AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1932

Franklin D. Roosevelt vs Herbert Hoover

A 105-minute lesson on the 1932 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, DBQ pairing, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA New Deal Coalition	ELECTORAL VOTES 531 total
WINNER Franklin D. Roosevelt (Democratic) · 472 EV	RUNNER-UP Herbert Hoover (Republican) · 59 EV
KEY ISSUE Great Depression; unemployment; New Deal relief, recovery, and reform	TURNOUT 56.9%

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3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1932: Franklin D. Roosevelt vs Herbert Hoover

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 1932 that made a partisan realignment likely. For each, explain how it specifically constrained Hoover's options or expanded Roosevelt's.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	The 1932 election produced the largest single-cycle realignment in American political history. Herbert Hoover, who had won 444 electoral votes in 1928, lost in 1932 by 472 to 59 - a 388-vote swing. Franklin Roosevelt's 57.4 percent popular-vote share was the highest since 1872. Democrats took 313 House seats (up 90) and 59 Senate seats (up 12). The coalition Roosevelt built - urban ethnic Catholics, organized labor, Southern whites, Northern Black voters, and progressive intellectuals - would dominate national politics for the next thirty-six years. The immediate cause was the Great Depression. The October 1929 stock market crash had been followed by three years of contraction. By the summer of 1932, U.S. industrial production had fallen 46 percent below its 1929 peak. Unemployment stood at 23.6 percent and was climbing. Five thousand commercial banks had failed, wiping out $7 billion in deposits (the FDIC did not yet exist). Total wages had fallen 60 percent. Net farm income had collapsed by two-thirds. Tent cities and breadlines had become the visible signature of a four-year economic catastrophe. Hoover's response had been constrained by his philosophy of voluntary cooperation. He believed direct federal relief to individuals would corrupt civic virtue and produce a permanent dependent class. He restricted federal action to (a) jawboning industry leaders to maintain wages, (b) increasing tariffs (Smoot-Hawley, 1930), (c) creating the Reconstruction Finance Corporation in 1932 to lend to banks and railroads, and (d) signing the Federal Home Loan Bank Act to slow foreclosures. He blocked direct federal jobs programs and direct relief on principle. The July 1932 forcible eviction of the Bonus Army veterans from Washington by federal troops under General Douglas MacArthur sealed the political verdict that Hoover was indifferent. Roosevelt's campaign was strategically vague. He had no detailed program, and his policy advisers - the Brain Trust of Columbia and Harvard professors led by Raymond Moley - were still drafting positions through the fall. What Roosevelt offered was a posture: confidence, experimentation, and willingness to use federal power. He

attacked Hoover from the right on the budget (promising a 25 percent cut in federal spending) and from the left on relief (promising direct aid to the unemployed). The contradictions did not matter. Voters were not buying a program; they were buying an attitude.

The Hundred Days (March 9 - June 16, 1933) translated the attitude into legislation. Fifteen major laws passed Congress in fifteen weeks, most drafted in the executive branch and rushed through with minimal floor debate. The Emergency Banking Act (passed in eight hours) stabilized the financial system. The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration created federal jobs programs. The Agricultural Adjustment Act paid farmers to restrict production. The Tennessee Valley Authority began a federal program of regional planning, dam-building, and rural electrification. The National Industrial Recovery Act created industry-by-industry production codes that recognized labor unions and set minimum prices. The Glass-Steagall Banking Act separated commercial and investment banking and created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The Securities Act began federal regulation of stock issuance.

The second wave of New Deal legislation in 1935 went further: the Social Security Act created federal old-age pensions and unemployment insurance; the Wagner Act guaranteed labor unions the right to organize; the Works Progress Administration created the largest federal jobs program in American history (8.5 million employees by 1943). The 1935 measures, sometimes called the Second New Deal, were what made the realignment durable. The conservative coalition that emerged in Congress by 1937 - Southern Democrats plus Republicans - could limit further expansion, but the existing programs were untouchable. Social Security in particular created an entitlement that would survive the Eisenhower, Reagan, and Bush administrations untouched.

