AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1912

Woodrow Wilson vs Theodore Roosevelt

A 105-minute lesson on the 1912 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, DBQ pairing, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Progressive Era	ELECTORAL VOTES 531 total
WINNER Woodrow Wilson (Democratic) · 435 EV	RUNNER-UP Theodore Roosevelt (Progressive) · 88 EV
KEY ISSUE Progressive reform; trust-busting; tariff; Republican Party civil war	TURNOUT 59.0%

CONTENTS

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3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1912: Woodrow Wilson vs Theodore Roosevelt

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 1908-1912 America that would produce a Republican Party split. For each, identify the specific 1909-1911 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1912 election was the 32nd U.S. presidential election. It produced Woodrow Wilson's 435-88-8 electoral-vote victory over Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft - the only major Democratic break in 1896-1932 Republican dominance. The election was a four-way race involving three Progressive candidates (Wilson, Roosevelt, Debs) and a conservative incumbent (Taft). Roosevelt's decision to bolt the Republican Party after losing the nomination produced the structural split that elected Wilson. The political conditions had been transformed by the Roosevelt-Taft feud. The Payne-Aldrich Tariff (August 1909) and Ballinger-Pinchot affair (January 1910) had alienated Roosevelt. November 1910 midterm: Democrats gained 58 House seats. Roosevelt's August 1910 New Nationalism speech at Osawatomie articulated a comprehensive Progressive alternative to Taft. The Republican National Convention met in Chicago on June 18-22, 1912 and nominated Taft on the first ballot despite Roosevelt's 9-of-12 primary victories. Roosevelt and Progressive Republicans bolted. The Progressive National Convention August 5-7, 1912 nominated Roosevelt by acclamation; Hiram Johnson of California was VP. Roosevelt: "We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord." The Democratic National Convention met in Baltimore on June 25 - July 2, 1912 and nominated Wilson on the 46th ballot after Bryan switched from Champ Clark. Thomas R. Marshall of Indiana was VP. Wilson was 55, former Princeton president and New Jersey governor - the only academic professor ever elected president. The Socialist Party of America nominated Eugene V. Debs for the fourth time. Debs won 901,551 popular votes (6.0%) - the Socialist Party's electoral peak. The campaign featured four competing political frameworks: Roosevelt's New Nationalism, Wilson's New Freedom, Taft's conservative Republicanism, and Debs's

socialism. The October 14, 1912 Schrank shooting in Milwaukee added drama; Roosevelt gave his 90-minute speech with the bullet still in his chest.

Wilson won 435 electoral votes; Roosevelt 88; Taft 8. Wilson carried 40 states; Roosevelt 6; Taft 2. The popular vote: Wilson 6,296,284 (41.8%); Roosevelt 4,122,721 (27.4%); Taft 3,486,242 (23.2%); Debs 901,551 (6.0%).

Taft's 8 EV was the worst incumbent president result in U.S. history. Wilson's 41.8% was less than Bryan's 43.0% in 1908. The combined Roosevelt + Taft popular vote (50.6%) showed unified Republicans would have won.

Wilson was inaugurated March 4, 1913. He governed as a Progressive Democrat: October 1913 Underwood Tariff (41% ’ 27%); December 1913 Federal Reserve Act; October 1914 Clayton Antitrust Act; September 1914 Federal Trade Commission Act; July 1916 Federal Farm Loan Act; September 1916 Adamson Act; September 1916 Workmen's Compensation Act. Constitutional amendments: 16th (income tax) operationalized 1913; 17th (direct election of senators) April 1913; 18th (Prohibition) January 1919; 19th (women's suffrage) August 1920.

The 1916 rematch between Wilson and Republican Charles Evans Hughes (without Roosevelt third-party challenge) would be close: Wilson 277-254 EV with 49.2% to 46.1% - decided by California by 3,773 votes. Wilson's narrow 1916 re-election demonstrated that the 1912 result had been entirely a product of the Republican split.

