The Will of the People

A Teacher’s Guide with Historical Background and Lesson Plans

Colonial Williamsburg®
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The United States Constitution, 1787. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.
Historical Background

Hanging chads, contested elections, and negative campaigning are all familiar elements of America’s modern election system. But with the exception of hanging chads, these elements have been part of our country’s political system since the early days of the Republic. One of the most graphic examples occurred just eleven years after the inauguration of George Washington as the first president of the United States.

The Year 1800

It was a new year and twenty-four years after the Declaration of Independence was written and a little more than nineteen years since the Revolutionary War ended in victory for America. The U.S. Constitution, which established the country’s plan of government, had been in effect for twelve years. America was also a country in mourning. George Washington had died on December 14, 1799, seventeen days before the start of the New Year.

The current president, John Adams, would be the first to move into the still-unfinished president’s home in the new capital city of Washington, D. C., located in a heavily forested area along the Potomac River with little cultivated acreage and a great deal of swampland.

By 1800, three new states had been added to the original thirteen—Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The new country’s population was slightly more than five million, of which almost one-fifth were enslaved African Americans and two-thirds lived within fifty miles of the Atlantic coast. The population west of the Appalachian Mountains numbered about 500,000. It was difficult to move to the west because there were very few roads that connected the coastal areas to the interior. Canals and railroads had not yet been built.

The year 1800 was also an election year. Presidential electors cast ballots on December 3 and the votes were counted two months later, on February 11, 1801. Incumbent president and Federalist John Adams of Massachusetts and his running mate, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina, received 65 and 64 votes, respectively. Federalist John Jay of New York received one vote. Democratic-Republican Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, the incumbent vice president, and his running mate, Aaron Burr of New York, each received 73 votes.
At the time, the candidate who received the most electoral votes became president and the one who received the second-highest number of electoral votes became vice president. Because Jefferson and Burr had received the same number of votes, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives, where lame-duck Federalists were still in the majority.

On February 17, 1801, the House of Representatives elected Thomas Jefferson the third president of the United States, with Aaron Burr named vice president. The process, however, had not been easy. Thirty-six separate ballots were cast—the last of which was a compromise—before Jefferson received one more vote than Burr. On March 4, Jefferson became the first U.S. president to take the oath of office in Washington, D.C.; the inauguration was administered by his distant kinsman and longtime political rival, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall.

Jefferson’s “revolution of 1800” had been fought and won through a peaceable change of government by a party with a new political philosophy. The handover of political power had occurred without the raising of arms or bloodshed, but it could very easily have gone another way.

Voting in Colonial America

Grant M. Hayden, a law professor at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, wrote in the Oxford Companion to American Law:

The history of voting in the United States has not been characterized by a smooth and inexorable progress toward universal political participation. It has instead been much messier, littered with periods of both expansion and retraction of the franchise with respect to many groups of potential voters.

In 1607, the first English settlers who settled at Jamestown, Virginia, brought with them English ideas of representative government, including a limited franchise (right to vote). In 1619, Virginia’s new governor, Sir George Yeardley, arrived with detailed instructions from the London-based Virginia Company of London, the joint stock venture that had provided funds for the colonizing enterprise. The instructions included a call for a general assembly of representatives of the inhabitants. “[T]hat they might have a hand in the governing of themselves,” Yeardley’s proclamation stated, “it was granted that a general assembly should be held yearly once . . . with two burgesses from each Plantation [settlement] freely to be elected by the inhabitants thereof.”

The election of the representatives—or burgesses, as they were called—took place in June 1619. Inhabitants of the various settlements made known their choices verbally or by a show of hands. An “inhabitant” in this case was defined as any male adult. (Women, children, and underage apprentices were not permitted to vote.) On July 30, the newly chosen burgesses—from ten plantations scattered along the shores of the James River—met at Jamestown with the governor and his council of advisors. This meeting was the first representative assembly to take place in English-speaking America, and it marked the rudimentary beginnings of a long evolutionary process of experimentation with representative government.

For the next one hundred and seventy years, this “experiment” spread to all thirteen colonies and was adapted and modified over time by various colonial legislatures. The right to vote, though more widespread in America than in Great Britain, was still narrowly focused by modern standards. Only independent persons were entitled to the franchise; that is, those who were not subject to the will of any other man. Dependents—including women, children, American Indians, African Americans (free and enslaved), white men who were not landowners, and non-Protestants—were usually disenfranchised.

By the eighteenth century, a man in Virginia was considered a landowner if he owned one of the following: fifty acres of undeveloped land, twenty-five acres with a house and plantation, a house and part of a lot in a town, or £50 in visible property (cash and/or possessions). Delaware, however, required voters to own fifty acres of land or £40 in visible property, and Connecticut required voters to own land worth a yearly rent of £2 or livestock valued at £40.
At the time of the Revolution, most colonial elections involved selecting representatives for the lower houses of legislatures. Connecticut and Rhode Island voters chose their governors directly, but in other colonies the English king appointed the chief executives who, in turn, appointed the local officials. Following English tradition, voting was typically conducted by voice vote, although Pennsylvania, Delaware, and North Carolina used ballots.

The U.S. Constitution and the Vote

During and after the American Revolution, debates continued about extending the franchise and altering property requirements in the new nation’s representative government. Benjamin Franklin believed that a property requirement was ridiculous. He wrote:

Today a man owns a [donkey] worth 50 dollars and is entitled to vote; but before the next election the [donkey] dies. The man in the meantime has become more experienced . . . and he is therefore better qualified to make a proper selection of rulers—but the [donkey] is dead and the man cannot vote. Now, gentlemen, pray inform me, in whom is the right of suffrage? In the man or in the [donkey]?

John Adams, another signer of the Declaration of Independence, disagreed with Franklin. He strongly believed that the property requirement should be retained:

It is dangerous to open so fruitful a source of controversy and altercation as would be opened by attempting to alter the qualifications of voters; there will be no end to it. New claims will arise; women will demand the vote; lads from 12 to 21 will think their rights not attended to; and every man who has not a farthing, will demand an equal voice with any other, in all acts of state. It tends to confound and destroy all distinctions, and prostrate all ranks to one common level.

When the Constitution was written in 1787, voting rights for the new Republic were to be determined by the laws of each state. This meant that little changed regarding who had the right to vote—it was still granted only to property-owning, free white men twenty-one years of age or older. There were, of course, exceptions. In 1790, New Jersey adopted a new election law that termed voters “he or she” and enfranchised women and African Americans. This law remained in effect until 1807, when a disputed election resulted in the loss of the vote for women and African American men. Vermont became the first state to drop all property and tax-paying qualifications for voting. By 1790, all of the states had eliminated religion requirements for voting.

