AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1904

Theodore Roosevelt vs Alton B. Parker

A 105-minute lesson on the 1904 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, DBQ pairing, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Progressive Era	ELECTORAL VOTES 476 total
WINNER Theodore Roosevelt (Republican) · 336 EV	RUNNER-UP Alton B. Parker (Democratic) · 140 EV
KEY ISSUE Trust-busting; progressive reform; Roosevelt's Square Deal	TURNOUT 65.5%

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3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1904: Theodore Roosevelt vs Alton B. Parker

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 1900-1904 America that would produce a decisive Progressive Republican victory in 1904. For each, identify the specific 1901-1904 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1904 election was the 30th U.S. presidential election. It produced Theodore Roosevelt's 336-140 electoral-vote victory over Alton B. Parker - Roosevelt's first election as president in his own right. Roosevelt's 196-EV margin and 2,545,514 popular-vote margin were the largest presidential margins since Lincoln's 1864 victory. Roosevelt won 56.4% of the popular vote - the highest percentage since Grant's 1872 re-election. Roosevelt's three-and-a-half-year first term had been remarkably active. Major Square Deal achievements: (1) The March 1902 antitrust suit against Northern Securities Company. The March 14, 1904 Supreme Court ruling (5-4) against Northern Securities established federal authority under the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act to break up monopolies. (2) The October 1902 anthracite coal strike mediation - first time a U.S. president intervened in a labor dispute as a neutral arbiter. (3) The 1903 Panama Revolt and November 1903 Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty granting the U.S. a 10-mile-wide Canal Zone. (4) The June 1902 Reclamation Act. (5) The 1903 Department of Commerce and Labor. (6) Conservation expansion - 75 million acres of new national forests by 1904. The Republican National Convention met in Chicago on June 21-23, 1904 and nominated Roosevelt by acclamation. Charles W. Fairbanks of Indiana was VP. The Democratic National Convention met in St. Louis on July 6-9, 1904 and nominated Chief Judge Alton B. Parker of the New York Court of Appeals. Henry G. Davis of West Virginia (80 years old) was VP. The Democratic platform was vague; Parker telegraphed clarification of his gold-standard position after nomination. The Bryan wing was deeply unhappy. The Socialist Party of America was emerging. Eugene V. Debs of Indiana won 402,810 popular votes in 1904 - more than four times his 1900 total. Debs would receive 6% in 1912 (the Socialist peak) and 913,693 votes in 1920 (from federal prison for opposing World War I draft).

The campaign was unusual. Roosevelt was restricted by tradition from active campaigning. Republican fundraising approximately $2.2 million; Democratic approximately $700,000.

Roosevelt won 336 electoral votes to Parker's 140. Roosevelt carried 32 states; Parker carried 13 states. The popular vote: Roosevelt 7,630,557 (56.4%); Parker 5,083,880 (37.6%); Debs 402,810 (3.0%); Swallow 259,102 (1.9%); Watson 114,070 (0.8%). Roosevelt-Parker popular-vote margin: 2,546,677.

On Election Night, Roosevelt issued a statement: "Under no circumstances will I be a candidate for or accept another nomination." The statement followed the unwritten two-term tradition.

Roosevelt's second term (1905-09) deepened the Square Deal: June 1906 Hepburn Act; June 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act (after Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle"); June 1906 Meat Inspection Act; June 1906 Antiquities Act; December 1904 Roosevelt Corollary; September 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth (Russo-Japanese War mediation; 1906 Nobel Peace Prize - first U.S. president); 1907 Panic management; 1907 Tillman Act prohibiting corporate political contributions.

The 1908 succession was consequential. Roosevelt selected William Howard Taft as his successor; Taft won the November 1908 election (321-162 EV over Bryan in Bryan's third presidential run). Taft's 1909-12 presidency proved more conservative than Roosevelt expected - fired Progressive appointees, supported the Payne-Aldrich Tariff. By 1912, Roosevelt was attempting to recover the Republican nomination.

The 1912 Republican Convention denied Roosevelt the nomination in favor of Taft. Roosevelt bolted to form the Progressive Party ("Bull Moose Party"). The Roosevelt-Taft split produced Woodrow Wilson's Democratic victory (435-88 EV over Roosevelt 88 and Taft 8). The 1904 promise had foreclosed the simpler path of 1908 renomination.