Roosevelt's political career effectively ended with 1912. He attempted to recover the 1916 Republican nomination but lost to Hughes. He died January 6, 1919 - too late to attempt a 1920 campaign. Roosevelt's last major statement was strident opposition to Wilson's 1918 League of Nations.

The Bull Moose Party effectively dissolved after 1912. Most Progressive Republicans returned to the Republican Party by 1916. The Progressive Party ran a final candidate in 1916 (John M. Parker of Louisiana, 0.2%); after 1916, the party dissolved.

Wilson's 1913-21 presidency would be defined by three structural phases: (1) The 1913-16 domestic Progressive reform phase. (2) The 1917-18 World War I phase - declaration of war April 6, 1917; Espionage Act 1917 and Sedition Act 1918; armistice November 11, 1918. (3) The 1919-21 post-war phase - Versailles Treaty negotiations January-June 1919; League of Nations rejection by Senate; Wilson's September 1919 stroke; 1920 Republican landslide (Harding 404-127) returning Republicans to power.

The 1912 election's structural significance was fourfold. First, it was the only major Democratic break in 1896-1932 Republican dominance. Second, it demonstrated the structural power of third-party splits to produce minority-faction victories - Wilson won

		41.8% of the popular vote and 435 EV. Third, it produced the Wilson presidency that would deeply transform U.S. governance through World War I, the post-war settlement, and four constitutional amendments (16th-19th). Fourth, it ended Roosevelt's political career and produced the Republican reunification that would dominate 1920-1932. The Progressive Era's structural significance for 20th-century U.S. governance: the 1900-1920 reforms transformed the federal government from limited 19th-century governance to active 20th-century governance. Federal regulatory expansion (Federal Reserve, FTC, Clayton, ICC enhancements); federal labor regulation (Adamson Act, Workmen's Compensation, child-labor restrictions); federal social provision (Federal Farm Loan, Federal Children's Bureau); constitutional democratization (16th income tax, 17th direct senators, 19th women's suffrage). The Progressive transformations would be deepened by FDR's 1933-45 New Deal (Social Security, FDIC, NLRB, FLSA, AAA) and the post-1945 federal welfare state. The 1912 election can be analyzed retrospectively as the peak of Progressive Era political momentum. After 1912, the structural conditions for further Progressive reform would gradually weaken: World War I (1917-18) interrupted domestic reform; the post-war recession (1919-21) shifted political priorities; the 1920s Republican dominance (1921-29) returned to laissez-faire economic policy. The Progressive Era's structural transformations would be consolidated rather than expanded between 1920 and 1932. The 1929 stock market crash and Great Depression would then create the structural conditions for FDR's 1932 victory and the New Deal extension of Progressive 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

Bull Moose Party (Progressive Party)
The 1912 third party formed by Theodore Roosevelt. Won 88 EV - best third-party result in U.S. history.

New Nationalism vs New Freedom
The contrasting 1912 Progressive policy frameworks.

Schrank shooting
The October 14, 1912 attempt to assassinate Theodore Roosevelt in Milwaukee.

Federal Reserve Act
The December 1913 federal law creating the Federal Reserve System.

Federal Trade Commission Act
The September 1914 federal law creating the FTC.

Woodrow Wilson
The 28th U.S. president (1913-21). Former Princeton president and New Jersey governor.

Eugene V. Debs (1912 peak)
Socialist Party presidential candidate. 1912 was the Socialist Party's electoral peak: 901,551 votes (6.0%).

Underwood Tariff
The October 1913 federal law substantially reducing tariff rates (from 41% to 27%).

Clayton Antitrust Act
The October 1914 federal law strengthening the 1890 Sherman Act.

19th Amendment
August 1920 constitutional amendment prohibiting denial of vote based on sex. Originally a Progressive Party 1912 platform demand.

The New Nationalism speech

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, AUGUST 31, 1910

Roosevelt delivered this speech at Osawatomie, Kansas on August 31, 1910 - 18 months after leaving the presidency and two years before the 1912 Republican Convention. The speech articulated a more comprehensive Progressive agenda than the Square Deal.

