



THE ELECTION OF 1912

A re-creation of the 1912 presidential campaign involving
William Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Eugene Debs

ARTHUR PETERSON, the author of THE ELECTION OF 1912, has an M.A. degree in history from California State University, Hayward. For Interact Art has written the other re-creation elections as well as two simulations—PEACE and HOMEFRONT—and an individual learning project—DETECTIVE. After 30 years of teaching in San Francisco, he currently works as a writer and educational consultant.

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Interact

10200 Jefferson Boulevard

P.O. Box 802

Culver City, CA 90232

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PURPOSE

Why re-create the Election of 1912?

The election of 1912 stands out as one of the United States elections appropriate for special study for several reasons. First, two of its candidates, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, appear on most lists of great and near great presidents. Second, the election provides a classic example of how a third party candidacy affects the two major parties. Finally, the campaign's other two candidates, William Howard Taft and Eugene V. Debs, are certainly worthy of more attention than they receive in most textbook—Taft for his fine mind and years of governmental service to his country; Debs for his compassion, devotion, and integrity.

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

Knowledge

1. Understand the issues debated in the 1912 election
2. Be aware of how third parties come about, the difficulties they have functioning within the two-party system, and the contribution they make to the American political process

Attitudes

1. Appreciate the need of utilizing certain criteria to judge a political candidate: a) what the candidate says and doesn't say; b) what the candidate does and doesn't do; and c) the candidate's personality and character
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

OVERVIEW



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

Three class periods are needed for this re-creation.

Hour 1

Students first complete the THREE SITUATIONS SURVEY. Then factions of four political parties and uncommitted voters are established and students are selected to role-play candidates and campaign managers. Next students read the Background Essay and begin to use this essay to record specific details under the questions on the Party Position Outline.

Hour 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 the Identity Questions in the Student Guide. Members of the opposing factions then have an opportunity to win over members of the uncommitted faction.

Hour 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 objective and essay tests, if so desired. Optional follow-up activities also are available for a fourth hour of instruction.)

Gene

D E B S

... a passionate American

SETUP DIRECTIONS - 1



Note: You will not need to duplicate the bulleted items the first time you use this re-creation, for Interact has given you different colored handouts for those students playing roles and a class set of the **THREE SITUATIONS SURVEY**. If you choose to give the **UNIT TEST**—an optional activity—you will have to duplicate it. All other necessary items are in the *Student Guide*.

1. **Handouts** See note at left the first time you use this re-creation. For subsequent classes, duplicate the number in parentheses, using the masters in this Teacher Guide.
 - **THREE SITUATIONS SURVEY** (class set: one page)
 - **WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT HANDOUT** (two: one for Taft; one for his campaign manager, three pages, back to back)
 - **THEODORE ROOSEVELT HANDOUT** (two: one for Roosevelt; one for his campaign manager, three pages, back to back)
 - **WOODROW WILSON HANDOUT** (two: one for Wilson; one for his campaign manager, three pages, back to back)
 - **EUGENE V. DEBS HANDOUT** (two: one for Debs; one for his campaign manager, three pages, back to back)
 - **REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN MANAGER HANDOUT** (one for campaign manager: one page)
 - **PROGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN MANAGER HANDOUT** (one for campaign manager: one page)
 - **DEMOCRATIC CAMPAIGN MANAGER HANDOUT** (one for campaign manager: one page)
 - **SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN MANAGER HANDOUT** (one for campaign manager: one page)

Optional:

- * **UNIT TEST** (class set: two pages, back to back)

2. **Dividing the class into supporters and uncommitted**
 - a. In 1912 about 15 million votes were cast: Wilson received 6.3 million; T.R., 4.1 million; Taft, 3.5 million; Debs, a little less than a million. Try to roughly simulate the above breakdown of voters by dividing your class as follows: Uncommitted, one-quarter; Supporters, three-quarters. Then divide three-quarters of your class, your supporters, into Wilson, Taft, T.R., and Debs supporters according to a rough ratio of 6:4:4:1—Wilson (6), Taft (4), T.R. (4), Debs (1).
 - b. Here is an example of how to divide a class of 32 students. One-fourth (8) would be uncommitted; three-fourths (24) would be supporters—Wilson (10), Taft (6), T.R. (6), Debs (2). *Note:* Of course, you will explain to your students that you're trying to use the class' number of actual bodies to give students a feeling for two things: a) what happens to a major party suffering a schism during a presidential campaign; b) how much the cards are stacked against third parties.

