AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1952

Dwight D. Eisenhower vs Adlai Stevenson II

A 105-minute lesson on the 1952 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 Dwight D. Eisenhower (Republican) · 442 EV	RUNNER-UP Adlai Stevenson II (Democratic) · 89 EV
KEY ISSUE Korean War; communist threat (McCarthyism); corruption in Truman administration	TURNOUT 62.3%

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

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower vs Adlai Stevenson II

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 1950-52 America that would produce a Republican Eisenhower victory. For each identify the specific Truman-era development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	1952 election was 42nd U.S. presidential election. Produced Dwight D. Eisenhower's 442-89 EV victory over Democrat Adlai Stevenson II. First Republican presidential victory since Hoover 1928. Political conditions: Korean War stalemated by 1951; McCarthyism; Truman approval 22% by January 1952. Truman announced March 29, 1952 he would not seek another term. Republican Convention Chicago July 7-11, 1952 nominated Eisenhower on first ballot over Taft. Nixon VP. Democratic Convention Chicago July 21-26, 1952 drafted Stevenson on third ballot. Sparkman VP. Checkers speech September 23, 1952. Eisenhower kept Nixon on ticket. First major political use of television to overcome scandal. Eisenhower campaign: "I Like Ike"; "I shall go to Korea"; K1C2 framework; Modern Republicanism. First Madison Avenue / TV advertising campaign. Eisenhower 442 EV; Stevenson 89. Eisenhower 39 states; Stevenson 9. Popular vote: Eisenhower 55.2%; Stevenson 44.3%. Margin 6,700,439. Geographic: Eisenhower carried 4 Southern states (FL, TN, TX, VA) - first significant Republican Southern penetration since 1928. Foreshadowed 1960s Republican Southern realignment. Eisenhower inaugurated January 20, 1953. Governed as "Modern Republican." 1953-61 Eisenhower achievements: Korean armistice July 1953; Iran + Guatemala

covert operations 1953-54; Brown v. Board May 1954; Geneva Accords July 1954; Interstate Highway System 1956; Little Rock crisis 1957; Sputnik response 1957 ' NASA 1958; "military-industrial complex" farewell January 17, 1961.

1952 election structural significance: (1) Ended 20 years of Democratic presidents. (2) 4-state Southern breakthrough. (3) Modern campaign methods.

Eisenhower would win 1956 in bigger landslide (457-73 EV).

The 1952-60 Eisenhower era was the consolidation of the New Deal welfare state under Republican governance. Eisenhower did not attempt to repeal major New Deal programs. Actually expanded Social Security (1954 amendments added 10M workers). Created Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (April 1953). "Modern Republicanism" framework accepted federal welfare-state programs while maintaining fiscal conservatism.

The framework would persist through JFK (1961-63), LBJ (1963-69), and Nixon (1969-74). Reagan 1980 conservative revolution would attempt structural reversal.

The 1952 election can be analyzed structurally as the consolidation phase of the New Deal era rather than its termination. Republicans had finally returned to the presidency but only by nominating a candidate who would accept rather than reverse the New Deal framework. The 1952-60 Eisenhower era was the structural continuation of the 1932-52 New Deal era under different partisan management. Genuine reversal would not come until Reagan 1980.

The 1952 Eisenhower victory's political-cultural significance was the high point of post-WWII U.S. confidence: economic growth (GDP grew 37% from 1953 to 1960); suburban expansion (Levittowns 1947+); cultural consensus; family formation; consumer prosperity. The 1950s "Eisenhower era" became a cultural touchstone of American optimism that would be invoked by subsequent generations (notably the Reagan 1980-88 era). The 1960s civil rights, Vietnam, and counterculture would shatter the 1950s consensus.

The Eisenhower presidency's long-term legacy includes: (1) Interstate Highway System - the largest peacetime federal infrastructure project in U.S. history, fundamentally restructuring American transportation, commerce, and suburban development. (2) NASA + National Defense Education Act - Sputnik response that produced structural U.S. scientific-educational mobilization. (3) Earl Warren appointment - Chief Justice (1953-69) who would lead the Warren Court's civil rights revolution (Brown 1954, Mapp 1961, Gideon 1963, Miranda 1966). (4) Federal civil rights enforcement - Little Rock 1957 federal troops; 1957 Civil Rights Act (first since 1875). (5) Military-industrial complex warning - January 17, 1961 farewell address articulated structural concerns about Cold War militarization that would prove prescient. (6)

		Modern political campaign template - "I Like Ike" + television advertising + Madison Avenue professional consulting.
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

Dwight D. Eisenhower
34th U.S. president (1953-61).

