2024

Donald Trump vs Kamala Harris

A 50-minute lesson on the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, background reading with primary source, 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%

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2024: Donald Trump vs Kamala Harris

Standards alignment

NCSS · D2.His.4.6-8 (chronological reasoning) · D2.His.14.6-8 (causation). CCSS · CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 (central ideas in primary sources).

Timing

5 min	**Warm-up**	List two structural conditions in 2021-24 America that would produce a Trump 2024 victory. For each identify the specific 2021-24 development most responsible.
15 min	**Reading + vocab**	2024 election was 60th U.S. presidential election. Trump 312 EV / Harris 226. Trump 49.8% popular vote / 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. Biden first term: January 2021 inauguration; March 2021 American Rescue Plan ($1.9T); November 2021 Infrastructure Act ($1.2T); August 2021 Afghanistan withdrawal; August 2022 Inflation Reduction Act ($369B); June 2022 Dobbs; February 2022 Ukraine invasion; October 2023 Hamas-Israel war; inflation peaked 9.1% June 2022; ~$2T cumulative inflation impact on household economy. Democratic primary 2024: Biden won all primaries. Republican primary 2024 had 13 candidates. Trump faced 4 criminal indictments + 91 criminal charges. May 30, 2024 NY hush-money guilty verdict on all 34 counts - first former president felony conviction. Iowa January 15, 2024 Trump 51%. NH January 23 Trump 54%. Haley continued through Super Tuesday but lost most states. Trump secured March 12, 2024. June 27, 2024 first debate Atlanta CNN. Biden performance politically devastating. Triggered Democratic panic. July 13, 2024 Trump Butler PA assassination attempt. Thomas Crooks (20) fired 8 rounds. Trump's ear grazed. Corey Comperatore killed. "Fight, fight, fight" iconic photo. July 15-18, 2024 Republican National Convention Milwaukee. Trump nominated. Sen JD Vance (OH) selected VP. Trump July 18 acceptance speech (92 minutes - longest in history). July 21, 2024 Biden withdrawal + Harris endorsement. First major-party incumbent

withdrawal since LBJ March 31, 1968.

July 23, 2024 Harris consolidated Democratic support. August 6, 2024 selected MN Governor Tim Walz VP.

August 19-22, 2024 Democratic National Convention Chicago. Harris-Walz nominated.

September 10, 2024 ABC debate. Harris-Trump. Trump invoked false "eating the pets" claim about Haitian immigrants.

Campaign defined by: economy + immigration + abortion + democracy + Trump character + Israel-Gaza + Trump unconventional outreach (Joe Rogan October 25, 2024).

Election Day November 5, 2024: Trump 312 EV / Harris 226. Trump 77.3M votes (49.8%) / Harris 75.0M (48.3%). Trump won all 7 battleground states (AZ +5.5, GA +2.2, MI +1.4, NV +3.1, NC +3.2, PA +1.7, WI +0.9).

Demographic: Trump improved among Latino voters (Harris 52% vs Biden 65% 2020); improved among young voters (Harris 54% 18-29 vs Biden 60% 2020); improved among Black voters (Harris 86% vs Biden 87% 2020). 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. Trump won 46% Latino vote - highest Republican Latino share in modern era.

Geographic: Trump improved in 49 of 50 states (only WA showed minimal Harris improvement). NYC Trump improved 47% Bronx + improved structurally in heavily-Hispanic working-class neighborhoods. NJ closest presidential race since 1992. Working-class non-white voters + young male voters + Latino voters shifting Republican.

Trump second term 2025-present: January 20, 2025 inauguration. Executive orders + January 6 pardons (1,500+ defendants). Cabinet: Rubio State, Hegseth Defense, RFK Jr. HHS, Noem DHS, Bondi DOJ. February 2025 tariff framework (25% MX/CA, 10% China). DOGE led by Elon Musk - federal workforce reductions. Ukraine peace talks + NATO recalibration concerns.

2024 election structural significance: (1) First president-elect with felony conviction. (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 - highest in modern era). (5) Biden withdrawal demonstrated Democratic Party adaptive capacity. (6) Trump 2024 ended Democratic-coastal-coalition framework that had dominated 2008-2020 elections.

10 min	**Primary source**	Read aloud once. Annotate individually. Quick pair-share on the source-analysis question.
10 min	**Discussion**	Small groups (3–4). Pick one prompt; report back two sentences.
10 min	**Worksheet**	Six questions: 2 multiple-choice, 3 short-answer, 1 map-read.

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

Donald Trump
45th + 47th U.S. president.

July 13, 2024 Trump assassination attempt
Butler PA rally. Thomas Crooks fired 8 rounds.

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization
June 24, 2022 Supreme Court ruling overturning Roe v. Wade.

Tim Walz
MN Governor (2019-present). Former teacher + National Guard + Congressman. Harris 2024 VP pick. "Weird" framing of Trump-Vance.

Kamala Harris
2024 Democratic nominee. Vice President (2021-25).

July 21, 2024 Biden withdrawal
Biden withdrew from race + endorsed Harris. First major-party incumbent withdrawal since LBJ 1968.

