

# The Birth of Modern Elections

## General

### Grade Level

Middle School

### Author Info

Larry Dorenkamp

[nittany10@gmail.com](mailto:nittany10@gmail.com)

North Hills Middle School

55 Rochester Road

Pittsburgh, PA 15229

### Type of Lesson

Hands-on

### Duration

2-3 school days

### Interdisciplinary Connections

This lesson will, depending of on the course of action that the students select, will incorporate skills of art, poetry/song writing, and technology.

## Objectives

### Overview

As you know, the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans have very differing views about how this infant nation should function. Both represented the interests of different groups of Americans.

Imagine that it is the fall of 1800. Americans are preparing for another Presidential election. The two candidates running for the office are very familiar with each other. It is a "rematch" of the Election of 1796. The Federalist candidate that is running for the office is President John Adams. His Vice-

President, Thomas Jefferson, represents the Democratic-Republicans in this race for The Executive Mansion.

It can be said that modern politics were born during the election of 1800. Supporters of both candidates spent time “mudslinging” accurate and inaccurate information about each candidate. As our nation has progressed to the 21st century, this “dirty” art of campaigning has evolved into what many present-day Americans believe to be a nuisance on American society. Today, peoples’ lives are bombarded with phone calls, emails, and silly television commercials. Sometime these forms of communication provide useful information. Most often, they contain less than truthful statements about the candidates running for the White House.

## **Prior Knowledge**

This lesson will require students to have a foundation of the core beliefs of our Nation's first two political parties, the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans. If you need a refresher of each party's ideals, check out the attached file, "CoreBeliefsFedDemRep.pdf".

## **State Standards**

Revolution and the New Nation: 1770's – Early 1800's

USI.7(c) – Describing the events and accomplishments of the first five Presidents of the United States.

## **Objectives/Learning Outcomes**

Students will display their understanding of the political ideals/core beliefs of the Federalist and Democratic-Republican Parties.

## **Additional Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will create positive or negative propaganda that is meant to influence a turn of the century (1800) voter.
2. Concluding presentations of class projects, students will show an understanding of the core values/beliefs of the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties through informal and formal quiz

## **Essential Questions**

"Has anyone ever heard of 'mudslinging'?"

"If you haven't, take some educated guesses of what it MIGHT mean. Share your thoughts with your neighbor."

# Procedures

1.

For your assignment, you are going to bring 21st century campaign techniques to the election of 1800 between President Adams and Vice-President Jefferson. You are assuming the role of campaign manager for either of these Founding Fathers (your choice) and you are convinced that he is best suited to lead the United States into the 19th century.

2.

Your job is to convince the voting American public to vote for one candidate or the other using ONE of the two methods below:

1. Mailing leaflet that will be placed in voters' mailboxes accompanied with creating/writing lyrics to a politically charged song (singing optional)
2. Using a movie production app (imovie or the like), produce a television commercial for your candidate or against the other candidate for the election of 1800

3.

As the brains behind these campaigns, it is your job to decide which approach would be best to garner the support of the American voter. Do you highlight the positive public service of your candidate and the beliefs of your party (Federalist or Democratic-Republican)? Or, do you become a "mudslinger" and attack the opposing candidate, their past actions, and the beliefs of their party? As campaign manager, it's your decision.

Whichever approach you choose, you have to stick exclusively to that approach. ***The leaflet, lyrics, or commercial can't be a mix of both. The tone must be consistent throughout.***

4. *Option 1 Leaflet and Song*

Leaflet

- Cite at least three core beliefs of either the Democratic-Republicans (if your ad is in favor of Jefferson) or the Federalists (if your ad is pro-Adams). Or, if you are "mudslinging", attack the other political party by putting a negative spin on their core beliefs. Either way, you MUST identify what their party's core beliefs are. Your leaflet will be judged/graded on your representation of their core beliefs.

- Additionally, the leaflet should be colorful and pleasant to the eye — Use images of the candidates (in a positive or negative light), symbolism, and/or analogies. The less words you can use, the better. Remember, the majority of Americans could not read or write. So, you need to use images/symbolism to catch their attention and garnish their vote.

## Song

Without mp3, cd's, records, or tape, most people would think that music was not a common aspect of early American life. However, music and songs were used during the colonial period to show political unity ("Hail, Columbia" was written for President Washington and was a unifying force of the Federalist Party).

Coupled with your political mailing propaganda, you are to create a song/poem rhyming poem about the core beliefs of the Democratic-Republicans or the Federalists.

- Select at least THREE core beliefs of one of the parties. Each of the three core beliefs should have 1 or 2 stanzas, with four lines per stanza. Within the poems, you will display your understanding of these things in a rhyming manner.
- Go to this website to see the rhyming patterns that you are to do.  
<http://tinyurl.com/rhymingpatterns>
- Example Stanza:

Democratic-Republicans, be a part of our clan (A)

Informed and educated will evolve the common man(A)

With this foundation leading decisions will come (B)

For this type of America freedom was won (B)

## 5. Option 2 iMovie Ad

### iMovie

The effective use of television has won and lost Presidential elections. In 1960, exit polls showed that many Americans voted for John F. Kennedy over Richard Nixon because in their televised debate, Nixon sweated profusely, making him look nervous. While, Kennedy appeared calm and cool.

From that point forward television has been used to point out the strengths and weaknesses of Presidential candidates.

Using your iMovie skills that have been developed earlier in the school year, you will create a 30 second political ad/commercial for the Election of 1800.

**Your 30 second ad should include:**

**A) Narration that supports your candidate, or attacks the other. Details of the core beliefs of the party should be apparent and accurate.**

**B) Still images of the two candidates and events that surround the happenings of their political life, in context to what your message is.**

**C) Appropriate background music and sound effects placed in the appropriate spots of your ad/commercial.**

**D) Textboxes with as few words as possible. The message should be a vocal one, with a few words to support, or reinforce, your message.**

**E) Appropriate Transitions.**

#### 6. Steps of iMovie Creation

- Create a script that you will read/narrate (you will not "wing it").
- Your script should consist of a beginning(opening), middle(support), and end(conclusion).

Opening – Introduce us to the candidate and what office they are running for. Provide background information here (where they are from, for example)

Support – Paint the picture of the candidate that you want to public to see. Use the core values of their party in a positive or negative light (depending on your commercial's approach)

Conclusion – Re-state your views about the candidate and why the American public should, or should not vote for him.

- Before you begin making your ad using iMovie, share your script with another classmate. Make sure that your viewpoint is coming across clearly and is understood by other students.
- On a piece of scratchpaper, create a SKETCHED STORYBOARD. Layout what types of images of primary sources (portraits, documents, political cartoons) you would like to add to the narration of your ad that will enhance your commercial and paint the picture of the candidate that you would like the public to see. You will need to effectively align these visuals with what your narration is saying so your story informs and educates the American public.
- Go out on the web and FIND the images of primary sources (portraits, documents, political cartoons) you are going to insert into your iMovie. This is a process that you have already completed on a handful of occasions this year.
- Now go and use the iMovie skills you have developed this school year to produce your ad.
- Upload/share the video to YouTube. Follow your teacher's directions to insert account

information.

## **Assessment**

### **Homework**

Work outside class as needed.

### **Assessment**

Individual teacher Rubric should be created to fit your districts grading criteria for quiz

Informal quizzing using eClicker to gauge knowledge of the core beliefs of the Federalists and Democratic-Republican Party

## **Accommodations**

### **Accommodations – Students with Special Needs**

Projects could be done in pairs or group or could be chunked for learners of varying levels

### **Accommodations – Advanced Learners**

Advanced students could include the beliefs of BOTH political parties.