Adlai Stevenson II
Illinois Governor and 1952 Democratic nominee (also 1956). Lost both elections to Eisenhower.

"I shall go to Korea"
Eisenhower's October 24, 1952 Detroit campaign promise.

K1C2 framework
Eisenhower's 1952 campaign framework: Korea, Communism, Corruption.

"I Like Ike"
Eisenhower's famous 1952 campaign slogan.

Checkers speech
Nixon's September 23, 1952 televised address.

McCarthyism
The 1950-54 anti-Communist demagoguery era.

Checkers Speech

RICHARD M. NIXON, SEPTEMBER 23, 1952

Nixon delivered this 30-minute televised address from El Capitan Theatre in Los Angeles on September 23, 1952.

> *"One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don't they'll probably be saying this about me too. We did get something - a gift - after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog. And believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was? It was a little Cocker Spaniel dog in a crate that he had sent all the way from Texas. Black and white spotted. And our little girl - Tricia, the six-year-old - named it Checkers. And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog. And I just want to say this right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're going to keep it."*

Nixon, "Checkers Speech" (Los Angeles, September 23, 1952). 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

Checkers Speech

RICHARD M. NIXON, SEPTEMBER 23, 1952

“One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don't they'll probably be saying this about me too. We did get something - a gift - after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog. And believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was? It was a little Cocker Spaniel dog in a crate that he had sent all the way from Texas. Black and white spotted. And our little girl - Tricia, the six-year-old - named it Checkers. And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog. And I just want to say this right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're going to keep it.”

Nixon, "Checkers Speech" (Los Angeles, September 23, 1952). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Farewell Address ("Military-Industrial Complex" speech)

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, JANUARY 17, 1961

“A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction. Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.”

Eisenhower, "Farewell Address" (Washington, DC, January 17, 1961). Public domain.

The 1952 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 (Nixon Checkers speech) articulating the family-defense rhetorical strategy. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Eisenhower farewell) warning of military-industrial complex. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources involve Eisenhower-era political figures but address different structural challenges. Identify the specific political function each source performs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Eisenhower's 1961 farewell speech was prophetic about the "military-industrial complex." Identify three specific 1961-1980 developments that operationalized his warning.

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

The 1952 election ended 20 years of Democratic presidents. Identify three structural reasons the Republican return to the presidency did NOT immediately produce conservative reversal of New Deal programs.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many viewers watched Nixon's 1952 Checkers speech?

( ) A. ~25 million
( ) B. ~40 million
( ) C. ~60 million
( ) D. ~85 million

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

In what month and year did Eisenhower deliver the farewell "military-industrial complex" speech?

( ) A. October 1960
( ) B. November 1960
( ) C. January 1961
( ) D. March 1961

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the 1952 election about Democratic-dominance-ending, television-campaign-inauguration, or Modern-Republican-consolidation? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Nixon's September 1952 Checkers speech (Source A) demonstrated television's political power and saved Nixon's place on the Republican ticket. Eisenhower's January 1961 farewell address (Source B) warned of the structural risks of the "military-industrial complex" that had emerged during the Cold War. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1948-1980 period, evaluate the extent to which the 1952 election's structural significance was (a) the ending of 20 years of Democratic presidential dominance, (b) the inauguration of the modern television-driven presidential campaign era, or (c) the consolidation of the New Deal welfare state under "Modern Republican" governance that would persist through Nixon 1974 before Reagan 1980 attempted structural reversal. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the Democratic-dominance-ending-vs-television-campaign-vs-Modern-Republican-consolidation axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Korean War, McCarthyism, Brown v. Board, the Interstate Highway System, the Little Rock crisis, the Sputnik response, the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the Reagan 1980 election. 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: "regardless of what they say about it, we're going to keep it", "our little girl - Tricia, the six-year-old - named it Checkers. And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog", "we did get something - a gift - after the election". The "regardless of what they say" phrase is the most distinctive defiance formulation.

Nixon's framing established the family-defense strategy.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex", "The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist", "We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes". The "military-industrial complex" phrase is the most distinctive warning.

Eisenhower's framing established the structural warning.