The Electoral College

In framing the Constitution, the Founders established the Electoral College system (Article II, Section I). The belief was that federal officials should not be elected by popular vote, lest some politicians attempt to use their influence to gain power. The Founders also feared an uninformed voting public with insufficient information about presidential candidates from states other than their own. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, news and information traveled via horse or ship, so spreading information was a much slower process than it is today.
The U.S. Constitution called for an indirect election of the president via a college of electors. Each state was allowed the same number of electors as U.S. Senators (two per state), plus the number of its members in the U.S. House of Representatives (which was determined by each state’s population)—a compromise between large and small states. The process of actually selecting the electors was left to individual state legislatures. Some states appointed, rather than elected, their electors. Kentucky and Virginia, however, chose their electors by voting for one elector in each district within the state, and Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire allowed voters to choose electors statewide.

In the original design of the Electoral College, each elector was required to cast two votes for President of the United States. The rule was established to prevent an elector from voting only for the candidate from his own state: one vote had to be cast for a candidate outside of the elector’s home state.

The United States in the 1790s: An Experiment in Representative Government

On February 4, 1789, electors from each state cast ballots that unanimously elected George Washington as the first president of the United States. John Adams was elected vice president. The first Congress convened in April 1789, and Washington took the oath of office in the temporary capital of New York City on April 30. In his inaugural address, the new president spoke of the “experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people”—the great experiment in representative government.

Washington guided the new United States through perilous times of insurrection and civil unrest. After serving two terms as president, Washington voluntarily stepped down and returned to his life as a private citizen. Despite the peaceful transition of power from Washington to John Adams in 1797, political conflicts grew. In his farewell address, Washington warned Americans to move beyond the bitter partisanship of domestic politics and work toward serving the common good. The warning, however, was not heeded by the Federalist followers of John Adams and former Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, or by the Democratic-Republican followers of James Madison and Vice President Thomas Jefferson.

The Alien and Sedition Acts

In the summer of 1798, the Federalist-controlled Congress, reacting to fears of a possible war with France and suspicious of foreigners living in the United States, passed four bills known collectively as the Alien and Sedition Acts. These acts restricted the activities and freedom of speech of both American citizens and European refugees, many of whom were prominent supporters of Jefferson’s political party. A number of Jeffersonian-Republican newspaper editors, reporters, and supporters were convicted, fined, and even imprisoned for writing articles criticizing the federal government and President John Adams.

Many Americans viewed the Alien and Sedition Acts as unconstitutional. The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions,
written by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and passed by the Virginia and Kentucky legislatures in November and December of 1798, condemned the acts. They warned that the federal government was moving toward absolute monarchy, and they called for all of the states to unite in opposition to the acts.

The New Country in Turmoil

By 1799, America appeared to be on the brink of disunity and civil war. The French Revolution was underway, and hostilities between the United States and France had escalated to the point that war seemed inevitable. Meanwhile, members of both the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties believed that the opposing party planned to undermine the federal government and abolish the U.S. Constitution.

Federalist Alexander Hamilton wrote that the attempt “by Virginia and Kentucky to unite the State Legislatures in a direct resistance to certain laws of the Union can be considered in no other light than as an attempt to change the government.” William Cobbett, another Federalist, warned his readers:

“No now the crisis is advancing. The abandoned faction, devoted to France, have long been conspiring, and their conspiracy is at last brought near to an explosion. I have not the least doubt but [Democratic-Republicans] have fifty thousand men, provided with arms, in Pennsylvania alone. If vigorous measures are not taken; if the provisional army is not raised without delay, a civil war, or a surrender of independence is not more than a twelvemonth’s distance.”

Democratic-Republicans feared the same type of upheaval from Federalists’ actions. “In place of that noble love of liberty and republican government which carried us through the war,” Jefferson wrote, “an Anglican monarchical & aristocratical party has sprung up [in the United States], whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance, as they have already done, [return the country to] the forms of the British government.”

The Campaign of 1800 and the Press

The presidential campaign of 1800 that pitted Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr against John Adams and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney was bitter and hard-fought from beginning to end. In one of the nastiest campaigns in American history, both sides waged war against one another in the press and at public gatherings.

The Federalist press accused Jefferson of wanting to “destroy religion, introduce immorality, and loosen all the bonds of society.” A Boston newspaper reported that some of the city’s women had hidden their Bibles under mattresses after hearing of the possible victory of the Virginia “atheist.” Jefferson was also accused of being a weakling, more French than American in outlook, and a man whose victory would mean civil war. It was rumored that as a slave owner, he cohabited with some of the enslaved women at his Virginia home, Monticello. He was also accused of having swindled his clients when he was a young lawyer.

In Democratic-Republican newspapers and pamphlets, John Adams was labeled a monarchist, more British than American, a
Tory, a warmonger, and “quite insane.” One rumor claimed that Adams had sent Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to London to procure four mistresses to divide between the two men. When Adams heard the story, he was quite amused. “I do declare upon my honor,” he wrote to a friend, “if this be true General Pinckney has kept them all for himself and cheated me out of my two.”

Not all of the criticism leveled at Adams came from his opponents. Some of the most damaging allegations originated with members of his own party, including Alexander Hamilton, with whom he had once been on friendly terms. Hamilton wrote letters to the party faithful declaring that Adams was unfit to remain president. In one letter he stated, “If we must have an enemy at the head of the government, let it be one whom we can oppose . . . who will not involve our party in the disgrace of his foolish and bad measures.”

The End Result

Despite all of the dire warnings and verbal attacks, a tie in the Electoral College that resulted in a national crisis did not occur between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, but between Jefferson and his own running mate, Aaron Burr. With the Federalists still in control of Congress for a few more months, the battle now shifted to the House of Representatives. Dire consequences were predicted if Jefferson was denied the presidency. A worried President Adams feared “a civil war.” There were rumors that Jefferson’s home state of Virginia would secede. After thirty-three ballots, the House was still deadlocked, a deadlock that seemed unbreakable. James Bayard, Delaware’s lone congressman and a Federalist who considered Jefferson and his fellow planters to be slave-owning hypocrites, originally supported Aaron Burr. Now, after receiving assurances through a third party (probably John Nicholas, a member of Virginia’s House delegation) that Jefferson would agree to support three points of Federalist concern—the public debt, the Navy, and the retention of Federalist officeholders—Bayard indicated that Delaware would abstain, leaving only fifteen states to ballot. With eight states already secured, Jefferson’s victory would be complete. Jefferson’s old nemesis, Alexander Hamilton, was also instrumental in securing Jefferson’s victory.

Hamilton told his Federalist friends in the House of Representatives that he preferred Jefferson rather than Burr for president. Though Jefferson, according to Hamilton, was “a contemptible hypocrite,” crafty, unscrupulous, and dishonest, he believed Burr was even worse: “a most unfit and dangerous man.” After thirty-six separate ballots, the Federalists in the House elected Jefferson as the third president of the United States.

