AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1900

William McKinley vs William Jennings Bryan

A 105-minute lesson on the 1900 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, DBQ pairing, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Progressive Era	ELECTORAL VOTES 447 total
WINNER William McKinley (Republican) · 292 EV	RUNNER-UP William Jennings Bryan (Democratic) · 155 EV
KEY ISSUE Imperialism and the Philippine-American War; prosperity and the gold standard	TURNOUT 73.7%

CONTENTS

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3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1900: William McKinley vs William Jennings Bryan

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 1900 America that would make foreign policy a major presidential election issue for the first time. For each, identify the specific 1898-1900 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1900 election was the 29th U.S. presidential election. It produced William McKinley's 292-155 electoral-vote victory over William Jennings Bryan - a rematch of the 1896 election. The 1900 result confirmed and expanded the 1896 realignment: McKinley's 292-155 EV margin (137 EV) was larger than his 1896 margin (95 EV). The election's structural significance was the confirmation of the Republican-dominant alignment and the elevation of Theodore Roosevelt to the vice presidency - leading to his assumption of the presidency after McKinley's September 1901 assassination. The political conditions had been transformed by the 1898 Spanish-American War and the subsequent Philippine-American War. The Treaty of Paris (December 1898) gave the U.S. the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam; Cuba became formally independent. The Philippine-American War began in February 1899 when Filipino independence fighters refused to accept U.S. colonization. The war would kill approximately 4,200 American soldiers and at least 200,000 Filipino civilians. The brutality produced an Anti-Imperialist League including Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, Samuel Gompers, Jane Addams, William James, and former Republican president Benjamin Harrison. The Republican National Convention met in Philadelphia on June 19-21, 1900 and renominated McKinley on the first ballot. Theodore Roosevelt - the 41-year-old governor of New York and famous Rough Rider Colonel - was selected as the new vice presidential candidate (Hobart had died November 1899). Mark Hanna's famous warning: "Don't any of you realize that there's only one life between this madman and the White House?" The Republican platform endorsed the gold standard, the Dingley Tariff, the Spanish colonial acquisitions, and an isthmian canal. The Democratic National Convention met in Kansas City on July 4-6, 1900 and renominated Bryan by acclamation. The Democratic platform endorsed free silver, tariff reduction, an income tax, and anti-imperialism.

The campaign's primary issues: prosperity ("Four years more of the full dinner pail") and imperialism vs anti-imperialism. McKinley delegated active campaigning to Theodore Roosevelt - 21,209 miles by train, 673 speeches in 24 states. Republican fundraising approximately $2.5 million; Bryan's approximately $350,000.

McKinley won 292 electoral votes to Bryan's 155. McKinley carried 28 states; Bryan carried 17 states. The popular vote: McKinley 7,228,864 (51.6%); Bryan 6,370,932 (45.5%); Woolley 209,004 (Prohibition, 1.5%); Debs 87,945 (Social Democratic, 0.6%); Barker 50,989 (Populist, 0.4%). McKinley-Bryan popular-vote margin: 861,495.

McKinley was inaugurated to a second term on March 4, 1901. Six months later, on September 6, 1901, he was shot at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York by anarchist Leon Czolgosz. McKinley died on September 14, 1901. Czolgosz was tried, convicted, and executed October 29, 1901.

Theodore Roosevelt took the oath on September 14, 1901 at the home of Ansley Wilcox in Buffalo. Roosevelt was 42 years old - the youngest U.S. president in history. Mark Hanna's reported reaction: "Now look! That damned cowboy is President of the United States!"

Roosevelt's presidency (1901-09) transformed American politics. The Square Deal agenda: trust-busting (Northern Securities 1902, Standard Oil 1906 leading to 1911 breakup); federal regulation (Hepburn Act 1906, Pure Food and Drug Act 1906, Meat Inspection Act 1906); conservation (150 million acres of national forests, U.S. Forest Service 1905, 5 new national parks); foreign policy (Panama Canal 1903, Roosevelt Corollary 1904, Russo-Japanese War mediation 1905 - first U.S. Nobel Peace Prize 1906). Roosevelt won the 1904 election (336-140 EV over Alton B. Parker) and declined to run again in 1908 - passing the Republican nomination to William Howard Taft.

The 1900 election's retrospective significance was the production of Roosevelt's succession that inaugurated the Progressive Era. The Progressive Era (approximately 1900-1920) would produce: (1) The federal government's active role in regulating corporate behavior (Sherman Act enforcement, Clayton Antitrust Act 1914, FTC 1914). (2) The federal government's active role in conservation. (3) The federal government's active role in foreign policy. (4) The presidency as the dominant political-policy actor. (5) Progressive constitutional amendments: 16th (income tax, 1913), 17th (direct election of senators, 1913), 18th (Prohibition, 1919), 19th (women's suffrage, 1920).

