AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1940

Franklin D. Roosevelt vs Wendell Willkie

A 105-minute lesson on the 1940 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) · 449 EV	RUNNER-UP Wendell Willkie (Republican) · 82 EV
KEY ISSUE Third term precedent; World War II neutrality; preparedness vs. isolationism	TURNOUT 62.4%

CONTENTS

1. Cover
2. Lesson plan (105 min) + framework alignment
3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
4. Primary source B (DBQ pair)
5. Worksheet (8 questions)
6. Long-essay-question + rubric
7. Answer key + discussion

1940: Franklin D. Roosevelt vs Wendell Willkie

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 1939-40 America that would produce a third-term Roosevelt candidacy. For each identify the specific 1938-40 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	1940 election was 39th U.S. presidential election. Produced FDR's 449-82 electoral-vote victory over Republican Wendell Willkie - FDR's unprecedented third election victory. FDR was first U.S. president to break Washington's 1797 unwritten "two-term tradition" that had been respected 144 years. WWII began September 1, 1939 (Germany invaded Poland). By summer 1940 Germany conquered most of Western Europe; Britain stood alone. FDR believed only he had structural authority to mobilize U.S. support for Britain. Democratic National Convention Chicago July 15-18, 1940 nominated FDR by acclamation on first ballot. Henry A. Wallace VP. Republican National Convention Philadelphia June 24-28, 1940 nominated Wendell Willkie on sixth ballot. Charles L. McNary VP. September 1940 Selective Service and Training Act = first peacetime military draft. September 2, 1940 "destroyers for bases" deal. America First Committee founded September 4, 1940. ~800,000 members. Charles Lindbergh leading spokesman. FDR's October 30, 1940 Boston speech: "Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars." Operationally violated within 14 months. FDR won 449 EV; Willkie 82. FDR carried 38 states; Willkie 10. Popular vote: FDR 54.7%; Willkie 44.8%. FDR inaugurated third term January 20, 1941. March 11, 1941 Lend-Lease Act. August 14, 1941 Atlantic Charter. December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor. 2,403 Americans killed. December 8 Congress

declared war on Japan. December 11 Germany and Italy declared war on U.S. WWII until September 2, 1945. U.S. mobilized 16M soldiers, lost 405,399 American military deaths.

1940 election structural significance: (1) Broke 144-year-old two-term tradition. (2) Confirmed FDR's political authority for wartime mobilization. (3) Produced 1941-45 FDR wartime presidency.

22nd Amendment ratified February 27, 1951. Made two-term limit constitutional. FDR remains only U.S. president to serve more than two terms.

The 1940-45 FDR wartime presidency produced structural foundations of post-WWII U.S. governance: (1) Federal economic mobilization (War Production Board January 1942; Office of Price Administration 1941; National War Labor Board 1942). (2) Federal income tax expansion (rates rose to 94% on top incomes by 1944; August 1942 Revenue Act introduced withholding). (3) Manhattan Project (1942-45) - federal atomic-bomb program. (4) Federal scientific research (Office of Scientific Research and Development under Vannevar Bush). (5) Federal civil rights (June 1941 Executive Order 8802 prohibiting federal contractor racial discrimination; FEPC). (6) Internationalist foreign policy (Lend-Lease, Atlantic Charter, Casablanca 1943 unconditional surrender, Tehran 1943, Yalta February 1945). (7) Post-war institutional framework (Bretton Woods July 1944 IMF + World Bank; Dumbarton Oaks August-October 1944 UN; San Francisco April-June 1945 UN founding).

The 1940 election can be analyzed retrospectively as the structural transition between New Deal Democratic alignment (1932-40) and the WWII/Cold War U.S. internationalist alignment (1941-89). The transition was: (1) From domestic Progressive reform to foreign-policy internationalism. (2) From limited federal foreign policy to global U.S. hegemony. (3) From peacetime governance to wartime-and-Cold-War governance. (4) From the Washington precedent of presidential term limits to the FDR precedent of indefinite incumbency (later constitutionalized in the 22nd Amendment).

The 1944 fourth-term election would confirm the wartime continuity but produce concerns about FDR's health. FDR's April 12, 1945 death four months into his fourth term elevated Vice President Harry Truman to the presidency. Truman would: (1) Authorize the August 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings ending WWII. (2) Articulate the Truman Doctrine March 1947 (containment of Communism). (3) Sign the Marshall Plan April 1948 ($13B European economic reconstruction). (4) Sign the NATO Treaty April 1949 (collective defense). (5) Lead the U.S. through the Korean War 1950-53. The Truman presidency operationalized the Cold War framework that would dominate U.S. foreign policy until 1989. The 1940 election was the structural origin of the Truman-era transformations.