> *"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.

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

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.

SOURCE B

The New Freedom (acceptance address)

WOODROW WILSON, AUGUST 7, 1912

"I have not a doubt of the rectitude of the laws which authorize the Sherman Act, and the necessity of carrying them through to the bitter end. But I cannot agree with the men who insist that the trusts must be regulated and controlled, not destroyed. I think we shall finally have to admit that the trusts must be destroyed; that monopoly cannot stand in a free country in the long run; and that there is no escape from the proposition that, while some combinations of capital are necessary for the conduct of large enterprise, those combinations must be made subject to free competition and to the inspection of the public. The whole question of monopoly, as the recent campaign brought it out, is the question of whether or not we shall have free industry in the United States in the future, free for all who are competent to be engaged in it, and not merely a privilege for those who are already big enough to oppress."

Wilson, "The New Freedom (acceptance address)" (Sea Girt, NJ, August 7, 1912). Fair use under 17 USC §107 — educational excerpt of public political speech, ~150 words.

The 1912 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 New Nationalism) articulating the active-federal-government philosophy. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Wilson's New Freedom) articulating the antitrust-and-free-competition framework. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources articulate Progressive philosophy but with contrasting mechanisms. Identify the specific political function each source performs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Wilson's Source B says "the trusts must be destroyed" while Roosevelt's Source A says combinations should be "regulated." Did Wilson's 1913-21 presidency follow his New Freedom framework, or did it adopt elements of Roosevelt's New Nationalism?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

The 1916 election (Wilson vs Hughes) was close (Wilson 277-254 EV, decided by CA by 3,773 votes). What does the 1916 close result reveal about the 1912 Wilson victory?

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many of the 12 state Republican primaries did Roosevelt win in 1912?

( ) A. 6
( ) B. 8
( ) C. 9
( ) D. 11

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

In what year was the 19th Amendment (women's suffrage) ratified?

( ) A. 1916
( ) B. 1918
( ) C. 1920
( ) D. 1922

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the 1912 election about framework-coexistence, Wilson-presidency, or Progressive-peak? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Roosevelt's 1910 New Nationalism speech (Source A) articulated the case for strong federal regulation of corporations as the structural foundation of his 1912 Progressive Party. Wilson's 1912 New Freedom acceptance speech (Source B) articulated the contrasting case for breaking up monopolies through antitrust enforcement and free competition. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1909-1932 period, evaluate the extent to which the 1912 election's structural significance was (a) the demonstration that two contrasting Progressive frameworks could coexist as serious political alternatives during a Republican party split, (b) the only major Democratic break in 1896-1932 Republican dominance that produced a Wilson presidency capable of transforming U.S. federal governance through 1913-21 reforms and constitutional amendments, or (c) the peak of Progressive Era political momentum that would shape 20th-century U.S. governance through New Deal extension and post-1945 welfare-state consolidation. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the framework-coexistence-vs-Wilson-presidency-vs-Progressive-peak axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff, the Ballinger-Pinchot affair, the 1916 Wilson-Hughes election, the Federal Reserve Act, the Clayton Antitrust Act, the 16th-19th Amendments, the 1932 New Deal. 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: "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", "the representative body shall represent all the people rather than any one class or section of the people", "puts the national need before sectional or personal advantage". The "executive power as the steward of the public welfare" phrase is the most distinctive Roosevelt formulation.

Roosevelt's framing articulated the Stewardship doctrine.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "the trusts must be destroyed; that monopoly cannot stand in a free country in the long run", "the whole question of monopoly, as the recent campaign brought it out, is the question of whether or not we shall have free industry in the United States in the future", "free for all who are competent to be engaged in it, and not merely a privilege for those who are already big enough to oppress". The "trusts must be destroyed" phrase is the cleanest articulation of New Freedom.

Wilson's framing distinguished the New Freedom approach.

