



THE ELECTION OF 1936

**A re-creation of the 1936 presidential campaign
involving Franklin D. Roosevelt and Alfred Landon**

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PURPOSE

What was being tested in the election of 1936?

Politicians often tell us that the outcome of an election in which they are involved is likely to change the world. This is usually campaign hyperbole, but in 1936 it was the truth. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected in a landslide victory over the Republican candidate, Alfred “Alf” Landon. Roosevelt had been elected in 1932 because he wasn’t Herbert Hoover. By 1936 Roosevelt’s programs for relief, recovery, and reform were entering the reform stage, and measures such as the Social Security Act and the Tennessee Valley Authority were beginning to bring dramatic and permanent changes to American life. Modern political commentators, both conservative and liberal, tell us we “cannot roll back the New Deal,” but in 1936 some Americans thought it was still possible to “unscramble the eggs.” People voted for Roosevelt in 1936 for many reasons that had nothing to do with his philosophy of government. Some voted for him out of gratitude for a job the New Deal had provided. Others were attracted by FDR’s charismatic personality. The principal philosophical issue of the campaign was, “What role should the government play in a nation founded on concepts of individual liberty?” If this issue had been raised more clearly, the vote in November might have been much closer. It is this issue that is the center of this re-creation.

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

Knowledge

1. Become familiar with the important issues which divided the political parties in 1936
2. Understand how the results of the election of 1936 brought long-lasting changes in government

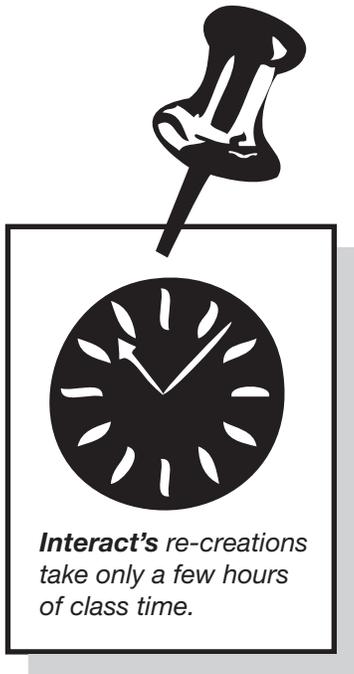
Attitudes

1. Understand that a particular piece of proposed legislation raises questions both practical and philosophical that are not stated in the proposed law
2. Become aware of the way 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



Three class periods are needed for this re-creation.

Hour 1

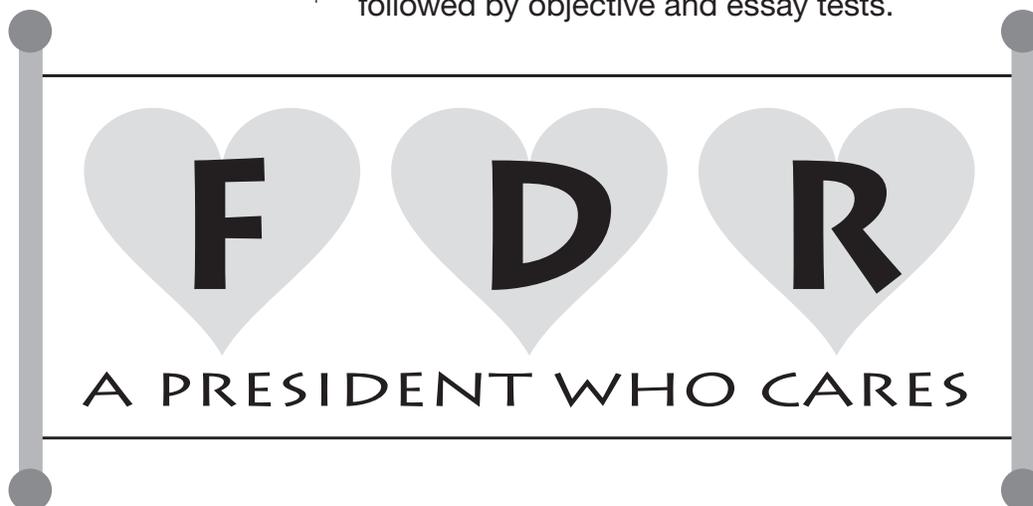
Students first complete the POLITICAL ATTITUDES SURVEY. Then factions of Democrats, Republicans, and uncommitted voters are established and students are selected to role-play candidates and campaign managers. Next students read the Background Essay in the Student Guide and begin to use this essay to record specific details under the questions on the Party Position Outline on page 7 in the Student Guide.