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

Third-term tradition
Unwritten U.S. tradition that presidents retire after two terms. Established by Washington 1797. FDR broke it 1940 and 1944. 22nd Amendment (1951) made limit constitutional.

America First Committee
September 1940 - December 1941 isolationist organization.

Selective Service and Training Act (1940)
September 1940 federal law establishing first peacetime military draft.

Atlantic Charter
August 14, 1941 joint statement by FDR and Churchill. Structural framework for United Nations.

Manhattan Project
1942-45 U.S. federal atomic-bomb program directed by General Leslie R. Groves and J. Robert Oppenheimer. Produced first nuclear weapons. August 6 + 9, 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings ended WWII.

Wendell Willkie
1940 Republican presidential nominee. Lost 449-82 EV.

"Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars"
FDR's 1940 promise. Operationally violated within 14 months.

Lend-Lease Act
March 11, 1941 federal law providing ~$50B in U.S. military aid to Allies through September 1945.

22nd Amendment
Ratified February 27, 1951. Made two-term presidential limit constitutional. FDR exempted (proposed during his death; ratified during Truman). Truman also exempted from amendment.

Address at Boston Garden ("Your boys" speech)

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, OCTOBER 30, 1940

FDR delivered this address at Boston Garden on October 30, 1940 - five days before Election Day. The speech was FDR's most explicit campaign promise about U.S. neutrality in WWII.

> *"I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars. They are going into training to form a force so strong that, by its very existence, it will keep the threat of war far away from our shores. The purpose of our defense is defense. The first purpose of our foreign policy is to keep our country out of war. At the same time we seek to keep foreign conceptions of government out of the United States. That is why we make ourselves strong; that is why we muster our resources to make this Nation impregnable; and that is why we must continue to build up our defenses, and continue to build them up with all the speed at our command. There is no other way to insure peace."*

Roosevelt, "Address at Boston Garden" (Boston, October 30, 1940). 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 at Boston Garden ("Your boys" speech)

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, OCTOBER 30, 1940

"I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars. They are going into training to form a force so strong that, by its very existence, it will keep the threat of war far away from our shores. The purpose of our defense is defense. The first purpose of our foreign policy is to keep our country out of war. At the same time we seek to keep foreign conceptions of government out of the United States. That is why we make ourselves strong; that is why we muster our resources to make this Nation impregnable; and that is why we must continue to build up our defenses, and continue to build them up with all the speed at our command. There is no other way to insure peace."

Roosevelt, "Address at Boston Garden" (Boston, October 30, 1940). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Address Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, DECEMBER 8, 1941

"Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American Island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack. I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire."

Roosevelt, "Address Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan" (Washington, DC, December 8, 1941). Public domain.

The 1940 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 Boston 1940) articulating the neutrality commitment. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (FDR December 8, 1941) articulating the war declaration. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources are FDR speeches but from different positions in the 1940-41 trajectory. Identify the specific political function each source performs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

The 1940 promise (Source A) and 1941 war declaration (Source B) are operationally inconsistent. Was the 1940 promise dishonest, or was it overtaken by events?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

The 22nd Amendment (1951) made the two-term limit constitutional. Identify three structural reasons U.S. politics constitutionalized the limit only after FDR.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many American military deaths did the U.S. suffer in WWII?

( ) A. 116,516
( ) B. 291,557
( ) C. 405,399
( ) D. 513,872

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

On what date was the 22nd Amendment ratified?

( ) A. February 27, 1951
( ) B. July 14, 1951
( ) C. August 18, 1951
( ) D. December 7, 1951

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the 1940 election about two-term-tradition, WWII-mobilization, or internationalist-transition? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

FDR's October 1940 Boston Garden Address (Source A) promised "your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars" - the structural commitment to U.S. neutrality. FDR's December 8, 1941 War Message (Source B) reversed that commitment after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor - "a date which will live in infamy." Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1937-1951 period, evaluate the extent to which the 1940 election's structural significance was (a) the breaking of Washington's 1797 two-term tradition, (b) the confirmation of FDR's political authority for the WWII mobilization that would shape the post-war international order, or (c) the structural transition from New Deal Democratic domestic-policy alignment to WWII/Cold War internationalist alignment. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the two-term-tradition-vs-WWII-mobilization-vs-internationalist-transition axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Lend-Lease Act, the Atlantic Charter, Pearl Harbor, the Manhattan Project, the Bretton Woods conference, the Yalta Conference, the 22nd Amendment, the Truman Doctrine. 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: "Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars", "I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again and again", "The first purpose of our foreign policy is to keep our country out of war", "There is no other way to insure peace". The "your boys" phrase is the most distinctive promise.