The problem of a tie vote between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr in the 1800 election led directly to the creation of the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution. The amendment, ratified in 1804, required each elector to cast one vote for president and a separate vote for vice president. If no candidate received a majority of electoral votes for president, then the U.S. House of Representatives would select the president from the top three candidates, with each state casting one vote. An absolute majority was required for a president to be elected.

Under the electoral system today, voters do not elect the president and vice president directly by popular vote. Instead, each citizen’s vote helps to determine which presidential candidate
receives the electoral votes of that citizen’s home state. So it is possible—as happened in the 2000 presidential election—for the candidate who wins the popular vote to lose the Electoral College vote and the election.

“This Government, the World’s Best Hope”

On March 4, 1801, Thomas Jefferson, now fifty-seven years old, took the oath of office in Washington, D.C. In his inaugural address, he attempted to heal the wounds created in the fierce presidential campaign:

Let us then, fellow citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things. . . . We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

The fledgling Republic had survived. The election of 1800 would not be the last crisis to beset the new nation. Many other bitterly fought presidential campaigns would follow, but the peaceful transfer of power would continue. In the end, the will of the people had prevailed.

**Glossary**

*abstain* — to purposely refrain from voting.

*amendment* — a change in wording or meaning in a law or bill.

*anarchy* — absence of government; a state of lawlessness, confusion, or disorder.

*ballots* — pieces of paper used to cast secret votes.

*candidate* — a person who runs in an election contest or is proposed for an office.

*citizen* — a person who owes allegiance to a government and is protected by it. Each citizen has both rights and responsibilities.

*civil unrest* — society in a disturbed or uneasy state; social turmoil. Examples of civil disorder may include illegal marches, sit-ins or other forms of obstruction, riots, and other types of crime.

*civil war* — war between opposing groups of citizens of the same country.

*conspiracy* — a plot to carry out some harmful or illegal act.

*Democratic Party* — a major U.S. political party founded in the late eighteenth century by people who favored states’ rights and strict adherence to the U.S. Constitution.

*Democratic-Republican* — a late eighteenth-century American political party that strictly interpreted the U.S. Constitution and emphasized states’ rights.

*dependents* — people (usually children) who rely on another person for support.

*dictatorship* — a government or country in which total political power is held by one person.

*disenfranchised* — deprived of the right to vote.

*domestic politics* — political affairs relating to one’s own country.

*effigy* — a crude figure representing a hated person.

*election system* — the process of voting to choose a person for office.

*electors* — members of the electoral college.

*Electoral College* — a body of electors in each state that meets every four years to elect the president and vice president of the United States.
electoral votes—votes by members of the Electoral College. On Election Day, electors for each state are chosen by a vote of the state’s residents.

Federalist—a member of an early political party in the United States that favored a strong centralized federal government.

franchise—a constitutional or statutory right or privilege, especially the right to vote.

general assembly—an official session of the members or representatives of a union, association, or government.

hanging chads—a tiny bit of paper, punched from a ballot using a mechanical voting machine, that does not completely detach from the ballot. When a ballot has a hanging chad, the vote that it represents may not be counted correctly.

House of Representatives—the lower house of the U.S. Congress in which representatives are divided among the states based on the population of each state.

hypocrites—individuals who act in contradiction to their stated beliefs or feelings.

inauguration—the introduction into office of an elected official, usually by means of a ceremony.

independent—free from the rule or governance of another; not belonging to a political party.

insurrection—rebellion; open fighting against authority (such as one’s government)

Know Nothings—a mid-nineteenth-century secret American political organization. Its members strongly opposed, and feared the political influence of, immigrants and followers of the Roman Catholic Church.

lame duck—a person holding office after his or her replacement has been elected to the office, but before the current term has ended.

literacy test—a reading test administered as a qualification for registering to vote. Such tests were frequently used to disenfranchise black citizens. The 1965 Voting Rights Act banned the use of literacy tests as a barrier to voting rights.

majority—the political party that has more than fifty percent of votes necessary for control of the government.

minority—a group of people that differs racially or politically from the larger population of it is a part. Also, the political party that has fewer than the number of votes necessary for control of the government.

monarchist—a person who believes in the establishment, preservation, or restoration of a monarchy as a form of government.

monarchy—a form of government in which supreme authority is held by a single hereditary ruler, such as a king or queen.

National Convention—a gathering of members of a political party to nominate a candidate for election.
negative campaigning—attempting to win political advantage by focusing on negative aspects of an opponent’s personality, record, or policies rather than emphasizing one’s own positive attributes or preferred policies. In extreme cases, such attacks are intended to destroy an opponent’s character.

partisanship—devotion to a particular cause or group.

political platform—a document stating the aims and principles of a political party. An individual aim or principle within a platform is referred to as a plank.

poll—the place where votes are cast or recorded.

poll tax—a per-person tax of a fixed amount often used to deny voting rights to low-income citizens, especially non-white citizens. In 1964, the Twenty Fourth Amendment eliminated poll taxes as qualification for voting in federal elections.

popular—relating to or coming from the whole body of people.

prestidigitation—sleight of hand; magic.

primary election—a preliminary (first) vote to choose a political party’s candidate to run in the general election.

propaganda—ideas, facts, or rumors spread deliberately to further one’s cause or to damage an opposing cause.

representatives—individuals who work on behalf of a section of the community as members of a legislative body. Also known as delegates.

republican—relating to or resembling a government having a chief of state who is not a monarch and in modern times is usually a president.

Republican Party—a major U.S. political party also known as the GOP (which stands for “Grand Old Party”). The Republican Party’s roots date to the mid-nineteenth century when it was founded as an anti-slavery party.

suffrage—the right to vote.

tally—a recorded count.

U.S. Constitution—the document that contains the basic principles and laws of the United States of America.

usurp—to take or make use of an office, a place, or powers without having the right to do so.

voting—the act or process of expressing one’s opinion or will by ballot in an election.

will of the people—the foundation of American democracy, in which leaders have the right to rule only with “the consent of the governed,” as stated in the Declaration of Independence.
Timeline

1787  The Second Article of the U.S. Constitution creates the Electoral College and outlines the process by which the president and vice president are elected.

1789  The first U.S. presidential election is uncontested. George Washington is unanimously elected.

1796  Candidates from two opposing political parties run for president for the first time in U.S. history. John Adams represents the Federalist Party; Thomas Jefferson represents the Democratic-Republican party.

1800  In the presidential election, a tie between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr forces the vote to the House of Representatives. The House elects Jefferson president and Burr vice president.

1812  The U.S. presidential election is the first in the country’s history to be held in wartime.

1820s–1830s  As new states are admitted to the Union, each develops and adopts its own constitution. Many of these state constitutions restrict voting rights to white adult men, typically those who are also property owners. Only in rare cases are free northern or southern blacks permitted to vote; women are not permitted to vote in any state.

