AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1868

Ulysses S. Grant vs Horatio Seymour

A 105-minute lesson on the 1868 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, DBQ pairing, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Reconstruction	ELECTORAL VOTES 294 total
WINNER Ulysses S. Grant (Republican) · 214 EV	RUNNER-UP Horatio Seymour (Democratic) · 80 EV
KEY ISSUE Reconstruction policy; Black suffrage; wartime debt repayment	TURNOUT 80.9%

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3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1868: Ulysses S. Grant vs Horatio Seymour

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 conditions in U.S. politics by 1868 that would make a Republican victory likely. For each, identify the specific 1865-1868 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1868 election was the 21st U.S. presidential election. It was the first U.S. presidential election after the Civil War; the first in which Black Americans in the South could legally vote; and the first to test whether the constitutional changes of Reconstruction could be sustained politically. The election produced Ulysses S. Grant's decisive victory and confirmed Republican control of Reconstruction for another four years. Its structural significance was the demonstration that multiracial democracy was politically possible in the United States - a demonstration that would be progressively dismantled between 1877 and 1965. The political environment was dominated by Reconstruction. After Lincoln's April 1865 assassination, Vice President Andrew Johnson - a War Democrat from Tennessee - had become the 17th president. Johnson and the Radical Republican congressional majority had fundamentally conflicting visions of Reconstruction. The conflict produced: the 1865 Black Codes; the 1866 Civil Rights Act (passed over Johnson's veto); the Fourteenth Amendment (ratified July 9, 1868); the 1867 Reconstruction Acts (placing the South under military rule); the 1867 Tenure of Office Act; and Johnson's February 1868 impeachment. The Senate trial ended May 16, 1868 with Johnson acquitted by 35-19 - one short of removal. The Republican Party met in Chicago on May 20-21, 1868. The convention nominated Ulysses S. Grant unanimously on the first ballot. Grant was 46 years old, the Union army's top general during the Civil War. He had accepted Robert E. Lee's April 9, 1865 surrender at Appomattox Court House. He had been Johnson's Secretary of War briefly (August 1867 - February 1868) before resigning over the Tenure of Office Act dispute. Schuyler Colfax of Indiana was the vice presidential candidate. The Republican platform supported federal protection of Black civil rights, continued Reconstruction, gradual debt reduction, and amnesty for most former Confederates. The Democratic Party met in New York City on July 4-9, 1868. The convention deadlocked through 21 ballots before nominating former Governor Horatio Seymour

of New York on the 22nd ballot - a Peace Democrat who had opposed Lincoln during the Civil War. Frank Blair Jr. of Missouri was the vice presidential candidate; Blair's June 1868 "Brodhead letter" advocated Black disenfranchisement and military reversal of Reconstruction state governments. The Democratic platform attacked Reconstruction as "unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void."

The 1868 election was politically transformative for several reasons. (1) The 1867 Reconstruction Acts had required Southern states to allow Black male voters as a condition of readmission to the Union. Seven of the eleven former Confederate states had been readmitted under Reconstruction governments by November 1868. Black voters in these states cast hundreds of thousands of votes - the first significant Black voting in U.S. history. (2) Black voters supported Grant overwhelmingly (around 90%). (3) Three former Confederate states (Mississippi, Texas, Virginia) had not yet been readmitted and did not vote. (4) The Ku Klux Klan conducted violent suppression of Black voters in parts of Georgia and Louisiana.

Grant won 214 electoral votes to Seymour's 80. Grant carried 26 of 34 voting states. The popular vote was 3,013,650 (52.7%) to 2,708,744 (47.3%). Grant's margin in the popular vote (305,000) was smaller than the estimated Black vote (around 700,000) in his column - meaning that without Black voters, Seymour might have won the popular vote.

