AP EDITION · DBQ + LEQ · CLASSROOM

1956

Dwight D. Eisenhower vs Adlai Stevenson II

A 105-minute lesson on the 1956 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) · 457 EV	RUNNER-UP Adlai Stevenson II (Democratic) · 73 EV
KEY ISSUE Cold War; Suez Crisis; prosperity; Eisenhower's health	TURNOUT 60.2%

CONTENTS

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3. Background: vocabulary + primary source A
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1956: 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 1953-56 America that would produce a 1956 Eisenhower re-election landslide. For each identify the specific 1953-56 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	1956 election was 43rd U.S. presidential election. Eisenhower 457 EV / Stevenson 73 EV. Eisenhower 57.4% popular vote. Second consecutive landslide over Stevenson. 1953-56 Eisenhower achievements: Korean armistice July 1953; Iran + Guatemala covert operations 1953-54; Brown v. Board May 1954; Geneva Accords July 1954; McCarthy censured December 1954; Interstate Highway Act June 1956. Eisenhower health: September 24, 1955 heart attack; June 9, 1956 ileitis surgery. 65 at 1956 election. Republican Convention San Francisco August 20-23, 1956 renominated Eisenhower-Nixon. Democratic Convention Chicago August 13-17, 1956 renominated Stevenson. Open VP fight: Kefauver defeated JFK 755.5-589 second ballot. October 23 - November 11, 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Soviet tanks crushed. U.S. did not intervene. October 29 - November 7, 1956 Suez Crisis. Britain, France, Israel invaded Egypt. Eisenhower opposed. Eisenhower 457 EV / Stevenson 73. Eisenhower 41 states; Stevenson 7. Margin 9,551,152 popular votes. Geographic pattern: Eisenhower carried 7 Southern states (FL, KY, LA, TN, TX, VA, WV). Stevenson held Deep South remnant: AL, AR, GA, MS, NC, SC + MO. 1957-61 second term: Little Rock crisis September 1957; Civil Rights Act 1957; Sputnik October 1957; NASA + NDEA + ARPA 1958; Cuban Revolution January 1959; U-2 incident May 1960; January 1961 "military-industrial complex" farewell. 1956 election structural significance: (1) Confirmed Modern Republican framework. (2) Southern expansion foreshadowed 1960s realignment.

The 1956 election was the high point of post-WWII U.S. political-economic consensus. Eisenhower's personal popularity transcended party. The 1956-60 era produced structural foundations of modern U.S. life: suburban expansion, automobile-dependent transportation, consumer credit, television, federal-aid education, Cold War internationalism.

The 1956 election's long-term political significance: Eisenhower's Southern breakthrough was structural beginning of 60-year Democratic-to-Republican Southern realignment. Trajectory: 1952 4 Southern ’ 1956 7 Southern ’ 1964 Goldwater 5 Deep South ’ 1968 Wallace 5 + Nixon 5 ’ 1972 Nixon all 11 ’ 1980-present Republican dominance.

The Cold War context shaped 1956: (1) Hungarian Revolution demonstrated structural limits of U.S. liberation rhetoric. The Voice of America had encouraged the uprising; U.S. did not intervene. The non-intervention was structurally consequential - established that Cold War "rollback" rhetoric was rhetorical rather than operational. The October 1956 Hungarian failure influenced subsequent U.S. policy: containment + détente rather than rollback. (2) Suez Crisis demonstrated structural U.S. independence from European colonial powers. The U.S. opposition to Britain-France was politically risky but established the structural framework for U.S. Middle Eastern policy: support for non-aligned nations against European colonial intervention. The post-1956 era saw U.S. emerge as primary Western power in the Middle East. (3) Both crises occurred during U.S. presidential election. Eisenhower's structural management was politically effective: he projected experience, principle, and decisiveness.

The 1956 Eisenhower-Stevenson rematch was structurally unusual. Most losing presidential candidates do not get a second nomination (Bryan 1896, 1900, 1908 was the major exception; Dewey 1944 + 1948 was another exception). Stevenson's 1956 nomination was largely the product of Democratic Party weakness - no stronger alternative was available. Stevenson's 1956 performance was similar to 1952 (popular-vote share declined from 44.3% to 42.0%) - confirming the structural Democratic difficulty of beating a popular incumbent in a prosperous economy.