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 on page 7 in the Student Guide. Members of the committed 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 any changes in their answers to the POLITICAL ATTITUDES SURVEY. This debriefing may be followed by objective and essay tests.



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 POLITICAL ATTITUDES 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.*

TEACHING TIP

Certain roles (for example: FDR and Landon) are so important that only you should determine who plays them.

You may wish to choose candidates and their campaign managers one or 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.

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.
 - POLITICAL ATTITUDES SURVEY (class set: one page)
 - FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT HANDOUT (two: one for Roosevelt; one for his campaign manager, five pages, back to back)
 - ALFRED LANDON HANDOUT (two: one for Landon; one for his campaign manager, five pages, back to back)
 - DEMOCRATIC CAMPAIGN MANAGER HANDOUT (one for campaign manager: one page)
 - REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN MANAGER HANDOUT (one for campaign manager: one page)

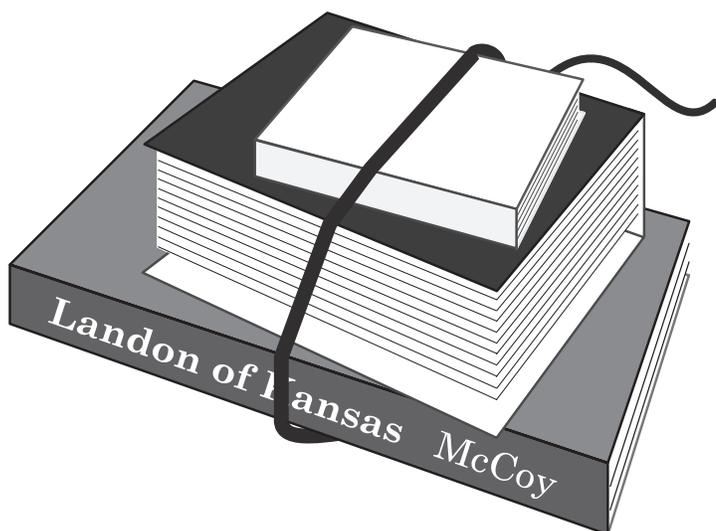
Optional:

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

2. **Dividing the class into supporters and uncommitted**
 - a. You should divide the class into thirds: one-third, Democrats; one-third, Republicans; one-third, Uncommitted. It is important to have an equal number of Democrats 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 Democrats, and 12 uncommitted.
 - b. It is important that you pick faction memberships rather than allowing students to group themselves. 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 Democrats 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 Roosevelt, Landon, 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.

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Consider seeing your friendly school librarian so that she/he will set up *THE ELECTION OF 1936 RESERVE SHELF* just for your class.

Certain students—the one playing Alfred Landon, for example—just might go to scholarly works such as Donald McCoy's biography in order to “flesh out” a character.

DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 1



The POLITICAL ATTITUDES 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.

Day 1

1. Distribute the POLITICAL ATTITUDES 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 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 read the Purpose, Background Essay, and Procedure in the Student Guide.
6. Show them how to set up four sheets for Party Position Outline on page 7 of the Student Guide. Have students start filling out these four sheets during the class period. Point out that they will complete their filling out of these sheets overnight and during tomorrow’s campaign speeches and questions/answers.
7. Use the last 10 minutes of this period to allow Republican and Democratic 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 on page 6 of the Student Guide. Stress that the uncommitted must make their 8-1/2" x 11" 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 candidate on the second day.