1824  In the presidential election, no candidate receives one-half of the electoral votes, so the decision is thrown to the House of Representatives. Although Andrew Jackson receives the greatest number of popular and electoral votes, the House elects John Quincy Adams as president in a controversial decision.

1828  Andrew Jackson’s supporters form the basis of the modern Democratic Party. The opposing party is called the National Republicans, which later becomes the Whig Party.

1840  During the presidential campaign, the Democrats publish a specific platform for their party—a first for a major U.S. political party. Whig Party candidate William Henry Harrison publicly addresses voters, becoming the first U.S. presidential candidate to do so.

1840–1848  The Liberty Party draws national attention to the antislavery cause. The party is disbanded in 1848; many of its members join other antislavery proponents to found the Free-Soil Party.

1841  Harrison becomes the first U.S. president to die in office when he succumbs to pneumonia. Vice President John Tyler assumes the presidency, establishing a precedent for replacing an incumbent president that eventually becomes law.

1856  A coalition of ‘conscience Whigs’ and other antislavery supporters form the modern Republican Party. Noted explorer John C. Fremont is the party’s first presidential candidate.

1860  November  Abraham Lincoln wins the presidential election in a landslide in the Northern states, winning an electoral but not a popular majority.
Beginning with South Carolina, Southern states respond to Lincoln’s victory by seceding from the Union. The secession will lead to civil war.

1861
February
The Confederate States of America is formed, with Jefferson Davis as president.

April 12
Confederates under General Pierre Beauregard fire upon Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. The Civil War begins.

1865
On April 14, Abraham Lincoln is shot. He dies the following day, the first American president to be assassinated.

1870
The states ratify the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, making it illegal to deny the right to vote to any citizen based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

1872
Horace Greeley runs as the candidate for the Liberal Republican Party, a faction of the Republican Party; he is also officially endorsed by the Democrats, whose party he has frequently denounced.

African American men vote in a presidential election for the first time.

1876
The highly controversial presidential election between Samuel J. Tilden and Rutherford B. Hayes has the highest voter turnout in American history: 81.8 percent. Tilden wins the popular vote, but loses the election to Hayes by one electoral vote.

1877
On March 2, in what is referred to as the Compromise of 1877, a special commission declares Hayes the winner of the presidential election. The compromise is that Southern Democrats will recognize Hayes as president, but only if the Republicans agree to certain demands.

1888
Grover Cleveland wins the popular vote but loses the election when Benjamin Harrison receives 233 electoral votes to Cleveland’s 168.

1889
New York becomes the first state to adopt the Australian ballot (adopted in that country in 1857). All candidates’ names are printed on a single ballot and placed in the polling places at public expense. Printing, distribution, and marking of the ballot are protected by law, ensuring a secret vote.

1892
The mechanical lever voting machine is officially used in the United States for the first time at Lockport, New York.

Grover Cleveland becomes the first U.S. president elected using the secret ballot system.

1920
The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution grants women the right to vote.

1924
The Indian Citizenship Act gives Native Americans the right to vote.

1951
The Twenty-Second Amendment establishes a two-term limit for the office of president of the United States.
1961 The Twenty-Third Amendment permits residents of the District of Columbia to vote in presidential elections.

1964 The Twenty-Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits states from using a poll tax to prevent minority citizens from voting.

1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act. It reiterates the citizens’ rights granted under the Fifteenth Amendment and also prohibits the denial or abridgment of the right to vote based on a literacy test.

1971 The Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution lowers the voting age from 21 to 18.

2000 Democratic candidate Al Gore wins the popular vote, but loses to Republican candidate George W. Bush after the Supreme Court votes (in a 5-4 decision) to halt a ballot recount in Florida and award the electoral votes to Bush.
Who Could Vote?

INTRODUCTION
Citizenship and voting rights in America evolved and expanded over time, but not without significant struggles. During much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the right to vote was reserved for white male property owners, 21 years of age or older. African Americans, Native Americans, women, the poor, and other groups were excluded from participating in government. With the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, African American males were finally given the right to vote. Another fifty years passed before the 1920 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment extended the same right to women. In 1971, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.

OBJECTIVES
As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Explain that the right to fully participate in the political process belonged to a disproportionately small and privileged population in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America.
2. Interpret and analyze primary sources relating to the historical exclusion of large segments of the American population from the right to vote.
3. Apply chronological thinking to understand the key milestones in the struggle for voting rights in America.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING
This lesson meets the National Standards of Learning in the areas of chronological thinking, historical comprehension, and historical analysis and interpretation.

MATERIALS
Graphic Organizer: Who was Denied the Right to Vote?
Primary Source Sets 1–7
Graphic Organizer: Who was Denied the Right to Vote? (Teacher Answer Key)
Voting Rights Legislation Cards

STRATEGY
1. Explain to students that in eighteenth-century America, only a few people were eligible to vote. In Virginia, for example, each voter had to meet all of the following requirements (write these on the board or overhead):
   • Free
   • White
   • Male
   • 21 years of age or older
   • Property owner—£50 in visible property (cash and/or possessions)*
   • In many colonies, there were also restrictions based on religion. In Virginia, only Protestants could vote.
Note to teacher: For context, you may wish to explain that £50 was more than many skilled tradesmen earned in an entire year. A typical new journeyman (a tradesman who had just completed an apprenticeship and was working for someone else) earned approximately £35–£40 per year.

Explain that such restrictive voting requirements meant that a disproportionately small segment of the American colonies’ total population could vote. Voting requirements have changed dramatically since the eighteenth century, expanding the franchise to include increasingly larger portions of the total population until reaching the full franchise the United States has today.

2. Explain to students that they will examine several sets of primary sources (both images and text) relating to the denial of voting rights in United States history. Divide the class into small groups. Give each student a copy of the Who was Denied the Right to Vote? graphic organizer. Give each group a copy of Primary Source Sets 1–7.

One set at a time, have students read and discuss the primary sources and do the following:
- Determine what reason or method (race/color, gender, age, violence, poll tax, or literacy test) was used to deny the right to vote. Write the reason or method in the corresponding box in the first column of their graphic organizers.
- Identify who was denied the right to vote. In the corresponding box in the second column of their graphic organizers, circle the appropriate response.

3. Using the graphic organizer teacher answer key as a reference, facilitate a class discussion in which students share their findings. Check for understanding, resolve any differences of opinion students may have regarding the primary source sets, answer remaining questions, and ensure that all students have recorded correct information in the first and second columns of their graphic organizers.

Explain that changes in voting rights did not come quickly or easily. Achieving universal suffrage in the United States was a struggle that took more than two hundred years and the tireless efforts of many people. One by one, the major voting rights barriers were addressed and corrected through a series of key laws and Constitutional Amendments.