JD Vance
OH Senator. Trump 2024 VP pick. "Hillbilly Elegy" 2016 author.

Inaugural Address

DONALD TRUMP, JANUARY 20, 2025

Trump delivered this inaugural address from inside the U.S. Capitol Rotunda on January 20, 2025 - moved indoors due to cold weather. The address marked Trump's return to the presidency after his 2020 loss + 4-year absence + 4 criminal indictments + 1 felony conviction + 2 assassination attempts (July 13, 2024 Butler PA + September 15, 2024 West Palm Beach FL). The address articulated Trump second-term policy framework: "America First" + immigration enforcement + tariffs + deregulation + January 6 pardons. The address framed the 2024 victory as "historic political comeback" + "the people's mandate." Trump's structural framing: positioning his return as redemptive + transformative + restorative of American power.

> *"The golden age of America begins right now. From this day forward, our country will flourish and be respected again all over the world. We will be the envy of every nation, and we will not allow ourselves to be taken advantage of any longer. During every single day of the Trump administration, I will, very simply, put America first. Our sovereignty will be reclaimed. Our safety will be restored. The scales of justice will be rebalanced. The vicious, violent, and unfair weaponization of the Justice Department and our government will end. And our top priority will be to create a nation that is proud, prosperous and free."*

Trump, "Inaugural Address" (Washington DC, January 20, 2025). Public domain.

The 2024 Election

Read the background page, then answer the six questions below.

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

Trump says "The golden age of America begins right now." What is the rhetorical purpose of this framing?

QUESTION 5 · SHORT-ANSWER

How did the Dobbs ruling affect 2022-24 elections?

QUESTION 6 · MAP-READ

On the 2024 election map, identify Trump's 31 states and Harris's 19 states + DC. What does the geographic pattern reveal?

Answer key

QUESTION 1

312.

AP students should know the 312-226 split.

QUESTION 2

JD Vance. OH Senator. 39-year-old. "Hillbilly Elegy" 2016 author.

AP students should know Vance.

QUESTION 3

July 21, 2024 Biden withdrew from race + endorsed Harris. First major-party incumbent withdrawal since LBJ March 31, 1968. Operationalized by: June 27 debate disaster; NYT editorial; ~25 House Democrats; donor revolt; Pelosi + Schumer + Obama pressure; July 13 Trump assassination attempt + July 15-18 RNC momentum shift. Harris consolidated Democratic support within 48 hours + raised $200M+ in 7 days - largest 7-day political fundraising in U.S. history.

AP students should be able to articulate.

QUESTION 4

Trump's "The golden age of America begins right now" articulates redemptive-restoration rhetorical framework through five strategies: (1) Temporal-rupture framing - "begins right now" positions inauguration as discrete moment of historical change. (2) Civilizational-decline framing - implies the pre-Trump period was non-golden (Biden era + "weaponization of the Justice Department"). (3) National-pride framing - "the envy of every nation" + "proud, prosperous and free" articulates strong-nationalist framework. (4) Sovereignty-reclamation framing - "Our sovereignty will be reclaimed" implies it was lost (immigration + globalist trade + international institutions). (5) Justice-rebalancing framing - "The scales of justice will be rebalanced" + "weaponization of the Justice Department... will end" articulates structural counter-prosecution framework. The rhetorical purpose: positioning Trump's second term as redemptive restoration of American greatness after Biden-era decline + structural delegitimation of post-2020 legal-political framework that prosecuted Trump. The framing was politically masterful + structurally distinguished Trump 2025 from Trump 2017 first-term framework. Subsequent rhetorical analyses: Trump's "golden age" framing operationalized through executive-order spree (January 6 pardons + immigration + tariffs + deregulation) + cabinet appointments + DOGE. The structural lesson: redemptive-restoration framing combined with executive-action implementation can structurally transform presidential power framework.

AP students should be able to articulate.

QUESTION 5

Dobbs ruling June 24, 2022 overturned Roe v. Wade. Affected 2022-24 elections: (1) 2022 midterm Democratic overperformance; (2) 2023 special elections Democratic wins (WI Supreme Court, OH Issue 1); (3) 2024 abortion ballot measures (7 passed pro-rights, 3 failed); (4) Trump April 8, 2024 abortion-to-states framework; (5) Harris campaign framed abortion as freedom + Trump as threat. Democratic structural recovery in post-Dobbs era; Republican structural difficulty on abortion issue 2022-24.

AP students should be able to articulate.

QUESTION 6

Trump won 31 states + 1 ME EV (ME-02); Harris won 19 states + DC + 1 NE EV (NE-02). Trump expanded 2020 coalition. Won all 7 battleground states: AZ, GA, MI, NV, NC, PA, WI. Geographic pattern: Trump improved in 49 of 50 states (only WA showed minimal Harris improvement). Working-class non-white voters + young male voters + Latino voters shifting Republican. NYC Trump improved 47% Bronx + heavily-Hispanic working-class neighborhoods. The 2024 map confirmed structural realignment: Trump expanded into multi-racial working-class coalition; Harris held urban + suburban + coastal coalition but lost crucial Industrial Midwest + South + Mountain West.

AP students should be able to articulate.