Grant was inaugurated March 4, 1869. His two terms would deliver: the February 1870 Fifteenth Amendment ratification; the 1870-71 Enforcement Acts and Ku Klux Klan Act; the 1872 Amnesty Act; the 1872 re-election (286-66 over Horace Greeley running on the Liberal Republican / Democratic fusion ticket); the 1875 Civil Rights Act; but also major corruption scandals (Credit Mobilier 1872-73, Whiskey Ring 1875, Indian Ring 1876). The September 1873 Panic produced a deep depression. The 1877 Compromise would effectively end Reconstruction.

The 1872 election deserves brief contextualization here since it built on 1868. The Liberal Republican Party formed in 1872 from Republicans dissatisfied with Grant administration corruption and continued Reconstruction enforcement. Liberals nominated newspaper editor Horace Greeley, who was also endorsed by the Democratic Party. Grant won easily (286-66), but the Liberal Republican defection demonstrated that Northern Republican commitment to Reconstruction was already eroding. Greeley died in November 1872 before the Electoral College met; his 66 popular-vote electors scattered.

The Reconstruction Era's end was structural. The September 1873 Panic produced economic depression. Federal commitment to Black civil rights weakened as Northern white voters became more focused on economic recovery than on Southern racial justice. The 1873 Slaughterhouse Cases narrowed the 14th Amendment's Privileges and Immunities Clause. The 1876 United States v. Cruikshank decision restricted federal authority to prosecute private racial violence. The 1875 Civil Rights

		Act was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1883 (Civil Rights Cases). The 1877 Compromise resolving the disputed 1876 election withdrew federal troops from the South in exchange for Hayes's installation. Without federal military protection, Southern Reconstruction governments fell to white Democratic "Redemption" between 1877 and 1879. The 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision constitutionalized "separate but equal," and the post-1890 Southern state constitutions effectively disenfranchised Black voters until the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Historians treat the 1868 election as the high-water mark of Radical Reconstruction. The 1870s saw progressive erosion of Reconstruction commitments under continued Republican rule. By 1900 the political settlement of 1868 had been substantially reversed at the state level, even though the Reconstruction Amendments remained in the Constitution. The structural lesson: constitutional change requires sustained political enforcement; the 14th and 15th Amendments were on the books from 1868-1870, but they would not be substantively enforced for nearly a century.
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

Reconstruction
The 1865-1877 period when the federal government tried to rebuild the South after the Civil War and protect the rights of newly freed Black Americans. Ended with the 1877 Compromise that withdrew federal troops from the South.

Reconstruction Acts of 1867
The federal laws that placed the former Confederacy under military rule and required Southern states to ratify the 14th Amendment, allow Black male voters, and adopt new state constitutions as conditions of readmission to the Union.

Ku Klux Klan
A violent white-supremacist organization founded in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1865-1866 by former Confederate soldiers. The 1871 federal Ku Klux Klan Act produced 5,000 indictments and over 600 convictions; the Klan effectively dissolved by 1873 under federal pressure (though it would be re-founded in 1915).

Liberal Republican Party
The 1872 splinter party formed by Republicans dissatisfied with Grant administration corruption and Reconstruction enforcement. Nominated newspaper editor Horace Greeley, also endorsed by the Democratic Party. Lost decisively to Grant; demonstrated erosion of Northern Republican commitment to Reconstruction.

1877 Compromise
The informal political settlement of the disputed 1876 election. Republicans accepted Rutherford B. Hayes's election in exchange for the withdrawal of federal troops from the South. Effectively ended Reconstruction and inaugurated the Jim Crow era.

Reconstruction Amendments
The 13th (1865 - abolished slavery), 14th (1868 - citizenship and equal protection), and 15th (1870 - race-based voting rights) constitutional amendments. The constitutional foundation of post-Civil-War civil rights law. Substantively under-enforced from 1877 to 1965.

Tenure of Office Act
The 1867 federal law limiting the president's ability to fire Cabinet officials without Senate consent. Johnson's violation in firing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton was the basis for his February 1868 impeachment. Repealed in 1887.

Enforcement Acts of 1870-71
Three federal laws strengthening federal protection of Black voting rights against private violence. The 1871 Ku Klux Klan Act was the third and most important. Authorized federal prosecution of state officials and private citizens who suppressed civil rights.