4. Have students return to their small groups. Give each student a copy of the Voting Rights Legislation Cards. Have students read and discuss the text excerpts. [Note: It may be helpful to move about the room and help students with some of the more challenging words they will encounter in the excerpts.] Then, have students cut apart the cards and place them in the appropriate sections in the third column on their graphic organizers. Do not have them glue down their cards yet!

As a class, come to a consensus regarding the placement of each of the Voting Rights Legislation Cards. After students have placed each of the cards in its appropriate location on their graphic organizers, have them glue down the cards.

5. Conduct a summary class discussion. Discussion questions may include the following:
- Based on what you have seen and discussed today, what groups of citizens were once disenfranchised, or denied the right to vote?
- What reasons or methods were used to deny them the right to vote?
- Why do you think it took so long for some groups of people to be granted the right to vote?
- Have voting rights laws and Constitutional Amendments corrected all of the barriers to voting? If not, why not? What barriers or issues still remain, and how do they affect citizens’ right to vote?
LESSON EXTENSIONS

1. Have students research the current requirements for registering to vote. What are the restrictions? Who still cannot vote and why?

2. Invite a local polling official to the classroom to discuss his or her responsibilities in the election process. Encourage the guest speaker to bring blank ballots and examples of other resources that are used in the voting process.

“... Read, Think—and then Vote!!” detail from a Workers’ Nonpartisan Political Action League broadside, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1929. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection.
### GRAPHIC ORGANIZER: WHO WAS DENIED THE RIGHT TO VOTE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Set</th>
<th>What reason or method was used to deny the right to vote?</th>
<th>Who was denied the right to vote? (circle one)</th>
<th>Voting rights legislation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Native Americans • African Americans • White Americans • new immigrants • do not read/read poorly</td>
<td>• under 21 • men • women • poor • ALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Native Americans • African Americans • White Americans • new immigrants • do not read/read poorly</td>
<td>• under 21 • men • women • poor • ALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Native Americans • African Americans • White Americans • new immigrants • do not read/read poorly</td>
<td>• under 21 • men • women • poor • ALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Native Americans • African Americans • White Americans • new immigrants • do not read/read poorly</td>
<td>• under 21 • men • women • poor • ALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What reason or method was used to deny the right to vote?</td>
<td>Who was denied the right to vote? (circle one)</td>
<td>Voting rights legislation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Source Set 5</strong></td>
<td>• Native Americans • African Americans • White Americans • new immigrants • do not read/read poorly</td>
<td>• under 21 men women poor ALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Source Set 6</strong></td>
<td>• Native Americans • African Americans • White Americans • new immigrants • do not read/read poorly</td>
<td>• under 21 men women poor ALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Source Set 7</strong></td>
<td>• Native Americans • African Americans • White Americans • new immigrants • do not read/read poorly</td>
<td>• under 21 men women poor ALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quotation:

I will tell you why we want [the right to vote]. We want it because it is our right, first of all. No class of men can, without insulting their own nature, be content with any deprivation of their rights. . . . By depriving us of suffrage . . . you declare before the world that we are unfit to exercise the elective franchise, and by this means lead us to . . . feel that we have no possibilities like other men. Again, I want the elective franchise, for one, as a colored man, because ours is a peculiar government, based upon a peculiar idea, and that idea is universal suffrage . . . .

Mingling with the mass I should partake of the strength of the mass; I should be supported by the mass, and I should have the same incentives to endeavor with the mass of my fellow-men . . . to rule us out is to make us an exception, to brand us with the stigma of inferiority . . . therefore, I want the franchise for the black man.


Quotation:

Miss Anthony—May it please your honor, I am not arguing the question, but simply stating the reasons why sentence cannot, in justice, be pronounced against me. Your denial of my citizen’s right to vote, is the denial of my right of consent as one of the governed, the denial of my right of representation as one of the taxed, the denial of my right to a trial by a jury of my peers as an offender against law, therefore, the denial of my sacred rights to life, liberty, property and

Judge Hunt—The Court cannot allow the prisoner to go on.

Miss Anthony—But your honor will not deny me this one and only poor privilege of protest against this high-handed outrage upon my citizen’s rights. May it please the Court to remember that since the day of my arrest last November, this is the first time that either myself or any person of my dis[en]franchised class has been allowed a word of defense before judge or jury . . .

Judge Hunt—The Court must insist the prisoner has been tried according to the established forms of law.

Miss Anthony—Yes, your honor, but by forms of law all made by men, interpreted by men, administered by men, in favor of men, and against women; and hence, your honor’s ordered verdict of guilty, against a United States citizen for the exercise of “that citizen’s right to vote,” simply because that citizen was a woman and not a man. . .


Quotation:

I figure I need exactly two hundred dollars a month to live on. Every bit of it. Anybody with a family does. . . . Sure they want more, why shouldn’t they? Everybody in the world should have two hundred dollars a month, especially men with families. Is it right for me to try to live on eighteen dollars a week when I know that eighty percent of the wealth of this country is controlled by five percent of the people? Is that fair? Tell me!

And that brings up another thing. Do you know I’ve never voted in my life, never been able to exercise my right as a citizen because of the [poll] tax? I’ve had to eat and sleep and I can’t pay a poll tax, can’t have a voice in my own government. . . .

Quotation:

Every device of which human ingenuity is capable has been used to deny this right [to vote]. The Negro citizen may go to register only to be told that the day is wrong, or the hour is late, or the official in charge is absent. And if he persists, and if he manages to present himself to the registrar, he may be disqualified because he did not spell out his middle name or because he abbreviated a word on the application.

And if he manages to fill out an application he is given a test. The registrar is the sole judge of whether he passes this test. He may be asked to recite the entire Constitution, or explain the most complex provisions of State law. And even a college degree cannot be used to prove that he can read and write.


Quotation:

A gang of hired ruffians and bullies . . . from Baltimore have been imported by the Know Nothings to take violent possession of the polls, and . . . prevent our citizens from depositing their votes . . . .

After floating around for some time without effecting anything of note, they [attacked] . . . . A long line of voters [who] were standing in the street, extending for some distance from the polls, and composed principally of anti-Know Nothing voters. The [gang], assisted by several large squads of Chunkers and Rip Raps of our own city, endeavored to break into this line by crowding, but not succeeding in this they left the scene of action . . . .

After a short time they returned largely reinforced in numbers and . . . made a concerted onslaught upon the voters. A terrible scene now ensued, in which the entire crowd participated. Stones and pistols were rapidly discharged, and men were trampled to the earth, beaten, stamped on, and severely wounded.

Source: The Barre Gazette, Barre, Massachusetts, June 5, 1857.

PRIMARY SOURCE SET 6

Quotation:

... the Indians aren’t allowed to have a voice in state affairs because they aren’t voters . . . . Just why the Indians shouldn’t vote is something I can’t understand. One of the Indians went over to Old Town [Maine] once to see some official in the city hall about voting. I don’t know just what position that official had over there, but he said to the Indian, ‘We don’t want you people over here. You have your own elections over on the island, and if you want to vote, go over there . . . .


