2024

Donald Trump vs Kamala Harris

A 35-minute lesson on the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Modern Polarization	ELECTORAL VOTES 538 total
WINNER Donald Trump (Republican) · 312 EV	RUNNER-UP Kamala Harris (Democratic) · 226 EV
KEY ISSUE Inflation and cost of living; immigration; democracy concerns; Biden's age and competence	TURNOUT 64.1%

CONTENTS

1. Cover
2. Lesson plan (35 min)
3. Reading + key words
4. Worksheet (4 questions)
5. Answer key

2024: Donald Trump vs Kamala Harris

Timing

5 min	**Warm-up**	When a former president returns to seek the presidency after losing 4 years earlier, what political conditions favor or disfavor his victory?
15 min	**Reading**	2024 election was 60th U.S. presidential election. Produced Donald Trump 312-226 EV victory over Vice President Kamala Harris. Trump 49.8% popular vote vs Harris 48.3% (margin 2,284,872 votes - smallest popular vote margin since 2000). Trump carried all 7 battleground states (AZ, GA, MI, NV, NC, PA, WI). Trump first former president since Grover Cleveland 1893 to win non-consecutive terms. Joe Biden had been president 4 years. Biden 81 in November 2024 - oldest president in U.S. history. First term defined by: (1) January 20, 2021 inauguration following January 6, 2021 Capitol attack. ~10,000 attended ceremony amid COVID-19 + ~25,000 National Guard deployed for security. (2) March 11, 2021 American Rescue Plan Act ($1.9T COVID-19 relief). Largest federal stimulus since 2009. (3) November 15, 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ($1.2T bipartisan infrastructure - 19 Republican Senators voted yes). (4) August 30, 2021 final U.S. troops left Afghanistan after 20 years (Operation Allies Refuge). Chaotic withdrawal. August 26, 2021 Kabul airport bombing killed 13 American military + 170 Afghans. Taliban control restored August 15, 2021. (5) August 16, 2022 Inflation Reduction Act ($369B climate + healthcare investment) - 50-50 Senate split + VP Harris tie-breaking vote. (6) June 24, 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization Supreme Court ruling - overturned Roe v. Wade. Democratic structural recovery in 2022 midterm + 2023-24 special elections. (7) February 24, 2022 Russia invasion of Ukraine. U.S. + NATO sent ~$175B military + economic aid 2022-25. (8) October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel (1,200 deaths) + Israel-Hamas Gaza war. (9) Inflation peaked 9.1% June 2022 (40-year high). Federal Reserve raised rates 5.25 percentage points 2022-23. By November 2024 inflation 2.6%. Real wages stagnant for many low- and middle-income households despite low unemployment (4.1% October 2024). (10) Border crisis. Encounters at southern border rose from ~458,000 FY2020 to ~3.2M FY2023. Biden 2024 executive order restricted asylum applications. (11) Biden age concerns. 2022-24 stumbles + cognitive lapses prompted Democratic structural concerns. Democratic primary 2024 had Biden as incumbent. Minor challengers: Rep Dean Phillips (MN); Marianne Williamson; RFK Jr. (later switched to independent run April 9, 2024). Biden won all primaries through June 2024. Republican primary 2024 had 13 candidates. Trump emerged front-runner. Trump faced 4 criminal indictments + 91 criminal charges + civil cases. Indictments: (a)

March 30, 2023 NY Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg indictment (34 counts hush-money + business records); (b) June 8, 2023 federal Mar-a-Lago classified documents indictment (40+ counts); (c) August 1, 2023 federal January 6 Capitol attack indictment (4 counts); (d) August 14, 2023 GA Fulton County DA Fani Willis indictment (RICO + election interference, 13 counts). On May 30, 2024 NY hush-money case produced guilty verdict on all 34 counts - first former president felony conviction. Sentencing scheduled multiple times + ultimately delayed through 2024-25. The other indictments faced structural delays + Supreme Court rulings (presidential immunity July 1, 2024 broad ruling).

