

The Election of 1800

A re-creation of the 1800 presidential campaign involving
the Federalists and the Republicans



About the author

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Purpose

Every four years Americans get interested in politics. The front-page drama of a presidential election is enough to alter the concern of those who normally turn first to the comics or the horoscope. This re-creation involves students in roleplaying the election of 1800 so that the personalities and disputes of the time will come alive for them.

The election of 1800 was one of our country's most complicated elections because of the constitutional problems it raised. The tie in the electoral college between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, which occurred largely because of the development of a party system unanticipated by the framers of the Constitution, led to the passage of the 12th amendment, which established separate balloting for president and vice president. Because it was so difficult to choose a president, the election of 1800 provides one of the best opportunities in an American history course to examine how the electoral system works. Information about this process is included in the Background Essay and debriefing activities in the **Student Guide** and in the **Unit Test**. However, the emphasis of the re-creation itself is on the issues that are as real now as they were in 1800: foreign policy, defense, civil liberties, big government, and leadership.

Through participating in this re-creation, students should be able to accomplish the following:

Knowledge

1. Understand how the structure and process of presidential elections has changed since 1800
2. Become familiar with the important issues which divided the political parties in 1800

Attitudes

1. Appreciate that while issues may change in specific elections, basic questions of political philosophy change very little
2. Become aware of the manner in which a person's interests influence the way he or she votes

Skills

1. Practice note-taking while reading and listening
2. Organize and present arguments which appeal to the personal concerns of a particular individual
3. Relate the issues of the past to present political controversies

Why is the election of 1800 a particularly important historical election?

Overview

Three class periods-or days-are needed for this re-creation.

Interact's re-creations take only a few hours of class time.

Day 1

Students first complete the **Issues Survey**. Then factions of Federalists, Republicans, and uncommitted voters are established, and students are selected to role-play candidates and campaign managers. Next students read the Background Essay in their Student Guides and begin to use this essay to record specific details for the five campaign issues on their Party Position Outline (see the **Student Guide**).

Day 2

This hour's main purpose is for candidates' speeches and questions for the candidates from opposing and uncommitted factions. As students continue to gather specific information from the speeches and questioning, they add this information under the appropriate question on the Party Position Outline. After the speeches and questioning, members of the uncommitted faction "introduce" themselves, using as a guide their answers to Identity Questions in the **Student Guide**. Members of the opposing faction then have an opportunity to win over members of the uncommitted faction.

Day 3

This hour begins with party members displaying posters, passing out campaign literature, making general ballyhoo for their candidates, and striving one more time to win over members of the uncommitted faction. Then the balloting takes place, and the results are announced. Students next divide into small groups to discuss the debriefing questions in the Student Guide.

(The debriefing may be followed by the **Unit Test** if so desired. Optional follow-up activities also are available for a fourth period of instruction.)



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Setup Directions

1. **Handouts:** See note at left the first time you use this recreation. For subsequent classes, duplicate the number in parentheses, using the masters in this Teacher Guide.
 - Issues Survey—class set
 - John Adams Handout—two: one for Adams; one for his campaign manager
 - Thomas Jefferson Handout—two: one for Jefferson; one for his campaign manager
 - Federalist Campaign Manager Handout—one
 - Republican Campaign Manager Handout—one

Optional:

- Unit Test—class set

2. Assigning roles

- a. Divide the class into thirds: one-third, Federalists; one-third, Republicans; one-third, uncommitted. It is important to have an equal number of Federalists and Republicans. If the class cannot be equally divided, assign the “extra” students to the uncommitted faction. For instance, in a class of 32 you might have 10 Republicans, 10 Federalists and 12 uncommitted.
- b. It is important that you pick faction memberships rather than allowing students to group themselves into factions. You can thus assure that each faction has students with appropriate skills and talent. (Remember artistic and even musical talent can be useful to the Federalists and Republicans.)
- c. A particular word about the uncommitted faction: If possible, the students in this faction should all be imaginative enough to understand the relationship between their roles and their interests as voters.
- d. You should choose the students who will play Adams, Jefferson, and their campaign managers. Candidates should be persons who like to speak, who will conscientiously rehearse their speeches, and who will add some of their own touches. Campaign managers need to be good organizers who can delegate work within the faction, keep track of the faction’s efforts to win over the uncommitted, and generally take charge.



Teaching tip

Certain roles are so important that only you should determine who plays them.



Teaching tip

You may wish to choose candidates and their campaign managers one to two weeks before you use the re creation. If you do, the key roles will have time to do extra research and plan their campaign posters and songs.

