AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1916

Woodrow Wilson vs Charles Evans Hughes

A 105-minute lesson on the 1916 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) · 277 EV	RUNNER-UP Charles Evans Hughes (Republican) · 254 EV
KEY ISSUE World War I neutrality; progressive domestic reforms (Federal Reserve, labor laws)	TURNOUT 61.8%

CONTENTS

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2. Lesson plan (105 min) + framework alignment
3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1916: Woodrow Wilson vs Charles Evans Hughes

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 1916 America that would produce a close presidential election. For each, identify the specific 1913-1916 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1916 election was the 33rd U.S. presidential election. It produced Woodrow Wilson's 277-254 electoral-vote victory over Republican Charles Evans Hughes - the closest U.S. presidential election since 1888. The election was decided by California, which Wilson won by just 3,773 votes. The 1916 result was the first Democratic presidential re-election since Andrew Jackson in 1832 (84 years earlier). The political conditions had been transformed by World War I. The war had begun in Europe on July 28, 1914. By 1916, the war had killed approximately 5 million people. The U.S. response had been complicated. Most Americans wanted neutrality. Wilson had declared neutrality in August 1914. The Lusitania sinking (May 7, 1915) produced major U.S. outrage. The Sussex Pledge (May 1916) temporarily defused the submarine crisis. Domestic Progressive reform defined Wilson's 1913-16 first term: Underwood Tariff October 1913; Federal Reserve Act December 1913; Clayton Antitrust Act October 1914; Federal Trade Commission Act September 1914; Federal Farm Loan Act July 1916; Adamson Act September 1916; Workmen's Compensation Act September 1916; Keating-Owen Child Labor Act September 1916. The Democratic National Convention met in St. Louis on June 14-16, 1916 and renominated Wilson by acclamation. Thomas R. Marshall was renominated as VP. The Republican National Convention met in Chicago on June 7-10, 1916 and nominated Hughes on the third ballot. Hughes resigned from the Supreme Court on June 10, 1916 - the same day he was nominated. Charles W. Fairbanks was VP. The Progressive Party nominated Roosevelt, who declined June 26, 1916 - effectively dissolving the Progressive Party. The campaign focused on World War I neutrality and Progressive reform. The Wilson slogan "He kept us out of war" was structurally devastating against Hughes. The August 1916 Hughes-Johnson California snub damaged Hughes in California.

Wilson won 277 electoral votes to Hughes's 254. Wilson carried 30 states; Hughes carried 18 states. The popular vote: Wilson 9,126,868 (49.2%); Hughes 8,548,728 (46.1%); Benson (Socialist) 590,524 (3.2%); Hanly (Prohibition) 221,302 (1.2%); Parker (Progressive) 36,378 (0.2%). Wilson-Hughes popular-vote margin: 578,140.

The 1916 result was decided by California. Wilson won California by 3,773 votes. Election Night drama: the New York Times printed "Hughes Wins" before Western state results came in.

Wilson was inaugurated to a second term on March 4, 1917. One month later, on April 2, 1917, Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. Causes: Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare February 1, 1917; Zimmermann Telegram (February 1917); German U-boat sinkings of U.S. ships. Congress declared war April 6, 1917. The U.S. mobilized 4.7 million soldiers and lost 116,516 American military deaths.

Wilson's 1917-21 second term: November 11, 1918 armistice; January 1918 Fourteen Points speech; January-June 1919 Versailles Treaty negotiations; Senate rejected the League of Nations November 1919 and March 1920; Wilson's September 1919 stroke. 1920 Republican landslide (Harding 404-127 EV).

The 1916 election's structural significance was threefold. First, it demonstrated that the 1912 Wilson victory had been entirely a product of the Republican split. With the Republican Party reunited, Wilson's 1916 margin was just 23 EV. Second, it produced Wilson's 1917-21 second term that would deeply transform U.S. governance through World War I. Third, it inaugurated the Wilsonian doctrine of democratic internationalism that would shape 20th-century U.S. foreign policy.

The World War I U.S. experience (April 1917 - November 1918) transformed U.S. domestic governance and global role. Domestic effects: (1) Federal economic mobilization - the War Industries Board (July 1917), the Food Administration (under Herbert Hoover), the Fuel Administration, the National War Labor Board. (2) Federal regulation of dissent - the Espionage Act (June 1917) and Sedition Act (May 1918) prohibited criticism of the war effort. Eugene V. Debs imprisoned for opposing the draft. (3) Federal income tax expansion - rates rose to 77% on top incomes by 1918. (4) Federal prohibition - the 18th Amendment (ratified January 1919) prohibited the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors. (5) Federal women's suffrage - the 19th Amendment (ratified August 1920) prohibited denial of the vote based on sex. Global effects: (1) U.S. emergence as the dominant world economic power - American war loans to the Allies, postwar reconstruction credit. (2) Wilson's Fourteen Points framework for the post-war settlement. (3) The League of Nations (founded 1920) - the structural precursor to the United Nations.