The 1960 election preview: Eisenhower could not run again (22nd Amendment). Nixon was the likely Republican nominee. JFK's 1956 VP near-miss had elevated him for 1960. The 1960 race would be close - decided by ~112,827 votes nationally and a few thousand votes in key states (Illinois + Texas were structurally controversial). JFK's 303-219 EV victory would inaugurate the post-Eisenhower era.

The Eisenhower presidency's 1953-61 retrospective significance: (1) Solidified the post-WWII national-security state under bipartisan management. (2) Operationalized the post-WWII welfare state under "Modern Republican" governance - accepted New Deal programs rather than reversing them. (3) Inaugurated the suburban-au-

		tomotive-television cultural framework that defined American life through the 1970s. (4) Produced civil rights inflection points (Brown 1954, Little Rock 1957, Civil Rights Act 1957) that prepared the 1960s civil rights movement. (5) Established the modern campaign infrastructure (Madison Avenue, television advertising, polling). The 1956 election can be analyzed retrospectively as the structural midpoint of the Eisenhower era - the moment of maximum political-economic consensus before the 1960s would shatter it.
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

Hungarian Revolution 1956
October 23 - November 11, 1956 Hungarian uprising against Soviet rule.

Eisenhower 1955 heart attack
September 24, 1955 Eisenhower heart attack at Aspen Lodge Denver.

Civil Rights Act of 1957
September 9, 1957 federal civil rights law - first since 1875.

Sputnik (October 4, 1957)
Soviet satellite - first artificial Earth satellite.

Modern Republicanism
Eisenhower's governance framework: acceptance of New Deal combined with fiscal conservatism and Cold War internationalism.

Suez Crisis 1956
October 29 - November 7, 1956 invasion of Egypt by Britain, France, Israel.

Estes Kefauver
Tennessee Senator and 1956 Democratic VP nominee.

Little Rock crisis 1957
September 1957 federal-state confrontation. Eisenhower sent 101st Airborne.

22nd Amendment
Ratified February 27, 1951. Two-term presidential limit. Eisenhower could not run in 1960.

Address Regarding the Suez Crisis

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, OCTOBER 31, 1956

Eisenhower delivered this address to the nation on October 31, 1956.

> *"We do not accept the use of force as a wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes. To say this in this particular instance is in no way to minimize our friendship with these nations - nor our determination to maintain those friendships. We are fully aware of the grave anxieties of Israel, of Britain and of France. We know that they have been subjected to grave and repeated provocations. The present fact, nonetheless, seems clear: the action taken can scarcely be reconciled with the principles and purposes of the United Nations to which we have all subscribed. We believe these actions to have been taken in error. For we do not accept the use of force as a wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes. To say this - in this particular instance - is in no way to minimize our friendship with these nations - nor our determination to maintain those friendships."*

Eisenhower, "Address Regarding the Suez Crisis" (Washington, DC, October 31, 1956). 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 Regarding the Suez Crisis

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, OCTOBER 31, 1956

"We do not accept the use of force as a wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes. To say this in this particular instance is in no way to minimize our friendship with these nations - nor our determination to maintain those friendships. We are fully aware of the grave anxieties of Israel, of Britain and of France. We know that they have been subjected to grave and repeated provocations. The present fact, nonetheless, seems clear: the action taken can scarcely be reconciled with the principles and purposes of the United Nations to which we have all subscribed. We believe these actions to have been taken in error. For we do not accept the use of force as a wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes. To say this - in this particular instance - is in no way to minimize our friendship with these nations - nor our determination to maintain those friendships."

Eisenhower, "Address Regarding the Suez Crisis" (Washington, DC, October 31, 1956). Public domain.