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Iowa caucuses January 15, 2024 Trump won 51%-21% DeSantis-19% Haley. DeSantis withdrew January 21. NH primary January 23 Trump won 54%-43% Haley. Haley continued to Super Tuesday but lost most states. Trump secured nomination by March 12, 2024 (Super Tuesday + Mini-Super Tuesday).

June 27, 2024 first presidential debate (Atlanta CNN). Biden vs Trump. Biden performance was politically devastating - hoarse + slow + confused + lost train of thought. Trump exaggerated + lied but appeared more focused. The debate triggered Democratic Party panic + structural calls for Biden withdrawal. Democratic donors + elected officials + opinion writers (including New York Times Editorial Board June 28, 2024) called for Biden to step aside.

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July 21, 2024 Biden announced withdrawal from race + endorsed Vice President

Kamala Harris. Biden statement: "While it has been my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down." First major-party incumbent to withdraw from race since LBJ March 31, 1968 (Vietnam War). Biden 81 + 4 weeks of Democratic pressure post-debate + Pelosi behind-scenes pressure + Schumer behind-scenes pressure + Obama indirect pressure operationalized withdrawal.

July 23, 2024 Harris secured Democratic delegates support. Within 48 hours of Biden withdrawal, Harris had endorsements from Biden + most Democratic governors + most Democratic senators + most superdelegates. Harris was 59, biracial (Jamaican father + Indian mother), Howard University + UC Hastings, former CA Attorney General (2011-17), CA Senator (2017-21), Vice President (2021-25). First woman + first Black + first Asian American Vice President.

August 6, 2024 Harris selected MN Governor Tim Walz (60, former teacher + National Guard 24 years + Congressman 2007-19 + Governor 2019-present) VP. Walz "weird" framing of Trump-Vance ticket emerged as effective campaign rhetoric.

August 19-22, 2024 Democratic National Convention Chicago United Center. Harris-Walz nominated. Biden August 19 farewell speech. Hillary Clinton August 19 + Obama August 20 + Bill Clinton August 21 + Walz August 21 + Harris August 22 acceptance speech.

September 10, 2024 ABC presidential debate Philadelphia. Harris vs Trump. Harris performance was politically effective - framed Trump as unstable + dangerous + felon + January 6. Trump invoked false claim that Haitian immigrants were "eating the pets" of Springfield OH (claim fabricated + repeatedly debunked by Springfield officials). The "eating the pets" moment became cultural mockery in 2024 + 2025.

Campaign defined by: (1) Economy. Inflation 2.6% by November 2024 (down from 9.1% peak June 2022) but structural Biden-Harris political damage from 2022-23 inflation persistent. (2) Immigration. Border encounters peaked FY2023; Biden 2024 executive order restricted asylum. Trump framed immigration as crisis ("invasion"). (3) Abortion. Post-Dobbs Republican structural difficulty. 10 states had abortion-related ballot measures November 5, 2024. (4) Democracy + January 6. Harris framed Trump as threat to democracy + January 6 + 91 criminal charges. (5) Trump character. Trump's felony conviction + indictments + age 78 + civil cases + Stormy Daniels + E. Jean Carroll civil verdicts. (6) Israel-Gaza war. Pro-Palestinian Democratic primary "uncommitted" votes in MI February 27, 2024 (101,000+ votes). Harris faced structural Arab American + Muslim American + progressive Jewish American support concerns. (7) Trump unconventional outreach. Trump appeared on Joe Rogan (October 25, 2024 - 2.5+ hour interview) + Theo Von + Logan Paul + Lex Fridman + other podcast platforms. Reached non-political young male audience. (8) Late 2024 swings. Polls remained tight through Election Day.

Election Day November 5, 2024: Trump 312 EV vs Harris 226. Trump 77,302,580 popular votes (49.8%) vs Harris 75,017,708 (48.3%). Margin 2,284,872 votes - smallest popular vote margin since 2000. Trump won all 7 battleground states: AZ (Trump +5.5), GA (Trump +2.2), MI (Trump +1.4), NV (Trump +3.1), NC (Trump +3.2), PA (Trump +1.7), WI (Trump +0.9). Trump improved on 2020 performance in 90% of counties + among nearly every demographic group.