“'Move on!' Has the Native American no rights that the naturalized American is bound to respect?,” by Thomas Nast, Harper’s Weekly, April 22, 1871. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-77909].
PRIMARY SOURCE SET 7

Quotation 1:

The first great stirring of intellectual interest in public affairs takes place in high school, both as a result of social studies courses and participation in student elections, Hi-Y, Boys State, and other activities. Dampen that interest by postponing voting responsibility until age 21 and you are dulling the edge of their interest in civic affairs.

Source: Representative Kenneth Hechler, “Constitutional Amendment to Lower the Voting Age to 18,” 86th Congress, 1st session, Congressional Record 105 (September 1, 1959), p. 17622.

Quotation 2:

In the recent past, [the voting rights] movement has generally benefited minority groups and poor people, and the legislative struggle in these areas has virtually been won. But there is one large segment of Americans that is still denied the ballot—the group of men and women between the ages of 18 and 21. . . . And it is a wrong. Make no mistake about it. There is no constitutional requirement [for or against] voting on the basis of age. . . . These young Americans are more educated, more experienced, and probably better motivated, than any other generation of young people in our history. We require our 18- to 21-year-olds to accept the adult responsibilities of living in our society. They are legally liable for payment of taxes, for military service, and for the consequences of their personal actions. In simple justice, they should be given the right to participate as adults in the democratic process.

### VOTING RIGHTS LEGISLATION

**Directions:** Cut apart the cards, then paste each card in its correct box on your Who was Denied the Right to Vote? graphic organizer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amendment / Act</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nineteenth Amendment (1920):</td>
<td>The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-Fourth Amendment (1964):</td>
<td>The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election . . . shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-Sixth Amendment (1971):</td>
<td>The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifteenth Amendment (1870):</td>
<td>The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Citizenship Act (1924):</td>
<td>. . . all noncitizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States . . . [are] declared to be citizens of the United States . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting Rights Act (1965):</td>
<td>. . . no citizen shall be denied the right to vote in any Federal, State, or local election because of his failure to comply with any test or device in any State. . . . [requiring him to] demonstrate the ability to read, write, understand, or interpret any matter . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting Rights Act (1965):</td>
<td>. . . No person, whether acting under color of law or otherwise, shall intimidate, threaten, or coerce, or attempt to intimidate, threaten, or coerce any person for voting or attempting to vote . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting Rights Act (1965):</td>
<td>. . . No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard . . . or procedure shall be imposed . . . to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Source Set 1</td>
<td>race/color African Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Source Set 2</td>
<td>gender/sex female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Source Set 3</td>
<td>poll tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Source Set 4</td>
<td>literacy test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### GRAPHIC ORGANIZER: WHO WAS DENIED THE RIGHT TO VOTE? (TEACHER ANSWER KEY)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason or Method Used to Deny the Right to Vote</th>
<th>Who Was Denied the Right to Vote? (Circle One)</th>
<th>Voting Rights Legislation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Primary Source Set 5** | Violence, threats, or intimidation  
[Note: Affects all voters.] | • Native Americans  
• African Americans  
• White Americans  
• new immigrants  
• do not read/read poorly ALL  
| | • under 21  
• men  
• women  
• poor  
| | Voting Rights Act (1965): . . . No person, whether acting under color of law or otherwise, shall intimidate, threaten, or coerce, or attempt to intimidate, threaten, or coerce any person for voting or attempting to vote . . . |
| **Primary Source Set 6** | race/color  
Native Americans | • Native Americans  
• African Americans  
• White Americans  
• new immigrants  
• do not read/read poorly  
| | • under 21  
• men  
• women  
• poor  
| | Indian Citizenship Act (1924): . . . all noncitizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States . . . [are] declared to be citizens of the United States . . .  
| | Voting Rights Act (1965): No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard . . . or procedure shall be imposed . . . to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color. |
| **Primary Source Set 7** | age  
under 21 | • Native Americans  
• African Americans  
• White Americans  
• new immigrants  
• do not read/read poorly  
| | • under 21  
• men  
• women  
• poor  
| | Twenty-Sixth Amendment (1971): The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age. |
Negative Campaigning

INTRODUCTION
During political campaigns, candidates and their supporters use a variety of approaches to promote positions and describe how they differ from their opponents. Some campaigns extol the virtues of their own candidate, while others seek to “tear down” the competition. Candidates routinely criticize one another’s experience, positions on issues, and voting records. Occasionally, they also accuse each other of twisting the truth or even lying. This kind of negative campaigning is not a new phenomenon.

In this lesson, students will examine several primary sources to learn how candidates in presidential campaigns throughout U.S. history have used negative campaign tactics in the hope of gaining political advantage over opponents.

OBJECTIVES
As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Describe electioneering methods from the past.
2. Compare election campaign practices from the past to current ones.
3. Discuss how the public perceives negative campaigns.
4. Assess the effectiveness and relative merits of negative campaigns.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING
This lesson meets the National Standards of Learning in the areas of historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, and historical issues analysis.

MATERIALS
Political Print: “Congressional Pugilists”
Broadside: “Republicans Turn out, turn out . . .”
Political Print: “King Andrew the First”
Primary Source Quotations
Teacher Reference—Political Print and Broadside Information
Copies of current news magazines and/or politics news and editorial sections from local newspapers
(provided by the teacher)
Internet access
Art supplies for constructing a collage (provided by the teacher)

STRATEGY
1. Ask students what the phrase “negative campaigning” means to them. Attempt to get them to identify general tactics such as unsubstantiated personal attacks, attacking an opponent’s record, using faked documents to question an opponent’s positions, vandalizing the opposition’s campaign materials, and so on.

2. Explain to students that these types of behaviors are nothing new. Negative campaigning has been a part of the American political process since the founding of the republic. On an overhead, show students the Political Print: “Congressional Pugilists.”
Explain that this 1798 engraving is a crude portrayal of a fight that took place on the floor of Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The fight between Vermont Representative Matthew Lyon (wielding fireplace tongs) and Roger Griswold of Connecticut (armed with the cane) began when Griswold made an insulting remark to Lyon. The key discussion point is that contentious—and occasionally violent—behavior is nothing new in the world of politics.

3. Explain to the students that they will examine examples of negative campaign tactics from several nineteenth-century presidential elections.