QUESTION 3

Source A is Nixon's 1952 campaign scandal-management speech - articulated as a vice presidential candidate to save his place on the Republican ticket. The function is to defend Nixon personally against political-fund accusations through television-mediated emotional appeal. The speech demonstrated the structural power of television in U.S. politics. Source B is Eisenhower's 1961 valedictory address - articulated as the outgoing president to warn about structural risks of Cold War militarization. The function is to articulate prophetic concerns about the post-WWII U.S. national-security state. Together, the sources span Eisenhower's 1952-61 era: from the 1952 political beginnings (Nixon as VP candidate) to the 1961 political conclusion (Eisenhower's farewell). The structural arc: a war-hero candidate who organized Allied victory in WWII transitioned to a peacetime president who warned about the post-war military establishment.

AP students should be able to articulate the arc.

QUESTION 4

Three specific 1961-1980 developments operationalized Eisenhower's "military-industrial complex" warning: (1) Vietnam War (1965-73). U.S. military intervention in Vietnam reached peak 543,000 troops (1969). The war was structurally driven by Cold War containment doctrine, military-industrial supplier interests, and bureaucratic momentum. ~58,220 American military deaths. The war ended with U.S. defeat (Saigon fell April 30, 1975) - demonstrating the structural risks Eisenhower had warned about. (2) Defense spending escalation. U.S. defense spending rose from $50B in 1961 to $134B in 1980 (current dollars). The defense industry consolidated into ~10 major contractors (Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas, Boeing, Northrop, Grumman, General Dynamics, Hughes, Raytheon, etc.) with structural political-economic power. The 1968-72 ABM debate, the 1972 SALT I treaty, the 1979 SALT II treaty all reflected the structural defense-industry-government complex. (3) Iran-Contra affair (1985-87) and other covert operations. The U.S. national-security establishment (CIA, NSC, DOD) engaged in covert operations that violated congressional oversight - structurally consistent with Eisenhower's warning about military-industrial influence escaping democratic control. (4) Reagan-era defense buildup. 1981-89 Reagan administration defense spending grew from $158B to $304B - the largest peacetime defense buildup in U.S. history. The structural lesson: Eisenhower's warning was prescient. The military-industrial complex became a permanent feature of U.S. political economy, and the structural risks Eisenhower had identified materialized through Vietnam, defense-spending escalation, and post-Cold-War continuing military deployments.

AP students should be able to articulate multiple operationalizations.

QUESTION 5

Three structural reasons the Republican return to the presidency did NOT immediately produce conservative reversal of New Deal programs: (1) Public support for New Deal programs. Social Security, Wagner Act, FDIC, FHA, etc. were broadly popular with American voters. Republican reversal would have been politically costly. Eisenhower understood this and adopted "Modern Republicanism" - accepting the programs while emphasizing fiscal conservatism. (2) Personal preferences of Eisenhower. He was a moderate Republican who had been politically nonpartisan until 1952. He had supported Lend-Lease, NATO, and other internationalist programs that conservative Republicans had opposed. He was structurally aligned with the post-WWII consensus rather than with conservative reversal. (3) Congressional Democratic majorities. Democrats controlled the House and Senate during most of Eisenhower's presidency (1955-61). Even if Eisenhower had wanted to reverse the New Deal, he could not have passed reversal legislation. (4) Cold War priorities. Eisenhower's primary focus was foreign policy: Korean armistice, NATO, covert operations, nuclear strategy. Domestic-policy reversal was structurally lower priority than Cold War management. (5) Structural absorption of New Deal into U.S. governance. By 1952, the New Deal programs had been operationally integrated into American economic and social life for 20 years. Reversal would have required structural disruption. (6) Personal Eisenhower view: "Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history" (1954 letter to brother Edgar). The cumulative effect: 1953-61 was the consolidation rather than reversal of the New Deal. Genuine reversal would not come until Reagan 1980 - and even then the New Deal core programs (Social Security, Wagner Act, FDIC) would persist.

AP students should be able to articulate three structural reasons.

QUESTION 6

~60 million. Approximately 60 million viewers watched Nixon's Checkers speech on television plus additional millions on radio. The total audience was approximately 2/3 of the U.S. adult population in 1952. This was an unprecedented audience for a U.S. political speech.

AP students should know the ~60M viewership.

QUESTION 7

January 1961. Eisenhower delivered the farewell "military-industrial complex" address from the Oval Office on January 17, 1961 - three days before John F. Kennedy's January 20, 1961 inauguration.

AP students should know the January 17, 1961 date.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the Democratic-dominance-ending-vs-television-campaign-vs-Modern-Republican-consolidation axis, (2) avoid treating them as equivalent, (3) signal at least one piece of evidence from each source.

The thesis sketch is preparatory.