Demographic pattern: Trump improved among Latino voters (Harris won 52% vs Biden 65% 2020); improved among young voters (Harris won 54% 18-29 vs Biden 60% 2020); improved among Black voters (Harris won 86% vs Biden 87% 2020); improved among non-college whites (Trump won 65% vs 65% 2020 - held base + expanded turnout). Gender gap: Harris won women 53-46; Trump won men 55-42. Education gap: Harris won college-educated 55-43; Trump won non-college 56-42. Latino realignment structurally significant: Trump won 46% Latino vote (highest Republican Latino share in modern era).

Geographic pattern: Trump expanded 2020 coalition. Won all 7 battleground states. Improved in 49 of 50 states (only Washington showed minimal Harris improvement). NYC: Trump improved 47% Bronx + improved structurally in heavily-Hispanic working-class neighborhoods (Queens, Bronx). NJ: closest NJ presidential race since 1992. The structural realignment: working-class non-white voters + young male voters + Latino voters shifting Republican.

Trump second term 2025-present: (1) January 20, 2025 inauguration. (2) Executive order spree - structural deregulation + immigration enforcement + January 6 pardons (1,500+ defendants pardoned January 20, 2025). (3) Cabinet appointments - Marco Rubio Secretary of State + Pete Hegseth Secretary of Defense + Robert Kennedy Jr. Secretary of Health + Kristi Noem Homeland Security + Pam Bondi Attorney General. (4) Tariff framework - February 2025 25% tariffs on Mexico + Canada + 10% China. (5) DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) led by Elon Musk - large federal workforce reductions Feb-March 2025. (6) Foreign policy realignment - Ukraine peace talks framework + structural NATO recalibration concerns.

2024 election's structural significance: (1) First president-elect with felony conviction - structural test of "no person is above the law" framework. (2) First non-consecutive term victory since Grover Cleveland 1893. (3) Trump improved in nearly every demographic + geographic category - structural realignment. (4) Latino voter realignment structurally significant (Republican 46% share). (5) Biden withdrawal demonstrated structural Democratic Party adaptation. (6) Trump 2024 ended Democratic-coastal-coalition framework that had dominated 2008-2020 elections.

10 min	**Worksheet**	Four questions: one matches key words, three are short answers.
5 min	**Closure**	One sentence: what surprised you about this election?

The 2024 Election

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Key words

Donald Trump	45th + 47th U.S. president (2017-21 + 2025-present). NYC businessman. The Apprentice host. Won 2016 304-227 EV. Lost 2020 232-306 EV. Won 2024 312-226 EV. First non-consecutive term victory since Cleveland 1893. First felony-conviction president-elect.
Kamala Harris	2024 Democratic presidential nominee. CA Attorney General (2011-17). CA Senator (2017-21). Vice President (2021-25). First woman + first Black + first Asian American VP. Lost 312-226 EV.
July 13, 2024 Trump assassination attempt	Butler PA rally. Thomas Crooks (20) fired 8 rounds. Trump's ear grazed. "Fight, fight, fight" iconic photo.

July 21, 2024 Biden withdrawal	Biden withdrew from race + endorsed Harris. First major-party incumbent withdrawal since LBJ March 31, 1968.
Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization	June 24, 2022 Supreme Court ruling 6-3 (5-3-1 on overturning Roe). Overturned Roe v. Wade (1973). Returned abortion regulation to states.

Four questions

QUESTION 1 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

How many electoral votes did Trump win in 2024?

( ) A. 271
( ) B. 301
( ) C. 312
( ) D. 335

QUESTION 2 · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Who was Trump's 2024 VP pick?

( ) A. Mike Pence
( ) B. JD Vance
( ) C. Marco Rubio
( ) D. Tim Scott

QUESTION 3 · SHORT-ANSWER

Why was July 21, 2024 a historic Democratic Party event?