Divide students into small groups. Give each group a copy of the Broadside: “Republicans Turn out, turn out . . .,” the Political Print: “King Andrew the First,” and the Primary Source Quotations. Have each group examine the broadside, political cartoon, and quotations, and make a list of the negative comments, ideas, and/or tactics found in the materials. Conduct a class discussion in which students share their findings. [Note to teacher: For later reference, make a list of these findings on the board, chart paper, or an overhead transparency. For details on the broadside and political print, refer to the Teacher Reference—Political Print and Broadside Information.] Ask students:

For the “Republicans Turn out, turn out . . .” broadside:
- What words or phrases are used to describe the Federalists in a negative manner?
- The broadside ends with the words “Jefferson & Clinton, who fought their Country’s Battles in the year ’76.” What makes this a positive statement supporting the Democratic-Republican candidates Thomas Jefferson and George Clinton?

For the “King Andrew the First” political print:
- Why would it be considered negative to describe Andrew Jackson as “King Andrew the First”? What does the term “king” imply?
- What is “King Andrew” standing on? What does that suggest about Jackson’s approach to U.S. law?

For the primary source quotations:
- What words, phrases, or meanings in the quotations refer to candidates in a negative manner? Why are they negative?
- What does each quotation focus on and use as negative against the candidate? (experience, political record, physical characteristics, or policies, for example)

5. Explain to students that they will examine similar negative campaign tactics as practiced today. Give students a variety of current news magazines and editorial sections from local newspapers. Using these materials and the Internet, have student groups locate several examples of negative campaigning tactics being used today. Have each group construct a collage illustrating those tactics. Display the collages around the room and provide time for each group to share its work with the class.

6. Facilitate a summary class discussion about the pros and cons of using negative campaign tactics. Compare current tactics to those used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then discuss whether anything is different today, and if so, in what ways. [Note to teacher: Think in terms of technological changes that have provided new opportunities for waging such campaigns.]

LESSON EXTENSION

Have students write letters to the editor either supporting or opposing the use of negative campaign tactics.
BROADSIDE: “REPUBLICANS TURN OUT, TURN OUT . . .”

REPUBLICANS

Turn out, turn out and save your Country from ruin!

From an Emperor—from a King—from the iron grasp of a British Tory Faction—an unprincipled banditti of British speculators. The hireling tools and emissaries of his majesty, king George the 3d, have thronged our city and diffused the poison of principles among us.

DOWN WITH THE TORIES, DOWN WITH THE BRITISH FACTION,

Before they have it in their power to enslave you, and reduce your families to distress by heavy taxation. Republicans want no Tribute-liars—they want no ship Ocean-liars—they want no Rufus King’s for Lords—they want no Varick to lord it over them—they want no Jones for senator, who fought with the British against the Americans in time of the war.—But they want in their places such men as

Jefferson & Clinton,

who fought their Country’s Battles in the year ’76

POLITICAL PRINT: “KING ANDREW THE FIRST”

PRIMARY SOURCE QUOTATIONS

Will you remain at home and suffer [Andrew Jackson’s] tyrannical rule still to exist . . . or will you manfully and unitedly come forth to the polls, showing that you “know your rights, and knowing, dare maintain them?” . . .

Should Jackson be re-elected, we are to expect
The Destruction of the Supreme Court.
The Constitution a dead letter.
The Laws to be binding or not, as the President pleases.
The Indians to be driven, in spite of Laws and Treaties, into the wilderness.
The United States Bank and its safe notes to be destroyed.
[. . .]
The Newark Sentinel, November 6, 1832.

General [Zachary] Taylor is a military man, and a military man [only]. He has had no training in civil affairs. He has performed no functions of a civil nature, under the Constitution of his country.

Emancipator and Free Soil Press, October 4, 1848

We have repeatedly spoken of [Abraham Lincoln] as a gentleman of unblemished moral character, and an amiable and agreeable member of society. But as a politician, little can be said in his praise. His official record is next to nothing, and what little there is of it is not much to his credit. . . . How came a man with such an unhappy and disgraceful record to be thought of in connection with the Presidency? . . . to put forth such a man of such a record . . . is an insult to the intelligence and self respect of the American people.

Wisconsin Patriot, July 7, 1860.

[Stephen Douglas] is about five feet nothing in height and about the same in diameter the other way. He has a red face, short legs, and a large belly. Answers to the name of Little Giant, talks a great deal, very loud, always about himself . . . .

The Constitution (Washington, D.C.), September 8, 1860.

The age of statesmen is gone; the age of rail-splitters and tailors, of buffoons, boors, and fanatics has succeeded. . . . In a crisis of the most appalling magnitude [war] requiring statesmanship of the highest order, the country is asked to consider the claims of two ignorant, boorish, third-rate backwoods lawyers [Abraham Lincoln, and his running mate Andrew Johnson] for the highest stations in the government. Such nominations, in such a [circumstance], are an insult to the common sense of the people.

The New York World, June 9, 1864.
[Samuel J.] Tilden’s surroundings are bad. If elected he would take to the White House the worst set of political jobbers and thieves ever seen in Washington, and that is saying a good deal. . . . even though his millions could elect him, [he] would give us the most corrupt administration the country has ever known.

*The Duluth Minnesotian-Herald*, December 9, 1876.

[ Rutherford B. ] Hayes is a candidate whose weakness and unimportance are his principal recommendations to the Republican party. His record is brief and slight, though he is fifty-four years old. . . . His name in Congress or elsewhere has been identified with no policy, or measure, or action of any kind. He has no marked powers that have been brought into play; he has no strong point of character; he has been but a lucky man in politics.

*Georgia Weekly Telegraph*, June 27, 1876.
“REPUBLICANS TURN OUT, TURN OUT . . .”

This campaign broadside for Democratic-Republican candidates Thomas Jefferson and George Clinton is a prime example of negative campaigning. The words and phrases used throughout the piece portray Federalist candidates Charles Pinckney and Rufus King as Tories (loyalists) who still favor the King of Great Britain and continue to do so at the expense of the United States. The words used to describe Pinckney and King (“save your country from ruin,” “Tory,” “unprincipled,” “enslave,” “reduce your families to distress with heavy taxation,” “liars,” or “fought with the British against the Americans in time of war”) are intended to generate strong emotional anti-Federalist responses from readers. The broadside concludes with the words “Jefferson & Clinton, who fought their Country’s Battles in the year ‘76.” This is a positive statement about the patriotic Democratic-Republican candidates, Thomas Jefferson and George Clinton, who fought for America in 1776. The implication is that they will be good for the country and will not do the negative deeds the remainder of the broadside attributes to Pinkney and King.

“KING ANDREW THE FIRST”

This print was not created for a presidential campaign, but it is an excellent example of the satirical images that were often created to represent candidates during campaigns or to portray sitting presidents. The print depicts President Andrew Jackson as a king, wearing full regalia and standing before a throne. In his left hand he holds a “veto.” In his right hand he holds a scepter. He is also standing on the tattered remains of the U.S. Constitution and the seal of Pennsylvania (the United States Bank was located in Philadelphia). The implication is that Jackson views the presidency in imperial terms and will exceed his constitutional power by acting without the approval of Congress.
Evaluation Activity

INTRODUCTION

In a democratic society, citizens play a critical role in the electoral process. It is through the involvement of the people that candidates are selected, campaigns are conducted, and eventual office holders are elected. Those running for political office rely on their supporters to communicate their messages and positions to the general public. Such communication is accomplished by using all forms of media, including speeches and rallies, debates, town hall meetings, print, radio, television, and the Internet. For all of these candidates, the overarching goal is to convince the voting public to vote for them or against their opponents.

