired. Their political calculation: forcing a Bank fight in an election year would either destroy Jackson politically (if he vetoed) or rob him of populist credibility (if he signed). Congress passed the recharter in July

1832 by 28-20 in the Senate and 107-85 in the House.

Jackson vetoed the recharter on July 10, 1832. His veto message, drafted by Treasury Secretary Roger Taney (later Chief Justice), articulated a populist case against concentrated economic power. The message argued the Bank served "the rich and powerful" against "the humble members of society - the farmers, mechanics, and laborers, who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves." The veto became the founding document of American economic populism. The Senate failed to override (Congress had 22-19; two-thirds needed).

The campaign was a referendum on Jackson and the Bank. Three party conventions met. The Anti-Masonic Party (the first U.S. third party of national significance) had held the first national party convention in September 1831 in Baltimore, nominating William Wirt of Maryland. The National Republican Convention nominated Henry Clay in December 1831. The Democratic National Convention met in Baltimore in May 1832 and renominated Jackson with Martin Van Buren as his new running mate (replacing Calhoun, who had broken with Jackson over nullification).

Jackson won 219 electoral votes to Clay's 49 and Wirt's 7. South Carolina cast its 11 electoral votes for John Floyd of Virginia as a protest against Jackson on nullification. Jackson carried 16 states with 54.2% of the popular vote; Clay carried Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland (partially), Massachusetts, Rhode Island. Wirt carried only Vermont. Turnout reached 57.0% of eligible voters.

Jackson's second term would deliver the September 1833 Removal of Deposits (moving federal deposits from the Second Bank to state-chartered "pet banks"); the March 1834 Senate censure of Jackson (for the Removal of Deposits; the only such censure in U.S. history, expunged January 1837); and the 1836 Specie Circular (requiring gold or silver for federal land purchases, contributing to the 1837 financial panic). The 1832 election was the political foundation for Jackson's entire second-term economic policy.

The 1834 emergence of the Whig Party (combining the National Republicans, anti-Jackson Southern states-righters, former Anti-Masonics, and supporters of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay) formally completed the Second Party System. The Whigs took their name from the British anti-monarchist tradition - they framed Jackson as "King Andrew I" exercising royal-style executive power. The Second Party System (Democrats vs. Whigs) would dominate American politics until the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act broke both parties along sectional lines over slavery extension. 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 1832 election tells you about the Second 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

Bank War

The 1832-36 political fight between Andrew Jackson and the Second Bank of the United States. Jackson vetoed the Bank's recharter (July 1832), removed federal deposits to state "pet banks" (September 1833), and let the Bank's charter expire (1836). One of the most consequential economic-policy disputes in U.S. history.

Nullification Crisis

The 1832-33 confrontation between the federal government and South Carolina. South Carolina nullified the 1828 and 1832 federal tariffs, declaring them void within the state. Jackson threatened military force through the December 1832 Force Bill. Resolved by the 1833 Compromise Tariff. Vice President Calhoun resigned in December 1832 in protest.

King Andrew I

The pejorative nickname for Andrew Jackson used by his Whig opponents. Featured in famous 1832-33 political cartoons depicting Jackson as a king violating constitutional norms (12 vetoes, the Removal of Deposits, the spoils system, the Nullification threat). The "King Andrew" framing was the founding political identity of the Whig Party.

National convention

A large meeting where a political party chooses its presidential nominee. The 1832 election was the first U.S. presidential election in which all three major parties used national conventions. Replaced the congressional caucus system; would dominate U.S. presidential nominations until the modern primary system's emergence in the 1970s.

Second Bank of the United States

The federal national bank chartered in 1816 for 20 years. Its president was Nicholas Biddle of Philadelphia. Served as federal depository, issued the most stable paper currency in the U.S., and regulated state-bank credit. Closed when its charter expired in 1836; not replaced until the 1913 Federal Reserve System.

Pet banks

The state-chartered banks selected by Treasury Secretary Roger Taney (after Jackson removed Treasury Secretary William Duane for refusing the order) to receive federal deposits after the September 1833 Removal of Deposits from the Second Bank. The 1837 Panic was partially caused by their over-leveraged credit policies.

Whig Party

The political party formed in 1834 from the National Republicans, anti-Jackson Southern states-righters, former Anti-Masonics, and supporters of Webster and Clay. Named for the British anti-monarchist tradition. Won the presidency in 1840 (Harrison) and 1848 (Taylor); collapsed over slavery extension in the 1850s.

Bank Veto Message

ANDREW JACKSON, JULY 10, 1832

Jackson vetoed the recharter of the Second Bank of the United States on July 10, 1832 - one of the most consequential vetoes in U.S. history. The veto message, drafted by Treasury Secretary Roger Taney (later Chief Justice), articulated a populist case against concentrated economic power. The "humble members of society" passage became the founding statement of American economic populism. The Senate failed to override (22-19; two-thirds needed).

> *"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 1832 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 Andrew Jackson win in 1832?

( ) A. 168
( ) B. 189
( ) C. 219
( ) D. 247

QUESTION 2 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Which 1832 federal law authorized Jackson to use military force against South Carolina if it persisted in nullifying the federal tariff?

( ) A. Force Bill
( ) B. Compromise Tariff
( ) C. Nullification Act
( ) D. Specie Circular

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify three specific 1829-1832 Jackson administration actions that shaped the 1832 campaign as a referendum on Jacksonian Democracy.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Jackson says in his Bank Veto Message that the laws should not "make the rich richer and the potent more powerful." Identify two specific Bank features Jackson considered "artificial distinctions" that warranted veto.

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

How did Nicholas Biddle's decision to push for early Bank recharter in 1832 backfire politically? Identify two specific consequences.