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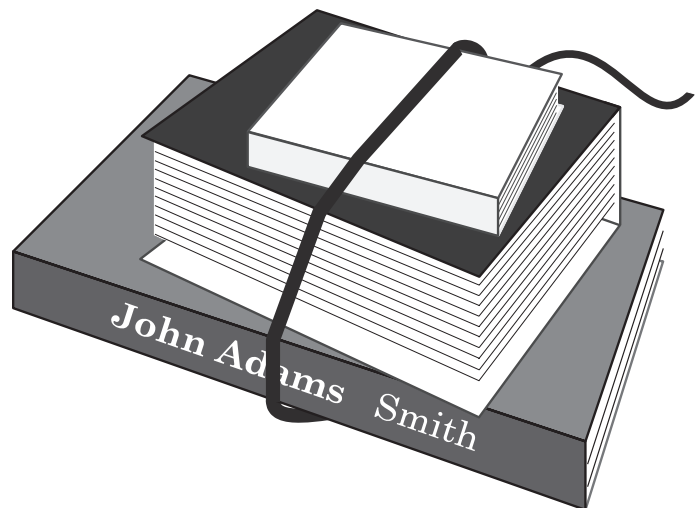
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Bright Idea



Consider seeing your friendly school librarian so that she/he will set up an Election of 1800 Reserve Shelf just for your class.

Certain students—the one playing John Adams, for example—just might go to scholarly works such as Page Smith's monumental biography in order to "flesh out" a character.



Daily Teaching Directions

Day 1

1. Distribute **Issues Survey**. Ask students to follow the directions. (Opinions in conflict are: A, B, and H; C and J; D and L; E and M; F and K; G and I.)
2. Collect the **Issues Survey** and keep to redistribute at the conclusion of the re-creation.
3. Divide the class into factions, candidates, and campaign managers according to the instructions outlined in the Setup Directions on page 3. (You may wish to choose the candidates and give them their materials several days in advance so they can study speeches and answers to the questions.)
4. Pass out copies of the **Student Guide** to all students. Pass out handouts to campaign managers and candidates-if not handed out earlier.
5. Allow students time to begin reading the Background Essay in the **Student Guide**. *However, before they begin reading, call students' attention to how to set up five sheets for the Party Position Outline.* (How-to instructions are in the Student Guide.) Have students start filling out these five sheets during this class period as they read the Background Essay.
6. Point out that they are to complete their filling out of these sheets overnight and during tomorrow's campaign speeches and question-and-answer session.
7. Use the last 10 minutes of this period to allow Republican and Federalist campaign managers to meet with their factions and the uncommitted voters to meet together to assign roles.
8. The uncommitted voters should use this time to begin answering their Identity Questions in the Student Guide. *Stress that the uncommitted must make their 8-½" x 11" ID sheets prior to tomorrow's class.*
9. The campaign managers should assign party members to make posters or develop other campaign materials for demonstrations on the second and third days of the re-creation. They should also assign students questions to ask the opposition candidate on the second day.



Teaching tip

The Issues Survey will show your students how the issues they are studying from the past are still "alive" for Americans today. Using this survey should help students sense the flow of history..

Teaching tip

Encourage your students to speak passionately. Work to get them truly involved in their characterizations.



Day 2

1. On this day the Republican and Federalist candidates speak and answer questions.
2. One candidate speaks, following the outline but possibly embellishing it with personal examples and language. No one should interrupt the candidate's speech to ask that a point be repeated. The basic ideas to be expressed are in the Background Essay.(Students may check the essay for points they miss.)
3. The opposition now has a chance to ask the candidate questions. Again the words may be their own, but the basic questions should be those assigned by the campaign manager.
4. The candidate answers the questions according to the instructions in his handout.
5. Repeat numbers 2-3-4 with the second candidate.
6. The uncommitted voters now introduce themselves, using their answers to the identity questions provided in the Student Guide.
7. Each faction now holds a brief meeting to determine who will approach which uncommitted voter and what arguments might be used to convince the uncommitted voter to give up his/her vote.
8. Now the lobbying takes place. If an uncommitted voter does give up his/her vote, he/she hands over his/her I.D. sheet to the faction being joined. However, uncommitted voters are not required to decide whom they will vote for before the election and may keep their votes secret.

Day 3

1. The third day begins with a display of posters, presentation of songs, and general ballyhoo, each faction performing on behalf of its candidate.
2. Give the two committed factions one more chance to win over the uncommitted.
3. The vote should now take place. The ballot should be secret, but only the uncommitted really have a choice; faction members should vote the party line.
4. Announce the results of the election. Then divide the students into groups of five to seven to discuss the debriefing questions. Make sure each group has Republicans, Federalists and uncommitted.
5. Pass back the **Issues Survey** so students can use it during the debriefing.