The 1919-21 post-war period would prove politically devastating for Wilson. The Sen-

		ate's rejection of the League of Nations (November 1919, March 1920) eliminated U.S. participation in the international institution Wilson had championed. Wilson's September 25, 1919 stroke left him incapacitated; Edith Wilson functionally governed the U.S. for the remainder of his term. The 1920 election (Harding 404-127 EV) returned Republicans to power and inaugurated the 1920s Republican dominance. The Wilsonian doctrine of democratic internationalism would prove structurally enduring despite Wilson's 1919-20 setbacks. The framework would be operationalized through: (1) FDR's 1941 Atlantic Charter and 1945 founding of the United Nations. (2) The 1947 Truman Doctrine. (3) The Marshall Plan (1948). (4) NATO (1949). (5) Subsequent 20th-century U.S. interventions justified by democratic-promotion rhetoric. The 1916 election can be analyzed retrospectively as the structural foundation for the modern U.S. global role - the war that Wilson promised to keep the U.S. out of would transform the U.S. into the world's dominant power.
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

He kept us out of war
Wilson's 1916 campaign slogan promising continued U.S. neutrality.

California 1916
The state that decided the 1916 presidential election. Wilson won California by 3,773 votes.

Zimmermann Telegram
German diplomatic communication (January 1917) offering Mexico the return of Texas/NM/AZ if Mexico would attack the U.S.

Sussex Pledge
May 4, 1916 German commitment to stop sinking passenger ships without warning. Repudiated by Germany on January 31, 1917.

Fourteen Points
Wilson's January 8, 1918 speech to Congress articulating the framework for the post-war settlement. Included: freedom of the seas, free trade, arms reduction, self-determination of nations, and a League of Nations. The actual Versailles Treaty (June 1919) was much harsher than Wilson's framework.

Charles Evans Hughes
The 1916 Republican presidential nominee. Former NY governor and Supreme Court Justice. Lost to Wilson 277-254 EV. Later: Secretary of State 1921-25, Chief Justice 1930-41.

Lusitania
British passenger liner sunk by German U-boat on May 7, 1915. 1,198 dead including 128 Americans.

Adamson Act
September 1916 federal law establishing the 8-hour workday for interstate railroad workers.

Wilsonianism (democratic internationalism)
The doctrine articulated by Wilson in his April 2, 1917 War Message that "the world must be made safe for democracy." Core elements: U.S. moral obligation to defend democracy globally; democratic governance as appropriate for all nations; international institutions to constrain autocratic behavior.

Address to Joint Session of Congress (War Message)

WOODROW WILSON, APRIL 2, 1917

Wilson delivered this address to a Joint Session of Congress on the evening of April 2, 1917 - five months after his November 1916 re-election. The address was Wilson's formal request for a declaration of war against Germany. Congress declared war on April 6, 1917.

> *"The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them. Just because we fight without rancor and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples, we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe with proud punctilio the principles of right and of fair play we profess to be fighting for."*

Wilson, "Address to Joint Session of Congress" (Washington, DC, April 2, 1917). 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

Address to Joint Session of Congress (War Message)

WOODROW WILSON, APRIL 2, 1917

"The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them. Just because we fight without rancor and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples, we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe with proud punctilio the principles of right and of fair play we profess to be fighting for."

Wilson, "Address to Joint Session of Congress" (Washington, DC, April 2, 1917). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Fourteen Points

WOODROW WILSON, JANUARY 8, 1918

"XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike. In regard to these essential rectifications of wrong and assertions of right we feel ourselves to be intimate partners of all the governments and peoples associated together against the Imperialists. We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end. For such arrangements and covenants we are willing to fight and to continue to fight until they are achieved; but only because we wish the right to prevail and desire a just and stable peace such as can be secured only by removing the chief provocations to war, which this programme does remove."

Wilson, "Fourteen Points" (Washington, DC, January 8, 1918). Public domain.

The 1916 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 (Wilson's 1917 War Message) articulating the doctrine of democratic internationalism. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Wilson's 1918 Fourteen Points) establishing the League of Nations framework. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources articulate Wilsonian doctrine but at different points in U.S. World War I involvement. Identify the specific political function each source performs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Wilson's "general association of nations" framework was operationalized through the League of Nations. The U.S. Senate rejected the League in November 1919 and March 1920. What does the rejection reveal about U.S. political will to operationalize Wilsonian doctrine?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

The Wilsonian doctrine survived its 1919-20 setbacks and became the structural framework for 20th-century U.S. foreign policy. Identify three specific 1941-1949 developments that operationalized the Wilsonian framework.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

By how many electoral votes did Wilson defeat Hughes in 1916?

( ) A. 17
( ) B. 23
( ) C. 37
( ) D. 52

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

In what month and year did Wilson deliver the Fourteen Points speech?