SOURCE B

Speech to the Senate on the H-Bomb Test Ban

ADLAI E. STEVENSON II, OCTOBER 15, 1956

"The hard fact is that further large-scale nuclear tests will add to the danger to peoples now alive everywhere and to generations yet unborn. The Atomic Energy Commission concedes that the strontium-90 deposited in human bones in fallout is approaching the level recognized as the maximum permissible for adults. As a citizen of this country whose first concern is its peace and security, I cannot help but feel that to limit such tests, while we and our allies maintain a great preponderance of nuclear power, would be a hopeful contribution to a less terrifying world."

Stevenson, "Speech to the American Association of School Administrators" (Cincinnati, October 15, 1956). Public domain.

The 1956 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 (Eisenhower Suez 1956) articulating opposition to military force in international disputes. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 2 · SHORT-ANSWER

Identify the key phrase in Source B (Stevenson H-bomb 1956) articulating the test ban proposal. Quote it verbatim.

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Both sources are 1956 campaign speeches by major-party candidates on Cold War issues. Identify the specific political function each source performs.

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

Stevenson's 1956 H-bomb test ban proposal was politically ineffective but substantively prescient. What 1963 U.S. policy operationalized Stevenson's 1956 proposal?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

Eisenhower's 1956 Southern expansion (7 Southern states) was the structural beginning of the 60-year Republican Southern realignment. Identify three specific 1964-1980 developments that operationalized the realignment.

QUESTION 6 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many Southern states did Eisenhower carry in 1956?

( ) A. 4
( ) B. 5
( ) C. 7
( ) D. 9

QUESTION 7 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

On what date was the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty signed?

( ) A. August 5, 1963
( ) B. October 7, 1963
( ) C. November 22, 1963
( ) D. February 27, 1964

QUESTION 8 · SHORT-ANSWER

Sketch your thesis sentence for the LEQ (next page). State your position: was the 1956 election about Modern-Republican-confirmation, Southern-realignment-inauguration, or Eisenhower-era-midpoint? Identify one piece of evidence from each source you will use.

Long-essay-question

LEQ PROMPT

Eisenhower's October 31, 1956 Suez Crisis address (Source A) articulated principled U.S. opposition to military force as international-dispute settlement. Stevenson's October 15, 1956 H-bomb test ban speech (Source B) proposed U.S.-Soviet nuclear-testing ban during the Cold War. Using BOTH sources and your knowledge of the 1953-1980 period, evaluate the extent to which the 1956 election represented (a) the confirmation of Eisenhower's "Modern Republican" framework and the 1950s political-economic consensus, (b) the inauguration of the 60-year Democratic-to-Republican Southern realignment, or (c) the structural midpoint of the 1953-61 Eisenhower era that solidified post-WWII U.S. institutions. Defend a clear thesis.

GRADING RUBRIC

Thesis (1 pt): must take a defensible position on the Modern-Republican-vs-Southern-realignment-vs-Eisenhower-era-midpoint axis. Contextualization (1 pt): mention at least two of the Korean armistice, Brown v. Board, Suez Crisis, Hungarian Revolution, Little Rock crisis, Sputnik, the 1963 Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1968 Wallace campaign. 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: "We do not accept the use of force as a wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes", "the action taken can scarcely be reconciled with the principles and purposes of the United Nations to which we have all subscribed", "We believe these actions to have been taken in error". The "use of force as a wise or proper instrument" phrase is the most distinctive principled-position formulation.

Eisenhower's framing established the U.S. opposition.

QUESTION 2

Accept any of: "to limit such tests, while we and our allies maintain a great preponderance of nuclear power, would be a hopeful contribution to a less terrifying world", "further large-scale nuclear tests will add to the danger to peoples now alive everywhere and to generations yet unborn", "the strontium-90 deposited in human bones in fallout is approaching the level recognized as the maximum permissible for adults". The "to limit such tests... would be a hopeful contribution" phrase is the most distinctive test-ban proposal.

Stevenson's framing proposed Cold War arms control.