The Republican Party's structural transformation under Roosevelt would produce the 1912 split. Roosevelt - having declined to run in 1908 - reconsidered after Taft's 1909-12 presidency proved more conservative than Progressive. Roosevelt sought

		the 1912 Republican nomination; lost it to Taft at the Republican Convention; bolted to form the Progressive Party (the "Bull Moose Party"). The 1912 split produced Woodrow Wilson's Democratic victory - the only Democratic break in 1896-1932 Republican dominance (excluding Wilson's 1916 narrow re-election). The 1900 election's long-term structural significance was thus fourfold. First, it confirmed the 1896 realignment as stable. Second, it produced the Roosevelt succession that inaugurated the Progressive Era. Third, it set up the 1912 Republican split that would briefly elect Wilson. Fourth, it inaugurated the structural transformation of U.S. federal government - from limited 19th-century governance to active 20th-century governance.
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

Theodore Roosevelt
McKinley's 1900 running mate and the 26th U.S. president (1901-09). Rough Rider colonel in Cuba 1898, NY governor 1899-1900. Became president at age 42 after McKinley's assassination.

Spanish-American War
The April-August 1898 war between the U.S. and Spain. Treaty of Paris (December 1898) gave U.S. the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam.

Anti-Imperialist League
The 1898-1920 American organization opposing U.S. colonization. Members included Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, Samuel Gompers, Jane Addams, William James, former Republican president Benjamin Harrison.

Square Deal
Theodore Roosevelt's 1901-09 progressive policy agenda. Trust-busting, federal regulation, conservation, foreign policy expansion.

Progressive Era
The approximately 1900-1920 period of U.S. political reform. Produced the 16th-17th-18th-19th Amendments, federal regulation of corporate behavior, conservation, women's suffrage. Began with Roosevelt's 1901 succession and extended through Wilson's 1913-21 presidency.

Full dinner pail
McKinley's 1900 campaign slogan: "Four years more of the full dinner pail."

Philippine-American War
The February 1899-1902 war between U.S. forces and Filipino independence fighters. Killed ~4,200 American soldiers and at least 200,000 Filipino civilians.

Leon Czolgosz
The anarchist who assassinated President McKinley on September 6, 1901 at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. McKinley died September 14, 1901; Czolgosz executed October 29, 1901.

Roosevelt Corollary
The December 1904 addition to the Monroe Doctrine. Roosevelt declared U.S. responsibility for maintaining order in the Western Hemisphere - asserting U.S. authority to intervene in Latin American nations to prevent European intervention. Operationalized through 1905 U.S. military occupation of the Dominican Republic.

Second Inaugural Address

WILLIAM MCKINLEY, MARCH 4, 1901

McKinley took the oath at the East Portico of the U.S. Capitol on March 4, 1901 - his second term following the 1900 rematch victory over Bryan. The address defended the Spanish-American War acquisitions. Six months later, McKinley would be assassinated; this address was his final political testament.

> *"No one can think that even now our work in respect to these new territories is finished. Some people lecturing on the lessons of the Spanish War, have entirely missed its meaning. There is the very real lesson of national obligation, and of the necessities of national strength. We are not advised which way our duty leads. The path of duty is plain. We must adopt for them our highest standards of government. We must instruct, develop, protect. We must continue our progress in extension of the principles of free government, of self-government, of representative government, of constitutional government, until they shall stand on a higher and broader plane than ever before. Our country shall be even greater than our fathers dreamed of."*

McKinley, "Second Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1901). 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

Second Inaugural Address

WILLIAM MCKINLEY, MARCH 4, 1901

"No one can think that even now our work in respect to these new territories is finished. Some people lecturing on the lessons of the Spanish War, have entirely missed its meaning. There is the very real lesson of national obligation, and of the necessities of national strength. We are not advised which way our duty leads. The path of duty is plain. We must adopt for them our highest standards of government. We must instruct, develop, protect. We must continue our progress in extension of the principles of free government, of self-government, of representative government, of constitutional government, until they shall stand on a higher and broader plane than ever before. Our country shall be even greater than our fathers dreamed of."

McKinley, "Second Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1901). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Annual Message to Congress (Roosevelt Corollary)

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, DECEMBER 6, 1904

"Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power. If every country washed by the Caribbean Sea would show the progress in stable and just civilization which with the aid of the Platt Amendment Cuba has shown since our troops left the island, and which so many of the republics in both Americas are constantly and brilliantly showing, all question of interference by this Nation with their affairs would be at an end."

Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress" (Washington, DC, December 6, 1904). Public domain.

The 1900 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 (McKinley's 1901 Inaugural) articulating the imperial civilizing-mission ideology. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Roosevelt Corollary) declaring U.S. responsibility for hemispheric order. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources articulate U.S. imperial responsibilities but from different positions in the 1898-1904 sequence. Identify the specific political function each source performs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Roosevelt's "international police power" framing extends the Monroe Doctrine (1823) significantly. What is the substantive change?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Theodore Roosevelt's succession after McKinley's assassination inaugurated the Progressive Era. Identify three specific Square Deal policies that transformed federal government from limited 19th-century governance to active 20th-century governance.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How old was Theodore Roosevelt when he became president?

( ) A. 38
( ) B. 42
( ) C. 47
( ) D. 53

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

In what year did the Roosevelt Corollary appear in the annual message?