Slaughterhouse Cases
1873 Supreme Court 5-4 decision narrowing the 14th Amendment's Privileges and Immunities Clause to federal privileges only. Effectively removed federal protection of most civil rights from state interference. One of the most-criticized 19th-century Supreme Court decisions.

First Inaugural Address

ULYSSES S. GRANT, MARCH 4, 1869

Grant took the oath at the East Portico of the U.S. Capitol on March 4, 1869, two months after Andrew Johnson's troubled term ended. Johnson did not attend the inauguration. Grant's address was strikingly brief - 1,128 words. He explicitly endorsed the 15th Amendment (then in the ratification process) and supported continued federal protection of Black civil rights.

> *"The country having just emerged from a great rebellion, many questions will come before it for settlement in the next four years which preceding Administrations have never had to deal with. In meeting these it is desirable that they should be approached calmly, without prejudice, hate, or sectional pride, remembering that the greatest good to the greatest number is the object to be attained. This requires security of person, property, and free religious and political opinion in every part of our common country, without regard to local prejudice. All laws to secure these ends will receive my best efforts for their enforcement."*

Grant, "First Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1869). 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

ULYSSES S. GRANT, MARCH 4, 1869

"The country having just emerged from a great rebellion, many questions will come before it for settlement in the next four years which preceding Administrations have never had to deal with. In meeting these it is desirable that they should be approached calmly, without prejudice, hate, or sectional pride, remembering that the greatest good to the greatest number is the object to be attained. This requires security of person, property, and free religious and political opinion in every part of our common country, without regard to local prejudice. All laws to secure these ends will receive my best efforts for their enforcement."

Grant, "First Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1869). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Ku Klux Klan Act (Third Enforcement Act)

U.S. CONGRESS, APRIL 20, 1871

"That if two or more persons within any State shall band, conspire, or combine together to overthrow, or to put down, or to destroy by force the government of the United States, or to levy war against the United States, or to oppose by force the authority of the government of the United States, or by force, intimidation, or threat to prevent, hinder, or delay the execution of any law of the United States, or by force to seize, take, or possess any property of the United States contrary to the authority thereof, or by force, intimidation, or threat to prevent any person from accepting or holding any office or trust or place of confidence under the United States, or from discharging the duties thereof, or by force, intimidation, or threat to induce any officer of the United States to leave any State, district, or place where his duties as such officer might lawfully be performed... each and every person so offending shall be deemed guilty of a high crime."

U.S. Congress, "Ku Klux Klan Act" (Washington, DC, April 20, 1871). Public domain.

The 1868 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 (Grant's Inaugural) that commits to federal enforcement of civil rights. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Ku Klux Klan Act) that authorizes federal prosecution of private intimidation. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources address federal enforcement of civil rights. Identify the specific aspect each source addresses.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source B was passed two years after Source A. What does the temporal gap tell you about how Grant's rhetorical commitment was operationalized into specific federal statutes?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source B authorized 5,000 indictments and over 600 convictions in 1871-72. Identify two specific 1872-1900 developments that progressively limited this federal enforcement capacity.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Which 1873 Supreme Court decision narrowed the 14th Amendment's Privileges and Immunities Clause?

( ) A. Plessy v. Ferguson
( ) B. United States v. Cruikshank
( ) C. Slaughterhouse Cases
( ) D. Civil Rights Cases

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

The 1877 Compromise resolving the disputed 1876 election:

( ) A. Strengthened Reconstruction enforcement
( ) B. Withdrew federal troops from the South
( ) C. Established the Justice Department
( ) D. Created the Federal Election Commission