Historians treat 1932 as the textbook case of critical realignment: an election in which an economic crisis broke an old majority coalition, mobilized previously inactive voters, and built a new majority around a new ideological project. The Roosevelt coalition lasted until 1968, when Vietnam, civil rights, and urban unrest broke it apart. Some of its institutional residues - Social Security, federal deposit insurance, the SEC, the NLRB - remain part of the basic structure of American economic life.

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

Critical realignment

A presidential election that produces a durable shift in partisan coalitions, lasting one or more generations. 1932 is the textbook example: it built the Democratic majority that would dominate the next thirty-six years.

Smoot-Hawley Tariff

The 1930 federal law raising U.S. tariffs to historic highs. Triggered retaliatory tariffs worldwide, deepened the Depression, and discredited protectionist economics. Hoover signed it over the public protest of 1,028 economists.

Bonus Army

The 1932 protest by 17,000 World War I veterans demanding early payment of a promised 1945 bonus. Hoover ordered the camp evicted; General MacArthur used cavalry and tanks. The political damage to Hoover was decisive.

Second New Deal

The 1935 wave of New Deal legislation: Social Security, the Wagner Act, the Works Progress Administration, the Banking Act of 1935. More structural than the 1933 emergency laws; it built the durable elements of the postwar welfare state.

Court-packing plan

Roosevelt's 1937 proposal to add up to six justices to the Supreme Court. The plan failed in the Senate, but the Court began upholding New Deal legislation shortly after, in what is sometimes called the switch in time that saved nine.

Brain Trust

The informal group of Columbia and Harvard professors (Raymond Moley, Rexford Tugwell, Adolf Berle) who advised Roosevelt on economic policy during the 1932 campaign and early administration. Symbol of the new technocratic style of federal policy-making.

Reconstruction Finance Corporation

The 1932 Hoover-created federal agency that lent money to failing banks, railroads, and corporations. Roosevelt kept and expanded it; it eventually lent to states, local governments, and direct industry rescues during World War II.

Hundred Days

March 9 - June 16, 1933. Fifteen major laws passed Congress in fifteen weeks. The benchmark for every subsequent presidency's opening months.

Schechter v. United States

1935 Supreme Court decision striking down the National Industrial Recovery Act as an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power. Triggered Roosevelt's 1937 court-packing plan.

First Inaugural Address

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, MARCH 4, 1933

Roosevelt took the oath at the East Portico of the U.S. Capitol on March 4, 1933 - the lowest point of the Depression. Banks were collapsing nationwide. Unemployment had reached 24.9 percent. The address combined emergency rhetoric with a deliberate refusal to blame his predecessor by name. The famous opening line is the address's most quoted phrase.

> *"This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself - nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."*

Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1933). 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

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, MARCH 4, 1933

“This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself - nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”

Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, March 4, 1933). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Madison Square Garden Address (closing 1936 campaign speech)

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, OCTOBER 31, 1936

“We had to struggle with the old enemies of peace: business and financial monopoly, speculation, reckless banking, class antagonism, sectionalism, war profiteering. They had begun to consider the Government of the United States as a mere appendage to their own affairs. We know now that Government by organized money is just as dangerous as Government by organized mob. Never before in all our history have these forces been so united against one candidate as they stand today. They are unanimous in their hate for me - and I welcome their hatred.”

Roosevelt, "Madison Square Garden Address" (New York, NY, October 31, 1936). Public domain.

The 1932 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 (FDR's First Inaugural) that frames the Depression as primarily a psychological or attitudinal problem. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (1936 Madison Square Garden) that names the opposition as a structural threat to democratic government. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources are Roosevelt speeches, but they characterize the New Deal's opposition differently. Identify the specific threat each source addresses.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source A was delivered before any New Deal legislation. Source B was delivered after three and a half years of New Deal legislation. What does this temporal ordering tell you about how Roosevelt's rhetoric responded to his own record?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Source B compares organized money to organized mob. Identify one specific 1933-1936 development that would have made this comparison concrete to a 1936 audience.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Which 1935 Supreme Court decision struck down the National Industrial Recovery Act?

( ) A. Schechter v. United States
( ) B. United States v. Butler
( ) C. West Coast Hotel v. Parrish
( ) D. Wickard v. Filburn

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

The Roosevelt coalition built in 1932 dominated American politics until what later election?

