1832

Andrew Jackson vs Henry Clay

A 20-minute lesson on the 1832 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, 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%

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1832

President Jackson had been president for four years. He had made many big decisions. Some people loved him. Some people hated him.

His biggest fight was with a bank. The Second Bank of the United States was a special bank in Philadelphia. The federal government kept its money there. The bank helped businesses borrow money. But Jackson thought the bank was too powerful. He said only a few rich men ran it and they used their power to help themselves.

In 1832 the bank asked Congress to renew its charter - the special permission it needed to keep operating. Congress said yes. But President Jackson said NO. He vetoed the bank charter. He wrote a long message saying the bank was unfair to the common people.

The Bank War made the 1832 election all about Andrew Jackson. Henry Clay ran against him for the new National Republican Party. Clay liked the bank and wanted to save it.

Both parties did something brand new. They had big meetings called national conventions to pick their candidates. The Anti-Masonic Party had been first, in 1831. Then the National Republicans had one. Then the Democrats had theirs in Baltimore. No party ever used the old congressional caucus to pick a presidential



Andrew Jackson was re-elected in 1832 with 219 electoral votes. The election was a referendum on his fight against the Second Bank of the United States.
RALPH E. W. EARL (1788-1838), VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Let's talk about the story

1.

Who won re-election in 1832?

2.

What does it mean when a president vetoes a law?

3.

What was the Bank War about?

Warm-up (5 min)

President Andrew Jackson hated a big bank in Philadelphia called the Second Bank of the United States. He thought it gave too much money power to a small group of rich people. In 1832 he ran for re-election and the bank was the main argument!

Answer key

1.

Andrew Jackson. He won 219 electoral votes - Henry Clay (the National Republican candidate) got 49, and William Wirt (the Anti-Masonic Party candidate) got 7.

Jackson's 1832 re-election consolidated the Democratic Party as the dominant U.S. political organization.

2.

When a president vetoes a law, the president says NO and stops it from taking effect. Congress can try to override the veto with a two-thirds vote in both houses, but that is hard to do. Jackson vetoed the Bank charter renewal in July 1832; Congress did not have the two-thirds majority to override.

Jackson used the veto more than all six previous presidents combined - 12 vetoes in his eight years. He transformed the veto from a constitutional check on Congress into a political weapon.

3.

The Bank War was the big political fight between President Jackson and the Second Bank of the United States. The Bank was a special federal bank in Philadelphia where the U.S. government kept its money. Jackson thought the bank was too powerful and helped only rich people. He vetoed the renewal of the Bank's charter in July 1832. Henry Clay supported the Bank and wanted to save it. The 1832 election was the showdown.

The Bank War lasted from 1832 to 1836. Jackson removed federal deposits from the Bank in 1833 (the Removal of Deposits crisis) and the Bank closed when its charter expired in 1836.