( ) A. April 1917
( ) B. January 1918
( ) C. November 1918
( ) D. June 1919

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the 1916 election about 1912-split-demonstration, Wilson-second-term-foundation, or Wilsonianism-inauguration? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Wilson's April 1917 War Message (Source A) articulated the doctrine of democratic internationalism - "the world must be made safe for democracy." Wilson's January 1918 Fourteen Points (Source B) operationalized this doctrine through a comprehensive framework for the post-war international settlement including a "general association of nations." Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1914-1932 period, evaluate the extent to which the 1916 election's structural significance was (a) the demonstration that the 1912 Wilson victory had been entirely a product of the Republican split, (b) the foundation for the 1917-21 Wilson second term that would transform U.S. governance and global role through World War I, or (c) the inauguration of the Wilsonian doctrine of democratic internationalism that would shape 20th-century U.S. foreign policy through World War II, the United Nations, and the Cold War. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the 1912-split-vs-Wilson-second-term-vs-Wilsonianism axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Federal Reserve Act, the Sussex Pledge, the Zimmermann Telegram, the Espionage Act, the League of Nations rejection, the 1920 Republican landslide, the 18th-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: "The world must be made safe for democracy", "We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion", "We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind", "Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty". The "safe for democracy" phrase is the most distinctive Wilsonian formulation.

Wilson's framing established the democratic-internationalism doctrine.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike", "we cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end", "for such arrangements and covenants we are willing to fight and to continue to fight until they are achieved". The "general association of nations" phrase established the League of Nations framework.

Wilson's framing established the League framework.

QUESTION 3

Source A is Wilson's 1917 war-declaration speech - articulated as the U.S. entered World War I to justify the structural reversal of his 1916 "He kept us out of war" slogan. The function is to provide moral framework for U.S. war involvement: not selfish national interest but "champions of the rights of mankind." Source B is Wilson's 1918 post-armistice framework - articulated nine months into U.S. participation to define the structural goals of U.S. involvement. The function is to operationalize the 1917 democratic-internationalism doctrine through specific peace-settlement provisions: freedom of the seas, free trade, self-determination, the League of Nations. Together, the sources show the doctrinal evolution of Wilsonianism from 1917 war justification to 1918 post-war framework. The 1916 election's position: the political mandate that enabled Wilson to pursue both.

AP students should be able to articulate the doctrinal evolution.

QUESTION 4

The U.S. Senate's rejection of the League of Nations (November 1919 and March 1920) revealed three structural facts about U.S. political will: (1) The American public's support for European entanglement had collapsed after the war. The U.S. had lost 116,516 soldiers; voters wanted to return to pre-war isolationism. (2) Republican senators (particularly Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts) saw the League as Wilson's personal project to be defeated for partisan advantage. The Lodge Reservations would have required congressional approval for U.S. military commitments under the League - which Wilson refused to accept. (3) The September 1919 Wilson stroke had eliminated Wilson's political effectiveness; he could not personally lobby senators or rally public support. Edith Wilson functionally governed but lacked Wilson's political authority. The cumulative effect: the Wilsonian doctrine's operationalization was structurally rejected by the U.S. political system within 18 months of its articulation. The 1920 Republican landslide (Harding 404-127 EV) confirmed the rejection. The Wilsonian framework would not be operationally adopted by the U.S. until FDR's 1941 Atlantic Charter and 1945 founding of the United Nations - 25 years later.

AP students should be able to articulate the structural rejection.

QUESTION 5

Three 1941-1949 developments operationalized the Wilsonian framework: (1) The August 1941 Atlantic Charter - FDR and Churchill articulated democratic principles (self-determination, freedom of the seas, economic cooperation) that explicitly echoed the Fourteen Points. (2) The June 1945 founding of the United Nations - the structural successor to Wilson's League of Nations. The U.S. Senate ratified the UN Charter 89-2 on July 28, 1945 - a stark contrast to the November 1919 League of Nations rejection. (3) The March 1947 Truman Doctrine - U.S. commitment to support free peoples resisting subjugation; explicitly Wilsonian in its democratic-internationalism framework. Additional operationalizations: April 1948 Marshall Plan (European economic reconstruction); April 1949 NATO (collective defense alliance); 1945-49 International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Bretton Woods Conference 1944). The cumulative effect: by 1949, the Wilsonian framework was the structural foundation of post-WWII U.S. foreign policy. The framework would persist through the Cold War and into the post-Cold War era.

AP students should be able to articulate multiple operationalizations.

QUESTION 6

23. Wilson 277 - Hughes 254 = 23 EV margin. The closest U.S. presidential election since 1888 (Harrison +65 EV after Cleveland won the popular vote).

AP students should know the 23-EV margin.

QUESTION 7

January 1918. Wilson delivered the Fourteen Points speech to a Joint Session of Congress on January 8, 1918 - nine months after the April 6, 1917 declaration of war.

AP students should know the January 1918 date.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the 1912-split-vs-second-term-vs-Wilsonianism axis, (2) avoid treating them as equivalent, (3) signal at least one piece of evidence from each source.

The thesis sketch is preparatory.