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

QUESTION 6 · SHORT-ANSWER

How did the 1832 election complete the transformation of U.S. presidential nomination from caucus to convention? Identify the specific 1831-32 sequence of conventions.

QUESTION 7 · MAP-READ

On the 1832 election map, identify Clay's six states and Wirt's one state. What does the geographic pattern reveal about the National Republican and Anti-Masonic coalitions?

Answer key

QUESTION 1

219. Jackson 219; Clay 49; Wirt 7; Floyd 11 (SC protest votes). Jackson carried 16 states with 54.2% of the popular vote.

The 1832 result consolidated the Democratic Party's national dominance.

QUESTION 2

Force Bill. The December 1832 federal law (officially "An Act Further to Provide for the Collection of Duties on Imports") authorized President Jackson to use military force against South Carolina if it persisted in nullifying the federal tariff. Passed alongside the 1833 Compromise Tariff as a face-saving resolution to the Nullification Crisis.

The Force Bill was structurally important: it established that the federal government would defend its authority by force if necessary. The principle would be invoked again in 1861.

QUESTION 3

Accept any three of: (1) The Spoils System (1829 onward) - replacing federal civil servants with party loyalists. (2) The 1830 Indian Removal Act - forcing the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations west of the Mississippi. (3) The 1830 Maysville Road Veto - blocking federal funding for internal improvements within a single state. (4) The 1830-32 Petticoat Affair / Peggy Eaton scandal that broke the Cabinet. (5) The 1832 Bank Veto. (6) The 1832 Force Bill and Compromise Tariff resolving the Nullification Crisis. (7) The 1830-31 Worcester v. Georgia conflict and Jackson's alleged "John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it" response.

AP students should be able to identify multiple specific first-term Jackson actions that defined his political brand.

QUESTION 4

Accept any two of: (1) The Bank's monopoly on federal deposits - granted by federal charter, denied to state banks. (2) The Bank's ability to issue paper currency - a privilege denied to ordinary commercial enterprises. (3) The Bank's minimum 20-percent foreign ownership (which Jackson argued made it serve foreign rather than American interests). (4) The Bank's broad federal exemption from state taxation (the McCulloch v. Maryland privilege). (5) The Bank's lobbying power - paid for by federal deposits but used against federal officials. (6) The Bank's discretion to expand or contract credit based on its own political calculations.

Jackson's Bank Veto Message articulated specific objections, not just general populist sentiment. AP students should be able to identify the specific institutional features Jackson opposed.

QUESTION 5

Consequences: (1) The Bank Veto became a political asset rather than a liability. Jackson successfully reframed the Bank as a tool of "the rich and powerful" against "the farmers, mechanics, and laborers." (2) The veto override failed (22-19; two-thirds needed). (3) The 1832 campaign became a referendum on the Bank - which Jackson won 54.2% to 37.4% in the popular vote. (4) Jackson's 1833 Removal of Deposits crippled the Bank politically and economically. (5) The Bank's charter expired in 1836; no federal national bank existed for the next 77 years (until the 1913 Federal Reserve). (6) The Whig Party emerged in 1834 as the structural opposition - but Whig anti-Jackson framing could not undo the Bank Veto's political popularity.

The Biddle-Clay miscalculation is structurally important. AP students should be able to articulate how opposition strategy can backfire.

QUESTION 6

September 1831: Anti-Masonic Party held the first national party convention in U.S. history in Baltimore, nominating William Wirt of Maryland and Amos Ellmaker of Pennsylvania. December 1831: National Republican Convention met in Baltimore, nominating Henry Clay and John Sergeant of Pennsylvania. May 1832: Democratic National Convention met in Baltimore, renominating Andrew Jackson and choosing Martin Van Buren as Vice President (replacing Calhoun). The 1832 cycle was the first U.S. presidential election in which all three major parties used national conventions. After 1832, no major U.S. presidential candidate would ever again be nominated by a congressional caucus. The convention format proved durable because: (1) it allowed wider party participation than the congressional caucus; (2) it integrated state-level parties into national organizations; (3) it produced more politically credible nominees by demonstrating party-wide support; (4) it adapted to mass-electorate politics in ways the caucus could not.

AP students should be able to identify the specific 1831-32 sequence and explain why the convention format displaced the caucus.

QUESTION 7

Clay states: Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky (Clay's home state), Maryland (partially), Massachusetts, Rhode Island = 49 EV. Wirt state: Vermont only (7 EV). National Republican pattern: New England-based commercial states plus Clay's personal Kentucky base. The geographic pattern reveals the National Republican coalition as the residual Federalist coalition of the 1820s plus Clay's upper-South base - a regional party without national reach. Anti-Masonic pattern: Vermont was the strongest Anti-Masonic state because of its rural Protestant culture, anti-elite politics, and the strong organizational presence of evangelical Christian networks aligned against Freemasonry. The Anti-Masonic Party would decline after 1840 as the slavery question displaced anti-Masonry as a salient cleavage. The 1832 map shows the future Whig coalition (National Republican + Anti-Masonic + anti-Jackson Southern states-righters) building gradually - though it would not formally consolidate as a single party until 1834.

AP students should be able to read the 1832 map as a snapshot of the structural opposition that would consolidate into the Whig Party in 1834.

Discussion prompts

1. Nicholas Biddle's decision to push for early Bank recharter in 1832 has been called one of the worst strategic miscalculations in U.S. political history. Identify two specific assumptions Biddle made that turned out to be wrong, and one structural feature of Jacksonian politics that made the assumptions fatal.

2. The 1832 election produced the structural transformation of U.S. presidential nomination procedures. Identify two specific innovations introduced between 1828 and 1832, and explain why the convention format proved more durable than the congressional caucus.