FDR's framing established the explicit neutrality commitment.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "a date which will live in infamy", "Yesterday, December 7th, 1941... the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked", "I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed". The "infamy" phrase is the most distinctive war-declaration framing.

FDR's framing established the war declaration with maximum rhetorical force.

QUESTION 3

Source A is FDR's 1940 campaign closing argument - articulated five days before Election Day to win a difficult third-term election. The function is to address widespread isolationist sentiment while not alienating internationalist supporters. The promise was politically necessary for victory but structurally untenable given European events. Source B is FDR's 1941 war declaration speech - articulated the day after Pearl Harbor to mobilize Congressional and public support for U.S. entry into WWII. The function is to articulate the moral and legal basis for war declaration while emphasizing Japanese aggression rather than FDR's prior wartime preparation. Together, the sources show the structural transition from 1940 campaign neutrality to 1941 wartime mobilization. The 14-month gap was overcome by the Pearl Harbor attack - a structural event outside FDR's control that justified the operational reversal.

AP students should be able to articulate the transition.

QUESTION 4

The 1940 promise was overtaken by events rather than dishonest, though it involved some structural deception. Five specific considerations: (1) FDR believed in 1940 that U.S. entry into WWII was likely but not certain. The Selective Service Act and destroyers-for-bases deal demonstrated his actual policy preferences. (2) The promise had a private "except in case of attack" qualification that FDR did not state publicly. The qualification was honest about his expectations but excluded from the campaign promise. (3) The Pearl Harbor attack was structurally outside FDR's control. The Japanese decision to attack was made in Tokyo by the Tojo government; FDR could not have prevented it through diplomatic concessions short of abandoning China and the Philippines (which would have been politically and morally impossible). (4) FDR's political dilemma: he had to win a third-term election against an internationalist Republican while substantial isolationist sentiment opposed wartime entry. The promise was politically necessary for victory. (5) The 14-month gap between October 1940 promise and December 1941 declaration was filled by Lend-Lease (March 1941), Atlantic Charter (August 1941), the September 1941 "shoot on sight" policy, and the November 1941 freezing of Japanese assets. By December 1941, the U.S. was not at war but was structurally aligned with the Allies. The structural lesson: presidential campaign promises about war can be honest at the time but operationally violated by events that the president partially anticipates but cannot fully control. The deception was political (the "except in case of attack" qualification omitted from the public promise) rather than fundamental (FDR did not lie about his preferences).

AP students should be able to articulate the structural analysis.

QUESTION 5

Three structural reasons U.S. politics constitutionalized the two-term limit only after FDR: (1) FDR's 12-year presidency demonstrated the structural risks of indefinite incumbency. The accumulated executive power, personal political machine, and incumbency advantages had reached unprecedented levels by 1945. The Bricker Amendment proposal (1953-54) reflected continuing congressional anxiety about excessive executive power. (2) Republican Congress 1947-49 (the 80th Congress) sought to prevent any future Democratic president from matching FDR. The amendment was proposed February 1947 and ratified February 1951 - during the Truman presidency. Truman was exempted from the amendment (which specifically excluded "the person holding the office of President when this Article was proposed"). (3) Post-WWII consensus about constitutional governance - the war had demonstrated the value of regular leadership transitions; the amendment institutionalized this consensus. The Washington 1797 precedent had been respected for 144 years; FDR's 1940 and 1944 break of the precedent created the structural conditions for constitutional codification. Additional factors: (a) FDR's 12 years had accumulated structural concerns about excessive presidential power (court-packing 1937, federal regulatory expansion, wartime executive orders). (b) The 22nd Amendment was passed with bipartisan support - Republicans saw it as preventing Democratic dominance; Democrats saw it as accepting a constitutional norm that prevented excessive concentration of power.

AP students should be able to articulate three structural reasons.

QUESTION 6

405,399. WWII killed approximately 405,399 American military personnel - 291,557 from combat and 113,842 from non-combat causes (disease, accidents). This was approximately 3.5x the 116,516 American military deaths in WWI (1917-18).

AP students should know the 405,399 figure.

QUESTION 7

February 27, 1951. The 22nd Amendment was ratified February 27, 1951 - 5 years 4 months after FDR's April 12, 1945 death and during the Truman presidency. Truman was exempted from the amendment.

AP students should know the February 27, 1951 date.

QUESTION 8

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

The thesis sketch is preparatory.