2024

Donald Trump vs Kamala Harris

A 20-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%

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2024

Joe Biden had been president 4 years (2021-25). First term defined by: (1) January 20, 2021 inauguration following January 6, 2021 Capitol attack. (2) March 11, 2021 American Rescue Plan ($1.9T COVID-19 relief). (3) November 15, 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ($1.2T bipartisan infrastructure). (4) August 30, 2021 final U.S. troops left Afghanistan (Operation Allies Refuge) - chaotic withdrawal + 13 American military deaths (August 26, 2021 Kabul airport bombing) + Taliban control restored. (5) August 16, 2022 Inflation Reduction Act ($369B climate + healthcare investment). (6) June 24, 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization Supreme Court ruling - overturned Roe v. Wade (1973). Democratic ascendance + Republican structural difficulty in 2022 midterm + 2023-24 special elections. (7) February 24, 2022 Russia invasion of Ukraine. U.S. + NATO sent ~$175B military + economic aid to Ukraine 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%. (10) Biden age concerns. Biden was 81 in November 2024 - oldest president in U.S. history. 2022-24 stumbles + cognitive lapses prompted Democratic structural concerns.

June 27, 2024 first presidential debate (Atlanta CNN). Biden vs Trump. Biden performance was politically devastating - hoarse + slow + confused + lost train of thought. Triggered Democratic Party panic + structural calls for Biden withdrawal.

July 13, 2024 Trump assassination attempt at Butler PA rally. Thomas Crooks (20-year-old) fired 8 rounds from rooftop ~140 yards away. Trump's ear grazed by bullet. One supporter killed (Corey Comperatore). Trump's "fight, fight, fight" fist-raised photo from immediately after became iconic political image.

July 15-18, 2024 Republican National Convention Milwaukee WI. Trump nominated. Sen JD Vance (OH, 39, "Hillbilly Elegy" author + venture capitalist + former Trump critic) selected VP. Trump July 18 acceptance speech post-assassination-attempt.

July 21, 2024 Biden announced withdrawal from race + endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris. First major-party incumbent to withdraw from race since LBJ March 31, 1968. Triggered structural Democratic Party consolidation around Harris.

July 23, 2024 Harris secured Democratic delegates support. Harris was 59, biracial (Black father + Indian mother), former CA At-

torney General (2011-17), CA Senator (2017-21), Vice President (2021-25). First woman + first Black + first Asian American Vice President. Selected MN Governor Tim Walz VP August 6, 2024.

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

September 10, 2024 ABC presidential debate Philadelphia. Harris vs Trump. Harris performance was politically effective - frame Trump as unstable + dangerous + felon. Trump invoked false claim that Haitian immigrants were "eating the pets" of Springfield OH (claim fabricated + repeatedly debunked).

Campaign defined by economy + immigration + abortion + democracy + Trump character. Trump framed immigration as crisis ("invasion") + economy as Biden-Harris failure ("Bidenomics") + 2024 as last chance to save America. Harris framed Trump as threat to democracy + reproductive rights + economic stability.

Look at picture. That Donald Trump - won 2024 re-election after losing 2020.

Election Day November 5, 2024: Trump 312 EV vs 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



Donald Trump, the 45th and 47th U.S. president. He won re-election in 2024 over Kamala Harris.
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Let's talk about the story

1.

Who became the 47th U.S. president in 2025?

2.

What happened at the Butler PA Trump rally on July 13, 2024?

3.

What was the Dobbs ruling and how did it affect 2022-24 elections?

Warm-up (5 min)

In 2024 Donald Trump won the presidential election over Kamala Harris. Trump 312-226 EV. Trump first former president since Grover Cleveland 1893 to win non-consecutive terms. First president-elect with felony conviction. Biden withdrew July 21, 2024 + endorsed Harris.

Answer key

1.

Donald Trump. 47th U.S. president (2025-present). Previously 45th president (2017-21). First former president since Grover Cleveland 1893 to win non-consecutive terms. First president-elect with felony conviction (May 30, 2024 NY hush-money guilty verdict on 34 counts).

AP students should know Trump as 47th president.

2.

July 13, 2024 Trump assassination attempt at Butler PA rally. Thomas Crooks (20-year-old) fired 8 rounds from rooftop ~140 yards away. Trump's ear grazed by bullet. One supporter killed (Corey Comperatore, 50, former fire chief). Two other supporters wounded. Crooks killed by Secret Service counter-snipers. Trump's "fight, fight, fight" fist-raised photo from immediately after the attack became iconic political image - photographer Evan Vucci's photo captured Trump bloodied + American flag in background. The attempted assassination affected 2024 politics for five reasons: (1) Reframed Trump campaign narrative - from felon-defendant to survivor-victim. Trump approval rose ~3 percentage points immediately after attempt. (2) Politically devastating for Biden - July 13 attempt occurred 13 days before July 26 Biden withdrawal. Combined with June 27 debate disaster, July 13 attempt structurally accelerated Biden withdrawal pressure. (3) Politically masterful image. Trump's "fight, fight, fight" fist + American flag was structurally powerful - widely cited as one of most consequential political photographs in U.S. history. (4) Republican structural consolidation. Trump received structural sympathy + support from Republicans + independents. (5) Security failures investigation. Subsequent investigations found Secret Service security failures + counter-sniper communication failures + rooftop access failures. Secret Service Director Kim Cheatle resigned July 23, 2024. The structural lesson: political violence has structural political consequences beyond immediate violence + survivors can be politically empowered by structural sympathy.

AP students should know the Butler PA attempt.

3.

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization was June 24, 2022 Supreme Court ruling 6-3 (5-3-1 split on overturning Roe). Majority opinion by Justice Alito. Concurring opinions: Roberts (concurring in judgment only), Thomas (criticized substantive due process), Kavanaugh (criticized scope). Dissent by Breyer + Sotomayor + Kagan. The ruling overturned Roe v. Wade (1973) + Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992). Returned abortion regulation to state authority. 13 trigger-law states immediately banned/restricted abortion. By 2024 19 states had banned/restricted abortion; 26 states protected abortion access; 6 states had varied frameworks. Dobbs affected 2022-24 elections in five structural ways: (1) 2022 midterm elections. Democrats overperformed structural expectations - retained Senate majority + lost only 9 House seats (vs predicted 30+). Republican gains structurally below historical midterm averages. Abortion ballot measures passed in CA, MI, VT (protecting abortion) + KS (rejecting abortion restriction August 2, 2022 - first post-Dobbs ballot test). (2) 2023 special elections. Wisconsin Supreme Court April 4, 2023 race won by Democratic-aligned Janet Protasiewicz - 11-percentage-point margin in swing state. Ohio August 8, 2023 Issue 1 ballot measure protected abortion (57-43% Yes); November 7, 2023 Ohio Issue 1 abortion-protection ballot won 56-44%. Virginia November 7, 2023 Democratic legislative gains. (3) 2024 ballot measures. 10 states had abortion-related ballot measures November 5, 2024. Pro-abortion-rights measures passed in AZ, CO, MD, MO, MT, NV, NY (constitutional right); pro-abortion-rights measures failed in FL (60% threshold not met despite 57% support), NE, SD (Republican-aligned alternatives). (4) Trump 2024 strategic adjustment. Trump April 8, 2024 announced abortion regulation should be left to states + opposed federal abortion ban. Structural moderation from previous Republican federal-abortion-ban framework. Trump argued the ruling was popular while denying personal abortion policy authority. (5) Harris 2024 framing. Harris campaign framed abortion as freedom + Trump as threat to reproductive rights. 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 know the Dobbs ruling.