QUESTION 4 · SHORT-ANSWER

How did the Dobbs ruling affect 2022-24 elections?

Answer key

QUESTION 1

312. Trump 312; Harris 226. Trump 49.8% popular vote vs Harris 48.3%. Margin 2,284,872 votes - smallest popular vote margin since 2000. Trump carried all 7 battleground states (AZ, GA, MI, NV, NC, PA, WI). Trump first former president since Grover Cleveland 1893 to win non-consecutive terms.

AP students should know the 312-226 split.

QUESTION 2

JD Vance. OH Senator (2023-25). 39-year-old. "Hillbilly Elegy" 2016 author. Yale Law. Venture capitalist (Mithril Capital). Former Trump critic-turned-supporter. Selected July 15, 2024 at Republican National Convention. As of 2026 he is Vice President.

AP students should know Vance.

QUESTION 3

July 21, 2024 Joe Biden announced withdrawal from 2024 presidential race + endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden statement: "While it has been my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down." First major-party incumbent to withdraw from presidential race since LBJ March 31, 1968 (Vietnam War). Five structural factors operationalized withdrawal: (1) June 27, 2024 debate disaster - Biden hoarse + slow + confused + lost train of thought. Triggered structural Democratic Party panic. (2) New York Times Editorial Board June 28, 2024 called for Biden withdrawal. ~25 House Democrats publicly called for withdrawal in following 3 weeks. (3) Democratic donor revolt. Major donors (Reid Hoffman, Disney CEO Robert Iger, Hollywood mogul Ari Emanuel, Netflix co-founder Reed Hastings) publicly + privately pressured withdrawal. (4) Behind-scenes pressure. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi behind-scenes pressure + Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer behind-scenes pressure + former President Barack Obama indirect pressure operationalized withdrawal. (5) July 13, 2024 Trump assassination attempt + July 15-18 Republican Convention shifted political momentum to Trump. Biden polling fell to ~38% approval + Democrats faced existential 2024 election. The structural significance: (1) Demonstrated Democratic Party adaptive capacity - replaced presidential nominee in ~108 days before election. (2) Within 48 hours Harris consolidated party support. (3) Harris campaign raised $200M+ within 7 days of withdrawal - largest 7-day fundraising in U.S. political history. (4) Trump campaign's anti-Biden framework had to adapt to Harris framework + lost ~2-3 weeks of structural messaging momentum. (5) Harris campaign had ~106 days to campaign as nominee (vs ~16 months Trump) - structural compressed timeline disadvantage. Subsequent analyses: structural debate of whether Biden withdrawal earlier (March 2024 or earlier) would have allowed Democratic primary + stronger nominee than Harris.

AP students should be able to articulate.

QUESTION 4

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization June 24, 2022 Supreme Court ruling 6-3 overturned Roe v. Wade. Returned abortion regulation to state authority. Affected 2022-24 elections in five structural ways: (1) 2022 midterm: Democrats overperformed structural expectations - retained Senate + lost only 9 House seats vs predicted 30+. KS August 2, 2022 ballot measure rejected abortion restriction 59-41% - first post-Dobbs ballot test. (2) 2023 special elections: WI Supreme Court April 4, 2023 Democratic Janet Protasiewicz won 11 points; OH August 8, 2023 Issue 1 + November 7, 2023 Issue 1 abortion protection. (3) 2024 ballot measures: 10 states had abortion measures. Pro-rights passed AZ, CO, MD, MO, MT, NV, NY. Failed FL (60% threshold not met despite 57% support), NE, SD. (4) Trump April 8, 2024 announced abortion regulation should be left to states + opposed federal ban - structural moderation from previous federal-ban framework. (5) Harris campaign framed abortion as freedom + Trump as threat. Harris won ~60% of voters who cited abortion as top issue. The Dobbs ruling's structural significance: 50 years of Roe-era abortion politics ended overnight + state-level political dynamics structurally transformed + 2022-24 Democratic structural recovery + 2024 mixed Republican results.

AP students should be able to articulate.