( ) A. 1902
( ) B. 1903
( ) C. 1904
( ) D. 1905

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the 1900 election about realignment, Progressive Era, or imperial role? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

McKinley's 1901 Inaugural (Source A) articulated the American imperial civilizing-mission ideology - "we must instruct, develop, protect" the Spanish-acquired territories. Roosevelt's 1904 Corollary (Source B) extended this philosophy to declare U.S. responsibility for "international police power" in the Western Hemisphere. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1898-1932 period, evaluate the extent to which the 1900 election's structural significance was (a) the confirmation of the 1896-1932 Republican realignment as stable, (b) the contingent production of Roosevelt's succession that inaugurated the Progressive Era domestic reforms (Square Deal, conservation, trust-busting), or (c) the establishment of the U.S. global imperial role that would shape 20th-century foreign policy through World War I, the Roosevelt Corollary interventions, and beyond. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the realignment-vs-Progressive-Era-vs-imperial-role axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Spanish-American War, the Philippine-American War, the Square Deal, the Roosevelt Corollary, the 1912 Republican split, the Wilson presidency. 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: "We must instruct, develop, protect", "the path of duty is plain. We must adopt for them our highest standards of government", "We must continue our progress in extension of the principles of free government". The "we must instruct, develop, protect" phrase is the most distinctive articulation of the civilizing-mission ideology.

McKinley's framing established U.S. responsibility for non-Western colonial administration.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention", "the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power", "all question of interference by this Nation with their affairs would be at an end". The "international police power" phrase is the cleanest declaration of U.S. hemispheric responsibility.

Roosevelt's framing extended the Monroe Doctrine from defensive to interventionist.

QUESTION 3

Source A is McKinley's presidential commitment to the imperial civilizing-mission ideology - articulated as the incoming second-term President to commit U.S. policy to administering the Spanish-acquired territories rather than granting them independence. The function is to legitimize U.S. colonial administration as morally necessary. Source B is Roosevelt's Corollary - articulated three years later (December 1904), after McKinley's assassination, as the incumbent President to commit U.S. policy to active intervention in Latin America. The function is to operationalize and extend McKinley's imperial vision from explicit colonies to a broader Western Hemisphere protectorate. Together, the sources show the structural evolution of U.S. imperial doctrine from the specific 1898 acquisitions to the broader 1904 hemispheric responsibility.

AP students should be able to articulate the doctrinal evolution.

QUESTION 4

The Monroe Doctrine (1823) declared that the Western Hemisphere was closed to further European colonization but did NOT commit the U.S. to intervene in Latin American nations. It was a defensive policy: it told Europeans to stay out without obligating the U.S. to act when they did not. The Roosevelt Corollary (1904) added a new component: when Latin American nations engaged in "chronic wrongdoing" or showed "impotence" that "loosens the ties of civilized society," the U.S. was obligated to intervene to prevent European intervention. The substantive change: (1) From defensive (telling Europeans no) to offensive (intervening directly in Latin American nations). (2) From limiting European action to expanding U.S. action. (3) From a U.S.-self-defense doctrine to a U.S.-hegemony doctrine. The Corollary established U.S. responsibility to police the Western Hemisphere - the structural foundation of 20th-century U.S. interventionism in Latin America (Cuba 1906-09, Nicaragua 1912-25, Haiti 1915-34, Dominican Republic 1916-24, and dozens of subsequent interventions).

AP students should be able to articulate the doctrinal extension.

QUESTION 5

Roosevelt's Square Deal transformed federal government in three structural ways: (1) Trust-busting and antitrust enforcement. The Northern Securities case (1902) was the first major application of the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act; the 1904 Supreme Court ruling established federal authority to break up monopolies. The 1906 Standard Oil case led to the 1911 Supreme Court breakup of Standard Oil. The structural transformation: the federal government accepted responsibility for regulating corporate market power. (2) Federal regulation of corporate behavior. The Hepburn Act 1906 strengthened the ICC's railroad-rate authority; the Pure Food and Drug Act 1906 and Meat Inspection Act 1906 established federal food/drug regulation (following Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle"). The structural transformation: the federal government accepted responsibility for regulating consumer-facing corporate behavior. (3) Conservation. Roosevelt established 150 million acres of national forests (compared to 47 million inherited from prior presidents), the U.S. Forest Service 1905, the Bureau of Reclamation 1902, and 5 new national parks. The structural transformation: the federal government accepted responsibility for managing natural resources rather than disposing them through Homestead Act-style privatization.

AP students should be able to articulate three specific Square Deal transformations.

QUESTION 6

42. Roosevelt was 42 years old at his September 14, 1901 oath - the youngest U.S. president in history.

AP students should know Roosevelt's age.

QUESTION 7

1904. The Roosevelt Corollary appeared in the December 6, 1904 annual message - one month after Roosevelt's decisive November 1904 election victory over Alton B. Parker (336-140 EV).

AP students should know the December 1904 date.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the realignment-vs-Progressive-Era-vs-imperial-role axis, (2) avoid treating them as equivalent, (3) signal at least one piece of evidence from each source.

The thesis sketch is preparatory. The LEQ rubric evaluates the full essay.