The 1904 election's structural significance was threefold. First, it confirmed Roosevelt's personal political mandate for Progressive reform. Second, it demonstrated that conservative Democratic strategy could not break the Republican alignment - Parker's 37.6% was the worst Democratic percentage since Reconstruction. Third, Roosevelt's Election Night promise would shape U.S. politics for the next eight years.

The Square Deal's broader structural significance for 20th-century U.S. governance: Roosevelt established the federal government's active regulatory role over corporate behavior, the federal government's active role in conservation, and the federal government's active role in foreign policy. These transformations would be deepened by Wilson (1913-21), FDR (1933-45), and the post-1945 federal regulatory state.

		The 1904-1909 Roosevelt presidency is widely cited as the structural inflection point between 19th-century limited federal government and 20th-century active federal government. The Progressive Era (1900-1920) would produce constitutional amendments operationalizing many of the late 19th-century Populist demands: 16th Amendment (income tax, 1913); 17th Amendment (direct election of senators, 1913); 18th Amendment (Prohibition, 1919); 19th Amendment (women's suffrage, 1920). Federal regulatory expansion: Federal Reserve Act 1913, Clayton Antitrust Act 1914, Federal Trade Commission 1914, Federal Farm Loan Act 1916, Adamson Act 1916, Espionage Act 1917, Sedition Act 1918. The Progressive Era transformations would shape U.S. federal government structure through the 1920s, the New Deal, and the post-1945 federal state.
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

Square Deal
Theodore Roosevelt's 1901-09 progressive policy agenda. Four pillars: trust-busting, federal regulation, conservation, labor protection.

Alton B. Parker
The 1904 Democratic presidential nominee. Conservative gold-standard New York judge. Lost 336-140 EV with 37.6% popular vote.

Northern Securities case
The March 1902 federal antitrust suit. The March 1904 Supreme Court ruling established federal authority to break up monopolies.

Pure Food and Drug Act
The June 1906 federal law prohibiting interstate commerce in misbranded or adulterated foods/drugs. Spurred by Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" (February 1906).

Tillman Act
The January 1907 federal law prohibiting corporate political contributions to federal candidates. First federal campaign finance regulation. Sponsored by Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina.

Speak softly and carry a big stick
Theodore Roosevelt's foreign-policy motto. Operationalized through Navy expansion, Roosevelt Corollary, Panama Canal, Russo-Japanese War mediation.

Eugene V. Debs
American socialist labor leader. Founded the American Socialist Party 1901. Ran for president 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912, 1920 (from federal prison).

Hepburn Act
The June 1906 federal law strengthening the Interstate Commerce Commission's authority to set maximum railroad rates.

Antiquities Act
The June 1906 federal law enabling presidential designation of national monuments. Roosevelt used it to designate 18 national monuments including the Grand Canyon (1908) and Devils Tower (1906).

First Annual Message to Congress

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, DECEMBER 3, 1901

Roosevelt delivered this annual message to Congress on December 3, 1901 - three months after assuming the presidency. The "great corporations" passage establishes the framework that would produce the Northern Securities case (1902) and the Square Deal's broader regulation of corporate behavior.

> *"There is a widespread conviction in the minds of the American people that the great corporations known as trusts are in certain of their features and tendencies hurtful to the general welfare. This springs from no spirit of envy or uncharitableness, nor lack of pride in the great industrial achievements that have placed this country at the head of the nations struggling for commercial supremacy. It is based upon sincere conviction that combination and concentration should be, not prohibited, but supervised and within reasonable limits controlled; and in my judgment this conviction is right. Combination of capital like combination of labor is a necessary element in our present industrial system. It is not possible completely to prevent it; and if it were possible, such complete prevention would do no good. If our political institutions were perfect, they would absolutely prevent the political success of the great corporation in any form. They are not perfect, and the great corporations have been able to make themselves felt as a power in politics."*

Roosevelt, "First Annual Message to Congress" (Washington, DC, December 3, 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