QUESTION 3

Source A is Roosevelt's pre-1912 political manifesto - articulated 18 months after leaving the presidency to define a Progressive alternative to Taft's judicial-temperament conservatism. The function is to articulate a comprehensive vision of active federal government that would become the structural foundation for the 1912 Progressive Party platform. Source B is Wilson's acceptance speech - articulated as the Democratic nominee to differentiate his approach from Roosevelt's New Nationalism while embracing the broader Progressive reform agenda. The function is to claim the Progressive label for Democrats while emphasizing competition restoration over corporate regulation. Together, the sources reveal the structural intellectual diversity of 1912 Progressivism: Roosevelt's regulation-of-bigness framework and Wilson's competition-restoration framework. The disagreement was over mechanism, not over Progressive reform goals.

AP students should be able to articulate the framework distinction.

QUESTION 4

Wilson's 1913-21 presidency adopted BOTH frameworks rather than purely the New Freedom approach. New Freedom elements operationalized: (1) Clayton Antitrust Act October 1914 - strengthened antitrust through specific prohibitions on monopolistic practices and exempted labor unions. (2) Underwood Tariff October 1913 - substantial tariff reduction (41% ’ 27%) to reduce monopoly advantage. (3) Federal Reserve Act December 1913 - eliminated J.P. Morgan-style private banker control over federal monetary policy. New Nationalism elements adopted: (1) Federal Reserve Act December 1913 - while New Freedom in eliminating private control, the FRS was structurally New Nationalism in centralizing federal monetary authority. (2) Federal Trade Commission Act September 1914 - federal regulatory agency overseeing business practices, exactly the New Nationalism approach. (3) Adamson Act September 1916 - federal labor regulation (8-hour day for railroad workers) directly contradicting New Freedom's preference for state-level reform. (4) Federal Farm Loan Act July 1916 - federal credit provision. (5) Federal Workmen's Compensation Act September 1916 - federal labor protection. The 1916 Wilson re-election platform was substantively closer to Roosevelt's 1912 New Nationalism than to Wilson's own 1912 New Freedom. The lesson: governance typically blends competing campaign frameworks into structural compromise; the New Freedom-vs-New Nationalism distinction was politically meaningful in 1912 but substantively dissolved by 1916.

AP students should be able to articulate the framework synthesis.

QUESTION 5

The 1916 election's close result reveals that the 1912 Wilson victory had been entirely a product of the Republican split. Specific evidence: (1) Wilson's 1916 popular vote (49.2%) was 7.4 percentage points HIGHER than his 1912 popular vote (41.8%). Wilson was MORE popular in 1916 than 1912. (2) Yet Wilson's 1916 EV total DROPPED from 435 to 277 - a 158-EV decline. (3) California - a Roosevelt state in 1912 - decided 1916 by just 3,773 votes for Wilson. (4) The 1916 Republican vote (Hughes 46.1%, 8.5M votes) was higher than the combined 1912 Roosevelt + Taft vote. The structural lesson: 1912 was a Republican election that Wilson won by exploiting the Republican split; 1916 was a Republican election that Wilson narrowly won by being a strong incumbent who had governed effectively. The 1920 Republican landslide (Harding 404-127 EV) confirmed the 1896-1932 Republican alignment's structural dominance.

AP students should be able to articulate the structural lesson.

QUESTION 6

9. Roosevelt won 9 of the 12 state Republican primaries in 1912. The state primaries were used for the first time in 1912; Roosevelt's primary success (1.4M votes vs Taft's 766K) was politically significant but did not control the Republican Convention. Taft's control of the convention's credentials committee determined the nomination.

AP students should know the Roosevelt 9/12 primary record.

QUESTION 7

1920. The 19th Amendment was ratified August 18, 1920 - the centennial of Wyoming's 1869 territorial enfranchisement of women. The amendment was operationalized in the November 1920 presidential election.

AP students should know the 1920 ratification.

QUESTION 8

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

The thesis sketch is preparatory.