( ) A. 1948
( ) B. 1960
( ) C. 1968
( ) D. 1980

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: did the New Deal begin as emergency response and evolve into an ideological commitment, or begin as an ideological commitment masked as emergency response? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Roosevelt's First Inaugural (Source A, 1933) frames the Depression in terms of national emergency requiring united action. His 1936 Madison Square Garden speech (Source B) reframes the same project as an ideological contest between democratic government and organized money. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1932-1937 period, evaluate the extent to which the New Deal began as emergency response and evolved into a durable ideological commitment, or began as an ideological commitment masked as emergency response. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the emergency-vs-ideology axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Hundred Days, the Bonus Army, the Schechter decision, Social Security, the court-packing plan, the 1937 recession. Evidence (2 pts): must quote at least one phrase from each source. Analysis (1 pt): must explicitly evaluate the extent - emergency vs. ideology - rather than treating them as equivalent. Total 5 points.

Answer key

QUESTION 1

Accept any of: "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself", "nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance". Both phrases recast economic collapse as primarily a problem of public confidence.

The framing is strategically chosen. It allowed Roosevelt to demand emergency powers (banking, jobs, agricultural restructuring) without naming an ideological enemy. The 1936 rhetoric will reverse this choice.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "Government by organized money is just as dangerous as Government by organized mob", "they had begun to consider the Government of the United States as a mere appendage to their own affairs", "I welcome their hatred". The "organized money equals organized mob" line is the most explicit framing.

The 1936 speech names "business and financial monopoly" as a specific named enemy in a way the 1933 address pointedly avoided. The shift signals the New Deal's evolution from emergency response to ideological project.

QUESTION 3

Source A treats the threat as collective psychology - paralysis born of unjustified fear. Source B treats the threat as concentrated economic power - business and financial monopoly attempting to govern through wealth. The 1933 framing demands national unity behind emergency measures; the 1936 framing demands partisan combat against named class enemies.

The two framings are politically incompatible: one cannot demand both unity and combat against a named enemy without rhetorical contradiction. Roosevelt's 1933-1936 evolution is the substitution of the second posture for the first.

QUESTION 4

The 1933 Inaugural was the beginning of an emergency response by a candidate who had carefully avoided ideological commitments during the campaign. The 1936 speech defended a record - three years of legislation already on the books - by recasting it as a fight against organized money. The temporal ordering tells you that the ideological framing emerged AFTER the legislative record, not before. The New Deal was an evolving project whose ideological self-understanding caught up with its substance.

This ordering is the central historiographical question of the New Deal's identity. AP students should be able to articulate it.

QUESTION 5

Accept any of: (1) The Schechter v. United States decision (May 1935) striking down the NIRA. (2) United States v. Butler (1936) striking down the Agricultural Adjustment Act. (3) The Liberty League, an organized opposition group of business executives and conservative Democrats founded in 1934. (4) Sit-down strikes by autoworkers in Flint, Michigan, in late 1936. The Court decisions are the strongest single piece of contextual evidence.

The Supreme Court's 1935-36 invalidations of New Deal legislation were the most concrete instance of "organized money" using institutional power to undo the New Deal program. Roosevelt's 1937 court-packing plan was the direct response.

QUESTION 6

Schechter v. United States. The 1935 decision struck down the National Industrial Recovery Act's code-making provisions as an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power to the executive branch.

Schechter triggered Roosevelt's 1937 court-packing plan. The other three answers all came later or addressed different statutes.

QUESTION 7

1968.

The Roosevelt coalition (urban ethnic Catholics, organized labor, Southern whites, Northern Black voters, progressive intellectuals) fractured in 1968 over Vietnam, civil rights, and urban unrest. Nixon's 1968 election broke the coalition; the Reagan realignment in 1980 consolidated the new pattern.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the emergency-vs-ideology axis, (2) avoid treating them as equivalent, (3) signal at least one specific piece of evidence from each source. Award credit for any defensible thesis that meets these three conditions.

The thesis sketch is preparatory. Full credit at the worksheet level requires only a clear position with two pieces of source evidence. The LEQ rubric on the next page evaluates the full essay.