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was Reconstruction-era federal enforcement structural, contingent, or foundational? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Grant's 1869 Inaugural (Source A) commits the federal government to "best efforts for ... enforcement" of laws securing civil rights. The 1871 Ku Klux Klan Act (Source B) operationalizes that commitment by authorizing federal prosecution of private violence against civil rights. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1865-1900 period, evaluate the extent to which the Reconstruction-era federal enforcement of Black civil rights was (a) a structural success that established constitutional protections for the next 150 years, (b) a contingent moment of federal commitment that depended on continued Northern political will and could not survive the 1873 Panic and the 1877 Compromise, or (c) a foundational moment whose constitutional achievements (the Reconstruction Amendments) provided the legal infrastructure for the 1960s civil rights movement nearly a century later. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the structural-vs-contingent-vs-foundational axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the 1867 Reconstruction Acts, the 1875 Civil Rights Act, the 1873 Slaughterhouse Cases, the 1877 Compromise, the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision. 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: "All laws to secure these ends will receive my best efforts for their enforcement", "this requires security of person, property, and free religious and political opinion in every part of our common country, without regard to local prejudice", "the greatest good to the greatest number is the object to be attained". The "best efforts for their enforcement" phrase is the cleanest commitment.

Grant's framing committed presidential authority to civil-rights enforcement - the structural basis of the 1870-71 Enforcement Acts.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "if two or more persons within any State shall band, conspire, or combine together to overthrow, or to put down, or to destroy by force the government of the United States", "by force, intimidation, or threat to prevent any person from accepting or holding any office", "each and every person so offending shall be deemed guilty of a high crime". The "by force, intimidation, or threat" framing is the cleanest authorization.

The Act's "force, intimidation, or threat" language explicitly extends federal jurisdiction to private violence.

QUESTION 3

Source A addresses the executive commitment to enforce civil-rights laws. Source B addresses the legislative authorization that gave the executive the specific powers needed for enforcement. Together they reveal the structural sequence: presidential commitment (1869) ’ legislative implementation (1870-71) ’ judicial enforcement (1871-72 prosecutions).

AP students should be able to identify the executive-legislative-judicial sequence as a deliberate constitutional structure.

QUESTION 4

The two-year gap between Source A (March 1869) and Source B (April 1871) covers the February 1870 ratification of the 15th Amendment, the May 1870 First Enforcement Act, the February 1871 Second Enforcement Act, and the April 1871 Ku Klux Klan Act. The temporal gap reveals that Grant's 1869 rhetorical commitment was operationalized into specific legislative authority over a 25-month period. The structural lesson: presidential commitment alone is insufficient - it must be backed by congressional legislation creating the specific powers needed for enforcement. Without the Enforcement Acts, Grant's 1869 framing would have been purely rhetorical.

AP students should be able to articulate the relationship between presidential commitment and legislative implementation.

QUESTION 5

Accept any two of: (1) The 1873 Slaughterhouse Cases narrowing the 14th Amendment's Privileges and Immunities Clause. (2) The 1873 Panic producing economic depression that shifted Northern political priorities away from Southern civil rights. (3) The 1875 United States v. Cruikshank decision restricting federal authority to prosecute private racial violence. (4) The 1877 Compromise withdrawing federal troops from the South. (5) The 1883 Civil Rights Cases striking down the 1875 Civil Rights Act's public accommodations provisions. (6) The 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision constitutionalizing "separate but equal." (7) The post-1890 Southern state constitutional conventions effectively disenfranchising Black voters through poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses. The 1877 Compromise and the 1883 Civil Rights Cases are the strongest single developments.

AP students should be able to identify multiple specific judicial and political developments that limited federal civil-rights enforcement.

QUESTION 6

Slaughterhouse Cases. The 1873 Supreme Court 5-4 decision narrowed the 14th Amendment's Privileges and Immunities Clause to federal privileges only. Effectively removed federal protection of most civil rights from state interference.

AP students should know the Slaughterhouse Cases as the structural narrowing of the 14th Amendment.

QUESTION 7

Withdrew federal troops from the South. The 1877 Compromise was the informal political settlement of the disputed 1876 election. Republicans accepted Rutherford B. Hayes's election in exchange for the withdrawal of federal troops from the South. Effectively ended Reconstruction and inaugurated the Jim Crow era.

AP students should know the 1877 Compromise as the structural endpoint of Reconstruction.

QUESTION 8

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