AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1936

Franklin D. Roosevelt vs Alf Landon

A 105-minute lesson on the 1936 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) · 523 EV	RUNNER-UP Alf Landon (Republican) · 8 EV
KEY ISSUE New Deal defense; Supreme Court battles; economic recovery	TURNOUT 61.0%

CONTENTS

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2. Lesson plan (105 min) + framework alignment
3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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7. Answer key + discussion

1936: Franklin D. Roosevelt vs Alf Landon

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 1933-36 America that would produce a presidential re-election landslide. For each identify the specific New Deal policy most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	1936 election was 38th U.S. presidential election. Produced FDR's 523-8 EV victory over Republican Alf Landon. FDR's 60.8% popular vote highest since 1820. 1936 result was structural confirmation of New Deal Democratic coalition that would dominate U.S. politics until 1968. FDR's First 100 Days (March 9 - June 16, 1933) produced 15 major federal laws including Emergency Banking Act, Glass-Steagall (FDIC), Securities Act, AAA, NIRA (PWA + NRA), TVA, CCC, FERA. Second New Deal (1935-36): Wagner Act, Social Security Act, PUHCA, Banking Act 1935, Revenue Act 1935 ("Wealth Tax"), WPA. By 1936: unemployment 17% (from 25% in 1933); industrial production +50% from 1933; bank failures stopped after FDIC. Democratic National Convention Philadelphia June 23-27, 1936 renominated FDR by acclamation. Republican National Convention Cleveland June 9-12, 1936 nominated Alf Landon (Kansas Governor) first ballot. Frank Knox VP. Union Party (Coughlin + Townsend + Smith) nominated Lemke. Socialist Thomas. Communist Browder. FDR campaign aggressive. October 31, 1936 Madison Square Garden: "They are unanimous in their hate for me - and I welcome their hatred." Identified "economic royalists." Literary Digest poll failure: predicted Landon 57-43%; actual FDR 60.8-36.5%. Gallup correctly predicted FDR through probability sampling. Literary Digest folded 1938. FDR won 523 EV; Landon 8. FDR carried 46 states; Landon Maine + Vermont. Popular vote: FDR 27,752,648 (60.8%); Landon 16,681,862 (36.5%); Lemke 892,267 (1.9%); Thomas 187,910 (0.4%); Browder 79,315 (0.2%). FDR's 1936 New Deal coalition: urban Northern industrial workers; Solid South;

African Americans (shifted from Republican); Western farmers and miners; intellectuals; organized labor.

1937 court-packing fight failed (Senate rejected 70-20 July 22, 1937). But "switch in time that saved nine" had already occurred: Justice Owen Roberts shifted to liberal bloc March 1937; subsequent decisions upheld Wagner Act and Social Security.

1936 election's structural significance: (1) Confirmed New Deal Democratic coalition through 1968. (2) FDR's 1936 mandate over-extended in 1937 court-packing fight.

New Deal Democratic coalition 1932-68: FDR (4 terms 1933-45) + Truman (1945-53) + Eisenhower (Republican 1953-61, governed within framework) + JFK (1961-63) + LBJ (1963-69). Coalition broke in 1968 when Wallace + Nixon Southern Strategy + urban unrest + Vietnam fragmented it.

The 1932-1968 New Deal era can be analyzed as one of three distinct major-party realignments in 20th-century U.S. politics. (1) 1896 realignment (McKinley defeats Bryan) inaugurated 1896-1932 Republican alignment. (2) 1932 realignment (FDR defeats Hoover) inaugurated 1932-68 New Deal Democratic alignment. (3) 1968 realignment (Nixon defeats Humphrey, with Wallace 3rd party) inaugurated 1968-92 Republican alignment. Subsequent: 1992 partial realignment (Clinton); 2016 partial realignment (Trump); 2024 second Trump victory.

The New Deal's 1932-39 federal-government expansion was the largest in U.S. peacetime history. Specific structural transformations: (1) Federal welfare state - Social Security 1935 (old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, aid to dependent children). (2) Federal labor regulation - Wagner Act 1935 (union organizing); FLSA 1938 (minimum wage, 8-hour day, child labor). (3) Federal financial regulation - Glass-Steagall 1933 (banking); SEC 1934 (securities); FDIC 1933 (deposit insurance). (4) Federal economic development - TVA 1933; Rural Electrification 1936; Federal Housing Administration 1934. (5) Federal agricultural support - AAA 1933/1938; Commodity Credit Corp 1933. (6) Federal employment - WPA 1935; CCC 1933 (cumulatively employed 3 million young men through 1942). The transformations would shape U.S. federal government structure through the 20th century and into the 21st.