First Annual Message to Congress

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, DECEMBER 3, 1901

“There is a widespread conviction in the minds of the American people that the great corporations known as trusts are in certain of their features and tendencies hurtful to the general welfare. This springs from no spirit of envy or uncharitableness, nor lack of pride in the great industrial achievements that have placed this country at the head of the nations struggling for commercial supremacy. It is based upon sincere conviction that combination and concentration should be, not prohibited, but supervised and within reasonable limits controlled; and in my judgment this conviction is right. Combination of capital like combination of labor is a necessary element in our present industrial system. It is not possible completely to prevent it; and if it were possible, such complete prevention would do no good. If our political institutions were perfect, they would absolutely prevent the political success of the great corporation in any form. They are not perfect, and the great corporations have been able to make themselves felt as a power in politics.”

Roosevelt, "First Annual Message to Congress" (Washington, DC, December 3, 1901). Public domain.

SOURCE B

The New Nationalism speech

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, AUGUST 31, 1910

“The American people are right in demanding that New Nationalism, without which we cannot hope to deal with new problems. The New Nationalism puts the national need before sectional or personal advantage. It is impatient of the utter confusion which results from local legislatures attempting to treat national issues as local issues. It is still more impatient of the impotence which springs from over-division of governmental powers, the impotence which makes it possible for local selfishness or for legal cunning, hired by wealthy special interests, to bring national activities to a deadlock. This New Nationalism regards the executive power as the steward of the public welfare. It demands of the judiciary that it shall be interested primarily in human welfare rather than in property, just as it demands that the representative body shall represent all the people rather than any one class or section of the people.”

Roosevelt, "The New Nationalism speech" (Osawatomie, Kansas, August 31, 1910). Public domain.

The 1904 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 (Roosevelt's 1901 message) articulating the Square Deal framework. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (1910 New Nationalism) articulating Roosevelt's welfare-state framework. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources articulate Progressive philosophy but from different positions in Roosevelt's career trajectory. Identify the specific political function each source performs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Roosevelt's 1910 speech demands that the judiciary be "interested primarily in human welfare rather than in property." How does this compare to his 1901 framework?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Many Progressive Era reforms were operationalized through constitutional amendments (16th-19th). Identify three of these amendments and their specific Progressive Era purposes.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

What was Roosevelt's percentage of the popular vote in 1904?

( ) A. 48.3%
( ) B. 51.6%
( ) C. 56.4%
( ) D. 60.8%

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

In what year did Roosevelt deliver the New Nationalism speech?

( ) A. 1906
( ) B. 1908
( ) C. 1910
( ) D. 1912

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the 1904 election about Square Deal confirmation, broader Progressive Era foundation, or contingent 1912-split production? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Roosevelt's 1901 message to Congress (Source A) articulated his Square Deal framework of "supervised and within reasonable limits controlled" corporate regulation. Roosevelt's 1910 New Nationalism speech (Source B) articulated a more comprehensive Progressive agenda demanding active federal welfare provision. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1901-1932 period, evaluate the extent to which the 1904 election's structural significance was (a) the confirmation of Roosevelt's 1901 Square Deal framework as a viable national political position, (b) the foundation for the broader Progressive Era reforms that would dominate 1908-1920 U.S. politics including constitutional amendments (16th-19th), federal regulatory expansion (Federal Reserve, Clayton Antitrust, FTC), and labor reforms, or (c) the contingent event that produced Roosevelt's Election Night promise that foreclosed 1908 renomination and produced the 1912 Republican split. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the Square-Deal-vs-Progressive-Era-vs-1912-split axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Northern Securities case, the anthracite coal strike, the Roosevelt Corollary, the Hepburn Act, the 1912 split, the Wilson presidency, the 16th-19th Amendments. 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: "combination and concentration should be, not prohibited, but supervised and within reasonable limits controlled", "Combination of capital like combination of labor is a necessary element in our present industrial system", "the great corporations have been able to make themselves felt as a power in politics". The "supervised and within reasonable limits controlled" phrase is the cleanest articulation.

Roosevelt's 1901 framing established the regulatory framework.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "the executive power as the steward of the public welfare", "interested primarily in human welfare rather than in property", "The New Nationalism puts the national need before sectional or personal advantage", "the representative body shall represent all the people rather than any one class or section of the people". The "human welfare rather than in property" phrase is the most rhetorically distinctive welfare-state articulation.