The Electronic Field Trip broadcast, *The Will of the People*, features the presidential election of 1800. In this activity, students will work in small groups to create campaign posters for one of the candidates in that election—Thomas Jefferson or John Adams.

OBJECTIVES

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe the various means by which citizens can become informed and involved participants in the electoral process.
2. Explain how voters are informed about the candidates’ potential strengths and weaknesses.
3. Create a campaign poster that supports a specific candidate or describes the opponent unfavorably.
4. Engage in a discussion about the election of 1800 that pitted Thomas Jefferson against John Adams.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

This activity meets the National Standards of Learning in the areas of historical comprehension and historical analysis and interpretation.

MATERIALS

- Election of 1800—The Candidates and Their Positions
- Large pieces of construction paper (provided by the teacher)
- Art supplies (provided by the teacher)

STRATEGY

1. Conduct a class discussion on a citizen’s role in the democratic electoral process. To participate fully in an election, individual voters must become informed about the candidates and their positions on relevant issues. Citizens must take the time to read, listen, and observe the various statements made by all of the candidates. Doing so enables them to make thoughtful, informed choices.

2. Have students identify, as a class, some of the factors that should be taken into consideration when attempting to determine who to vote for in an election. [Note to teacher: Factors may include, but are not limited to, previous experience, personal background, positions on current issues, voting record, reputation, and leadership skills.]

3. Explain to students that they will examine the two candidates who ran for president of the United States in the election of 1800—Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. During the election campaign of 1800, as in every presidential election since, each candidate had both supporters and detractors.
Give each student a copy of the Election of 1800—The Candidates and Their Positions sheet profiling Jefferson and Adams, their positions on issues, opinions of the opponent/opposing party, and information highlighting their personal experience. Review this material with the class.

4. Divide students into eight groups. Explain that each group will use the information from the Election of 1800—The Candidates and Their Positions handout to create a campaign poster for either Thomas Jefferson or John Adams. Assign each group a candidate and focus for the campaign poster as follows:

**Democratic-Republican Candidate**
- Group 1—Thomas Jefferson / issues
- Group 2—Thomas Jefferson / issues
- Group 3—Thomas Jefferson / experience
- Group 4—Thomas Jefferson / experience

**Federalist Candidate**
- Group 5—John Adams / issues
- Group 6—John Adams / issues
- Group 7—John Adams / experience
- Group 8—John Adams / experience

Explain to students that the campaign posters may be either for their assigned candidate OR against his opponent, but they must be clearly designed to encourage people to vote for their candidate. [Note to teacher: It may be helpful to show students samples (posters, advertisements, or political cartoons, for example) of campaign materials from past elections.]

5. Provide time for each group to share its work with the class. Each group’s presentation should touch on the following:
   - Which candidate does the poster support?
   - Does the poster promote the assigned candidate’s qualities and qualifications or focus on why the opponent is less qualified or desirable? Why was this approach selected?
   - Is the poster an example of positive or negative campaigning?

6. Facilitate a summary discussion in which students revisit the factors citizens should consider when deciding who to vote for in an election. Have them again consider the various ways voters can obtain information on the candidates and their positions on key issues. Conclude by having students discuss the merits of positive and negative campaign tactics. [Note to teacher: Depending on the students’ grade level and background knowledge, the teacher may need to take a more or less active role in this discussion.] Discussion questions may include, but are not limited to:
   - Is negative campaigning a new political strategy? If not, how long have such methods been used?
   - Why do you think some candidates use negative campaign strategies?
   - Do you believe positive or negative campaign strategies are the most effective? Why?
   - If you were a candidate running for office, how would you conduct your political campaign? Why?
   - Do you think modern communication methods (radio, television, Internet, etc.) have affected political campaigning? If so, in what way(s)?
   - Do you think modern campaigns are better suited to positive or negative approaches? Why?
ELECTION OF 1800—
THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR POSITIONS

Directions: Your campaign poster for the presidential election of 1800 may be either for your assigned candidate OR against his opponent, but it must be clearly designed to encourage people to vote for your candidate. Use the following information about the candidates and their parties’ political platforms to help you create your poster.

FEDERALIST PARTY
CANDIDATE: JOHN ADAMS

ISSUES AND OPINIONS
• Financial policy—supports the creation of a national bank; also believes taxes are important to fund a navy to protect American trade
• Interpretation of the U.S. Constitution—is in favor of a strong central government
• Relations with Great Britain and France—favors Great Britain because it is the original home country for most Americans, their language, and their culture
• Vision for the nation’s future—believes that the nation can become great by increasing manufacturing and trade
• Opinion of the Democratic-Republicans—believes they are too pro-French; also believes they mostly represent the interests of farmers, small businesses, and laborers

JOHN ADAMS’ EXPERIENCE
• Born in Braintree, Massachusetts, on October 30, 1735
• Graduated from Harvard College
• Lawyer
• Boston representative to the Massachusetts General Court
• Massachusetts delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses
• Member of the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence
• Joint commissioner to France, along with Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee
• Joint commissioner, with Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Henry Laurens, and Thomas Jefferson, to negotiate a peace treaty with Great Britain
• First U.S. minister to Great Britain
• First vice president of the United States under George Washington
• Second president of the United States

DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN PARTY
CANDIDATE: THOMAS JEFFERSON

ISSUES AND OPINIONS
• Financial policy—opposes the creation of a national bank; does not believe a large navy is necessary to maintain open trade with foreign nations
• Interpretation of the U.S. Constitution—favors strong state governments and a weak federal government
• Future development of the nation—believes the nation can become great by encouraging citizens to become farmers
• Relations with Great Britain and France—favors France because it supported the colonies during the American Revolution; believes that France fought its own similar revolution for liberty and equality
• Opinion of the Federalists—believes they are too pro-British; believes they mostly represent the interests of the rich and powerful, big businesses, and merchants
THOMAS JEFFERSON’S EXPERIENCE
• Born in Shadwell, Virginia, on April 13, 1743
• Attended the College of William and Mary
• Lawyer
• Member of the Virginia House of Burgesses
• Virginia delegate to the Second Continental Congress
• Wrote the Declaration of Independence
• Governor of Virginia
• First minister to France
• First U.S. secretary of state under George Washington
• Second vice president of the United States under John Adams
We would enjoy copies of some of your students’ work from any of the lesson plans in this teacher’s guide. If you care to share examples, please send them to:

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