1964

Lyndon B. Johnson vs Barry Goldwater

A 20-minute lesson on the 1964 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA New Deal Coalition	ELECTORAL VOTES 538 total
WINNER Lyndon B. Johnson (Democratic) · 486 EV	RUNNER-UP Barry Goldwater (Republican) · 52 EV
KEY ISSUE Civil rights; Great Society programs; nuclear war fears; Kennedy legacy	TURNOUT 62.8%

CONTENTS

1. Cover
2. Story (with a picture)
3. Three questions
4. Teacher notes

1964

JFK assassinated November 22, 1963 in Dallas, Texas. VP Lyndon Johnson sworn in aboard Air Force One that afternoon. Johnson was 55-year-old Texas senator who had been Senate Majority Leader 1955-61. He immediately committed to JFK's civil rights agenda.

LBJ achievements before 1964 election: (1) July 2, 1964 Civil Rights Act of 1964 - banned racial discrimination in public accommodations, employment, federally funded programs. Signed with 75 ceremonial pens. LBJ told aide: "We have lost the South for a generation." (2) August 7, 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution - Congress authorized U.S. military action in Vietnam after alleged North Vietnamese attacks on USS Maddox and USS Turner Joy. House voted 416-0; Senate 88-2. (3) August 20, 1964 Economic Opportunity Act - "War on Poverty" launched. (4) Major economic prosperity - GDP growing 5%/year; unemployment 5%.

Democrats renominated LBJ + Sen Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. Humphrey had been famous for 1948 Democratic Convention civil rights speech.

Look at picture. That LBJ - won biggest popular vote margin in U.S.

history.

Republicans had structural fight. Conservative wing led by Sen Barry Goldwater of Arizona (55). Moderate wing led by Gov Nelson Rockefeller of NY + Gov William Scranton of PA. Conservative wing won. Goldwater nominated July 13-16, 1964 at San Francisco convention. Goldwater's acceptance speech: "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." Politically devastating. Democrats used the quote against him.

Goldwater positions: (1) Voted against July 2, 1964 Civil Rights Act on states' rights grounds. (2) Proposed making Social Security voluntary. (3) Considered using tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam. (4) Wanted to sell Tennessee Valley Authority. Goldwater was structurally too conservative for 1964 voters.

LBJ campaign exploited Goldwater's extremism. September 7, 1964 "Daisy Girl" television ad. 60-second ad. Young girl picking petals off daisy, counting up to ten. Cut to countdown to nuclear explosion. LBJ voice-over: "These are the stakes! To make a world in which all of God's children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die." Aired only ONCE on September 7, 1964 - but generated massive media coverage. First major attack ad. Implied Goldwater would start nuclear war.



Lyndon B. Johnson, the 36th U.S. president. He won the 1964 election by the biggest popular vote margin in U.S. history.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS - U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WORK, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Let's talk about the story

1.

Who won the 1964 U.S. presidential election?

2.

What was the Daisy Girl ad?

3.

What was the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

Warm-up (5 min)

In 1964 Lyndon B. Johnson won biggest popular vote margin in U.S. history. 61% to 38.5%. LBJ had become president when JFK was assassinated November 22, 1963. He signed Civil Rights Act July 2, 1964. Republicans nominated conservative Barry Goldwater of Arizona. LBJ destroyed him.

Answer key

1.

Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ). He won 486 electoral votes to Barry Goldwater's 52. Popular vote: LBJ 61.1% vs Goldwater 38.5%. LBJ's 22.6-percentage-point margin was the biggest popular vote margin in U.S. history. LBJ had become president when JFK was assassinated November 22, 1963. 1964 was his first election as president in his own right.

AP students should know the 486-52 LBJ landslide.

2.

The Daisy Girl ad was LBJ's September 7, 1964 60-second television attack ad against Republican nominee Barry Goldwater. The ad opened with a young girl in a field picking petals off a daisy and counting "1, 2, 3, 4, 5..." Her counting cut to a male voice counting down a missile launch "10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5..." The screen filled with the image of a nuclear mushroom cloud. LBJ's voice-over: "These are the stakes! To make a world in which all of God's children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die." Closing text: "Vote for President Johnson on November 3. The stakes are too high for you to stay home." The ad aired ONLY ONCE on September 7, 1964 during The NBC Monday Movie - but generated massive media coverage and free additional airings on news programs. The ad did not mention Goldwater by name but clearly implied his "extremism" could lead to nuclear war. Widely cited as the first major political attack ad and the model for subsequent televised negative advertising.

AP students should know the Daisy Girl ad.

3.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the July 2, 1964 federal law banning racial discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and federally funded programs. The most important U.S. civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. Title I: voting rights. Title II: public accommodations (hotels, restaurants, theaters). Title III: public facilities. Title IV: public education. Title VI: federal funding. Title VII: employment - created Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). LBJ signed the act on July 2, 1964 in a televised White House ceremony with 75 ceremonial pens. He gave one to MLK and one to Hubert Humphrey. LBJ told aide Bill Moyers: "We have lost the South for a generation." The prediction was structurally correct - the Solid South would become Republican over the next 60 years. Followed by August 6, 1965 Voting Rights Act and April 11, 1968 Civil Rights Act (Fair Housing Act). Title VII would shape U.S. employment law for the next 60 years.

AP students should know the Civil Rights Act.