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

Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR)
32nd U.S. president (1933-45). Only president elected four times.

First New Deal
FDR's 1933-35 emergency response. First 100 Days produced 15 major laws.

"As Maine goes, so goes Vermont"
Famous 1936 joke. Landon carried only Maine and Vermont.

Literary Digest poll failure
1936 polling failure. Predicted Landon 57-43%; actual FDR 60.8-36.5%.

Switch in time that saved nine
March 1937 shift by Justice Owen Roberts from conservative to liberal bloc.

New Deal
FDR's 1933-39 federal response to Great Depression.

Second New Deal
FDR's 1935-36 redistributive expansion. Wagner Act; Social Security; WPA.

Alf Landon
Kansas Governor and 1936 Republican presidential nominee. Lost 523-8 EV.

Court-packing plan
FDR's February 5, 1937 Judicial Procedures Reform Bill. Senate rejected July 22, 1937 by 70-20.

Madison Square Garden Address

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, OCTOBER 31, 1936

FDR delivered this address at Madison Square Garden on October 31, 1936. The "economic royalists" passage articulated the structural class-based critique of 1920s and pre-New-Deal American politics.

> *"For nearly four years you have had an Administration which instead of twirling its thumbs has rolled up its sleeves. We will keep our sleeves rolled up. 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. I should like to have it said of my first Administration that in it the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second Administration that in it these forces met their master."*

Roosevelt, "Address at Madison Square Garden" (New York, October 31, 1936). 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

Madison Square Garden Address

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, OCTOBER 31, 1936

“For nearly four years you have had an Administration which instead of twirling its thumbs has rolled up its sleeves. We will keep our sleeves rolled up. 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. I should like to have it said of my first Administration that in it the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second Administration that in it these forces met their master.”

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

SOURCE B

Second Inaugural Address

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, JANUARY 20, 1937

“I see millions of families trying to live on incomes so meager that the pall of family disaster hangs over them day by day. I see millions whose daily lives in city and on farm continue under conditions labeled indecent by a so-called polite society half a century ago. I see millions denied education, recreation, and the opportunity to better their lot and the lot of their children. I see millions lacking the means to buy the products of farm and factory and by their poverty denying work and productiveness to many other millions. I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished. It is not in despair that I paint you that picture. I paint it for you in hope - because the Nation, seeing and understanding the injustice in it, proposes to paint it out. We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of his country's interest and concern; and we will never regard any faithful, law-abiding group within our borders as superfluous.”

Roosevelt, "Second Inaugural Address" (Washington, DC, January 20, 1937). Public domain.

The 1936 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 Madison Square Garden 1936) articulating the class-conflict strategy. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (FDR Second Inaugural 1937) articulating the structural commitment to continued New Deal expansion. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources are FDR speeches but from different positions in the 1936-37 political cycle. Identify the specific political function each source performs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

FDR's "one-third of a nation" framing in Source B was delivered two weeks before the February 5, 1937 court-packing plan announcement. How did the court-packing fight transform the 1937 political conditions?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

The New Deal Democratic coalition would dominate U.S. politics until 1968. Identify three structural reasons the coalition broke in 1968.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many electoral votes did FDR win in 1936?

( ) A. 435
( ) B. 472
( ) C. 486
( ) D. 523

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

On what date did the Supreme Court reject the 1937 court-packing plan?

( ) A. April 12, 1937
( ) B. July 22, 1937
( ) C. November 9, 1937
( ) D. February 14, 1938

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the 1936 election about coalition, recovery, or 1937-overconfidence? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

FDR's October 1936 Madison Square Garden Address (Source A) articulated the structural class-conflict framework of the New Deal Democratic coalition. FDR's January 1937 Second Inaugural Address (Source B) articulated the structural commitment to continued New Deal expansion - "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1932-1945 period, evaluate the extent to which the 1936 election represented (a) the confirmation of the New Deal Democratic coalition that would dominate U.S. politics until 1968, (b) the demonstration that FDR's First and Second New Deal had produced sufficient economic recovery to support a landslide re-election, or (c) the source of FDR's 1937 over-confidence that produced the court-packing failure and ended the New Deal's political momentum. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the coalition-vs-recovery-vs-1937-overconfidence axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the First New Deal, the Second New Deal, the Wagner Act, Social Security, the court-packing plan, the 1937-38 recession, the 1938 midterm losses, Pearl Harbor. 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: "They are unanimous in their hate for me - and I welcome their hatred", "the old enemies of peace - business and financial monopoly, speculation, reckless banking, class antagonism, sectionalism, war profiteering", "Government by organized money is just as dangerous as Government by organized mob". The "I welcome their hatred" phrase is the most distinctive class-conflict articulation.