The 1910 framing extended the 1901 framework toward active federal welfare provision.

QUESTION 3

Source A is Roosevelt's 1901 presidential commitment to corporate regulation - articulated three months into his accidental presidency to establish his Square Deal framework. The function is to define the federal government's constitutional authority to regulate corporate behavior - a structural departure from the Hanna-McKinley laissez-faire orthodoxy. Source B is Roosevelt's 1910 post-presidential political manifesto - articulated 18 months after leaving office, with the 1912 Republican nomination contest approaching. The function is to articulate a more comprehensive Progressive vision that would distinguish Roosevelt from both Taft's conservative Republicanism and the conservative Democratic establishment. Together, the sources show the structural evolution of Roosevelt's political philosophy from 1901 regulatory moderation to 1910 welfare-state progressivism. The 1904 election's position in this trajectory: confirmation of 1901 framework, foundation for 1906-1910 expansion, but also unique moment of political dominance that the 1904 promise would foreclose.

AP students should be able to articulate the philosophical evolution.

QUESTION 4

The 1910 "human welfare rather than in property" framing represents a significant evolution from the 1901 Square Deal framework. The 1901 framework: regulate corporations to prevent harm but accept the structural primacy of property rights. The 1910 framework: actively reorganize judicial doctrine to prioritize human welfare over property rights. Specific developments: (1) The 1910 framework reflects Roosevelt's frustration with Supreme Court decisions that had limited Progressive reforms (Lochner v. New York 1905 striking down New York's 10-hour bakery law as violation of "liberty of contract"; Adair v. United States 1908 striking down federal prohibition of "yellow-dog contracts"). (2) The 1910 framework anticipates Roosevelt's 1912 Progressive Party platform demand for popular review of judicial decisions on constitutional questions - a structural challenge to judicial supremacy. (3) The 1910 framework anticipates the 1937 Supreme Court "switch in time that saved nine" that accepted New Deal regulation of commerce, labor, and welfare provision. The structural significance: Roosevelt was articulating in 1910 the philosophical foundation for what would become 20th-century constitutional liberalism - the priority of human welfare over property rights in constitutional interpretation.

AP students should be able to articulate the constitutional-philosophy evolution.

QUESTION 5

Three Progressive Era constitutional amendments and their specific purposes: (1) 16th Amendment (February 1913) - authorized federal income tax without apportionment among states. Purpose: shift federal revenue from tariffs (which fell on consumers and were structurally regressive) to income tax (which was structurally progressive). Operationalized in the 1913 Underwood Tariff. (2) 17th Amendment (April 1913) - required direct popular election of U.S. senators (replacing election by state legislatures). Purpose: reduce corrupt corporate influence over the Senate and increase democratic accountability. Originally a Populist 1892 Omaha Platform demand. (3) 18th Amendment (January 1919) - prohibited the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors. Purpose: address the social and economic costs of alcohol consumption through federal regulation; reflected Progressive Era social-reform commitments. Repealed by the 21st Amendment (December 1933). (4) 19th Amendment (August 1920) - prohibited denial of the vote based on sex. Purpose: extend voting rights to women - a Progressive Era demand that had been a 19th-century reform priority. Operationalized through state-by-state ratification campaigns. Additional Progressive reforms: secret ballot (by 1900); Federal Reserve Act 1913; Clayton Antitrust Act 1914; Federal Trade Commission 1914; Federal Farm Loan Act 1916; Adamson Act 1916; Federal Highway Act 1916.

AP students should know multiple Progressive Era amendments and reforms.

QUESTION 6

56.4%. Roosevelt won 7,630,557 popular votes out of approximately 13,520,000 - 56.4% of the total. This was the highest percentage of any presidential candidate since Grant's 1872 re-election (55.6%).

AP students should know the 56.4% Roosevelt percentage.

QUESTION 7

1910. Roosevelt delivered the New Nationalism speech at Osawatomie, Kansas on August 31, 1910 - 18 months after leaving the presidency and two years before the 1912 Roosevelt-Taft Republican split.

AP students should know the 1910 New Nationalism speech.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the Square-Deal-vs-Progressive-Era-vs-1912-split 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.