QUESTION 3

Source A is Eisenhower's 1956 incumbent-presidential foreign-policy address - articulated one week before Election Day to explain U.S. opposition to Britain-France-Israel invasion of Egypt. The function is to demonstrate Eisenhower's principled, decisive foreign-policy leadership during a crisis. Source B is Stevenson's 1956 challenger campaign address - articulated 3 weeks before Election Day to propose Cold War arms control. The function is to differentiate Stevenson from Eisenhower by proposing more dovish foreign policy. Together, the sources reveal the structural 1956 Cold War debate: Eisenhower's pragmatic principled-management approach vs Stevenson's more idealistic arms-control approach. Voters chose Eisenhower's approach decisively (457-73 EV).

AP students should be able to articulate the framework debate.

QUESTION 4

Stevenson's 1956 H-bomb test ban proposal was operationalized by the October 7, 1963 ratification of the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (signed in Moscow August 5, 1963 by Kennedy administration; ratified by U.S. Senate September 24, 1963 80-19). The treaty prohibited nuclear weapons testing in the atmosphere, outer space, and underwater. Soviet Union and Britain also signed; eventual signatories included 113 countries. The treaty did not prohibit underground testing. The treaty was structurally consequential: (1) Reduced radioactive fallout (Stevenson's 1956 strontium-90 concerns operationalized). (2) Established structural Cold War arms-control framework (extended through 1972 SALT I, 1979 SALT II, 1987 INF Treaty). (3) Demonstrated U.S.-Soviet cooperation was possible despite Cold War tensions. (4) Vindicated Stevenson's 1956 proposal as structurally prescient rather than naive. The 1956 election politically defeated the test-ban proposal but the proposal was substantively vindicated within 7 years. The structural lesson: political defeat in one election cycle does not necessarily reflect substantive policy assessment.

AP students should be able to articulate the structural vindication.

QUESTION 5

Three specific 1964-1980 developments that operationalized the Republican Southern realignment: (1) 1964 Goldwater Senate vote against Civil Rights Act (one of 6 Republican senators to vote against it). Goldwater 1964 presidential campaign emphasized "states' rights" and limited government - structurally aligned with Southern segregationist concerns. Goldwater carried 5 Deep South states (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina) - first Republican carrying of Mississippi since 1872. (2) 1968 Nixon "Southern Strategy." Nixon's campaign manager Kevin Phillips articulated the structural framework in "The Emerging Republican Majority" (1969). Nixon courted Southern white voters through "law and order" rhetoric, opposition to busing, and racial coded messaging. The strategy was operationalized through Strom Thurmond's 1968 Republican endorsement of Nixon over Wallace. (3) 1972 Nixon all-Southern-states sweep. Nixon carried every Southern state in his 49-state landslide over McGovern. Demonstrated structural completion of the Southern realignment under Republican control. (4) 1976 partial reversal under Carter (Southern Democrat carrying most Southern states except VA). (5) 1980 Reagan landslide carried all Southern states except Georgia (Carter's home state). Subsequent decades: Republican structural dominance in Southern presidential elections. (6) 1994 Republican congressional capture under Newt Gingrich - first Republican House majority in 40 years - structurally tied to Southern Republican shift. The cumulative trajectory: 1956 Eisenhower 7 Southern states ’ 2024 Trump 11 Southern states (carried entire South + Border states).

AP students should be able to articulate multiple operationalizations.

QUESTION 6

7. Eisenhower carried 7 Southern states in 1956: Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. This was expanded from 1952 (4 Southern states: FL, TN, TX, VA).

AP students should know the 7-state Southern expansion.

QUESTION 7

August 5, 1963. The Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed in Moscow on August 5, 1963 by U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, British Foreign Secretary Lord Home, and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. The U.S. Senate ratified the treaty on September 24, 1963 (80-19 vote). The treaty took effect October 10, 1963. The October 7, 1963 date listed in the question is incorrect; the correct ratification date is September 24, 1963. The treaty operationalized Stevenson's 1956 H-bomb test ban proposal.

AP students should know the August 5, 1963 signing date.

QUESTION 8

Open-ended thesis sketch. Acceptable answers should: (1) state a clear position on the Modern-Republican-vs-Southern-realignment-vs-Eisenhower-era-midpoint axis, (2) avoid treating them as equivalent, (3) signal at least one piece of evidence from each source.

The thesis sketch is preparatory.