FDR's framing established aggressive class-conflict strategy.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished", "I see millions of families trying to live on incomes so meager that the pall of family disaster hangs over them day by day", "We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of his country's interest and concern". The "one-third of a nation" phrase is the most distinctive commitment to continued expansion.

FDR's framing established structural commitment to continued New Deal.

QUESTION 3

Source A is FDR's 1936 closing campaign argument - articulated three days before Election Day to mobilize the New Deal Democratic coalition through class-conflict rhetoric. The function is to consolidate the 1936 electoral mandate by explicitly embracing political conflict with corporate/financial opposition. Source B is FDR's 1937 second inaugural address - articulated 81 days after Election Day to commit his second-term administration to continued New Deal expansion. The function is to interpret the 1936 mandate as authorization for further reform rather than consolidation of existing gains. Together, the sources show the structural transition from 1936 campaign mobilization to 1937 governance commitment. The 1937 framing would prove politically over-extended through the court-packing plan announcement just two weeks after the inaugural.

AP students should be able to articulate the transition.

QUESTION 4

The 1937 court-packing fight transformed the 1937 political conditions in three specific ways: (1) Conservative coalition formation. The court-packing plan unified anti-New-Deal Democrats (Bourbon Democrats, Southern conservative Democrats) with Republicans into a structural conservative coalition. The coalition would dominate Congressional politics for the next 30 years and block significant New Deal expansion. (2) Senate rejection. The plan was rejected July 22, 1937 by 70-20 - a massive bipartisan defeat for FDR. Senate Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson had died July 14, 1937 - eliminating the plan's legislative champion. (3) Court self-correction. The "switch in time that saved nine" (Justice Owen Roberts shifting March 1937) upheld Wagner Act (April 12, 1937) and Social Security (May 24, 1937) - eliminating the immediate constitutional crisis but also eliminating the structural justification for the court-packing plan. The cumulative effect: by mid-1937, FDR's political momentum had collapsed. The 1937-38 Roosevelt Recession (industrial production -37% from 1937 peak; unemployment rose from 14% to 19%) compounded the political damage. The 1938 midterm elections produced Democratic House losses of 72 seats. The New Deal effectively ended by 1939. The structural lesson: even landslide mandates can be politically over-extended within months.

AP students should be able to articulate the transformation.

QUESTION 5

Three structural reasons New Deal Democratic coalition broke in 1968: (1) Civil Rights Act 1964 + Voting Rights Act 1965 alienated Southern Democrats. LBJ's prediction after signing the Civil Rights Act (according to Bill Moyers): "We have lost the South for a generation." The prediction was structurally correct. (2) Vietnam War (1965-73) alienated young voters, intellectuals, and the anti-war wing of the Democratic Party. The 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago (August 26-29) was disrupted by anti-war protests; Mayor Richard J. Daley's police violently dispersed protesters. The TV coverage damaged Democratic unity. (3) Urban unrest 1965-68 (Watts 1965, Detroit 1967, 110+ cities after MLK assassination April 4, 1968) alienated working-class whites in Northern cities who had been part of the New Deal coalition. (4) Wallace 1968 Independent campaign (46 EV, 13.5% popular vote) demonstrated the segregationist Southern Democratic break. Wallace's vote was structurally drawn from former Democratic voters - either old white Southern Democrats or working-class white Northern Democrats. (5) Nixon's "Southern Strategy" exploited the cleavage in 1968 and 1972 - moving Southern white voters to the Republican Party. The cumulative effect: by 1972, the New Deal coalition was structurally dead. McGovern 1972 (17 EV vs Nixon's 520) demonstrated the collapse.

AP students should be able to articulate the 1968 breakup.

QUESTION 6

523. FDR 523; Landon 8.

AP students should know the 523-EV figure.

QUESTION 7

July 22, 1937. The Senate rejected the court-packing plan by a 70-20 vote on July 22, 1937 - eight days after Senate Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson died of a heart attack on July 14, 1937.

AP students should know the July 22, 1937 date.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the coalition-vs-recovery-vs-1937-overconfidence axis, (2) avoid treating them as equivalent, (3) signal at least one piece of evidence from each source.

The thesis sketch is preparatory.