SETUP DIRECTIONS - 2



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.

You likely have students in your class who have the creativity to write and/or sing campaign songs and to do the work necessary to conceptualize and paint posters such as this one either criticizing or glorifying a candidate. Don't put all such students together. Instead, divide them equally between the four political factions.

- 3. Faction memberships** 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 four parties.)

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.

- 4. Key roles** You should choose the students who will play the candidates 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.



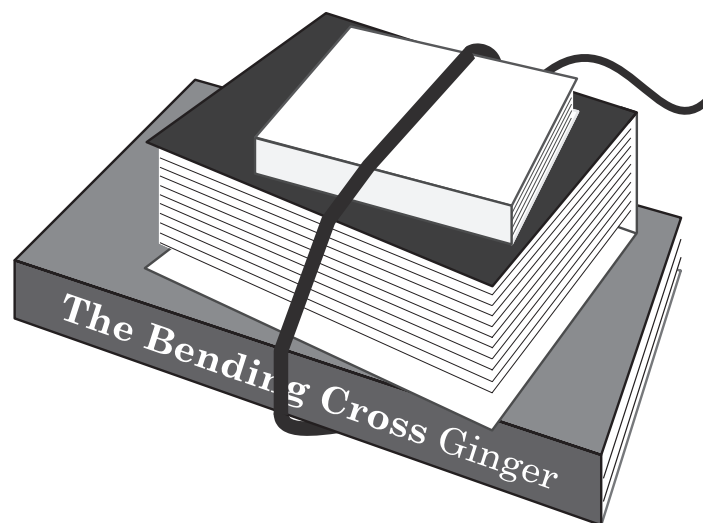
TR...
America
needs a
strong
Bull Moose

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Consider seeing your friendly school librarian so that she/he will set up THE ELECTION OF 1912 RESERVE SHELF just for your class.

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DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 1



The THREE SITUATIONS SURVEY should immediately in-trigue your students, capturing their interest for the re-creation that is about to begin.

Day 1

1. Distribute the THREE SITUATIONS SURVEY. Ask students to follow the directions.
2. Collect the survey and keep it 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. (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 read the Background Essay and Procedure in the Student Guide.
6. Show them how to set up seven sheets for Party Position Outline—see instructions on page 8 of the Student Guide. Have students start filling out these seven sheets during the class period. Point out that they will complete their filling out of these sheets overnight and during tomorrow's campaign speech and the question-answer session. Explain that no candidate's speech tomorrow will deal with all the issues. Roosevelt and Wilson will discuss the regulation of business. Taft will discuss the tariff, the role of government (including conservation), and the regulation of business and labor—in that order. Debs' speech will be more of a general attack on the American situation rather than an analysis of specific issues.
7. Use the last 10 minutes of this period to allow the 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 answer their Identity Questions under the Responsibilities for the Uncommitted portion on page 7 of the Student Guide. Stress that the uncommitted must make their 8-1/2"x11" ID sheets prior to class tomorrow.
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 candidates on Day 2.

DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 2



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

Day 2

1. On this day all four 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, and 4 with the other three candidates.
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 ID 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. Day 3 begins with a display of posters, presentation of songs, and general ballyhoo, each faction performing on behalf of its candidate.
2. Give the four parties 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 new groups of five to seven to discuss the debriefing questions.
5. Pass back the THREE SITUATIONS SURVEY so students can use it during the debriefing.