Day 2

1. On this day the Republican and Democratic 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

DAILY TEACHING DIRECTIONS - 2

TEACHING TIP

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

TEACHING TIP

If you are using this re-creation with more than one class, you might like to videotape the various classes' debriefing "hot seat" discussions and share them with different classes.



a point be repeated. The basic ideas to be expressed are in the Background Essay in the Student Guide; 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 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 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 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, Democrats, and uncommitted.
5. Pass back the POLITICAL ATTITUDES SURVEY so students can use it during the debriefing.
6. Hear reports from the debriefing groups.
7. Give the UNIT TEST if you plan to: Key to Objective Test: 1. c; 2. c; 3. b; 4. a; 5. a; 6. d; 7. c; 8. b; 9. a; 10. d.
8. You may wish to collect and grade the Party Position Outline. The completeness of this outline will serve as a fairly good indication of general effort and attentiveness.

POLITICAL ATTITUDES SURVEY

Introduction

A major purpose of re-creating the 1936 election is to encourage you to think about the role of government in 20th-century society. An increasing number of Americans want government to do things. But how much should a government do? Which things can government do well? Which things can government not do well? Which things will never get done if government doesn't do them? Questions such as these are the focus of this re-creation you are about to begin. You should emerge from re-creating THE ELECTION OF 1936 with a clearer idea of how governmental action affects different groups in our society. As a result, your convictions about the role and size of government will likely be clarified.

Directions: Examine each of the **seven proposals** below. Imagine that they have been put forward by an imaginary president. Then on your own paper write brief answers to the **four questions**—four answers for each proposal. Note well: Your teacher will collect your survey answers and return them after the re-creation. At that time you will examine your answers during a debriefing in order to see if participating in THE ELECTION OF 1936 has changed your initial attitudes.

An imaginary president's proposals

Proposal 1:

Persons who are too poor to afford cable TV can apply for and receive media welfare stamps.

Proposal 2:

Persons owning Mercedes-Benz automobiles (and other similarly priced luxury-priced automobiles) must pay a luxury tax to the federal government.

Proposal 3:

Parents and teachers spanking children are subject to a federal fine and, in extreme cases, federal imprisonment.

Proposal 4:

Elderly persons over 64 whose personal income is insufficient to afford decent housing and balanced meals will be guaranteed both by the federal government.

Proposal 5:

Workers who cannot find jobs elsewhere will be guaranteed jobs working for the welfare of the whole society.

Proposal 6:

Low-income college students willing to work for American society following their graduation will be given federal grants helping pay for their college education.

Proposal 7:

Since smoking has been proven to be injurious both to smokers and non-smokers inhaling the smoke, the manufacture, sale, and smoking of cigarettes, cigars, and pipes will become a federal offense subject to fine and imprisonment.

The four questions

Question 1:

Would this proposal increase or decrease governmental power? (If increase explain how.)

Question 2:

Whom would this proposal affect? (Whom would it help? Whom would it hurt?)

Question 3:

What would this proposal cost and where would the tax money come from?

Question 4:

How would the rights of individual citizens be affected?

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT HANDOUT - 1

SPEECH TIP

If you read this speech to your classmates, you will put them to sleep.

Suggestions:

1. Read this speech over aloud at home several times until you get the feeling for its cadence and ideas.
2. Copy its ideas into an outline form—but copy down only sentence fragments.
3. The ideas you copy should be written onto 3" x 5" note cards.
4. Now practice the speech again, using the 3" x 5" note cards.
5. If you get stuck, look again at these handout pages.
6. Above all, do not read this speech from either these pages or note cards.
7. A good speaker talks a speech; he or she does not read it to an audience.

Speech Outline

Issue 1: The power of the president

1. You have heard Franklin Roosevelt is a powerful president.
 - a. On many points I disagree with my opponents, but on this point they are correct.
2. Our administration *is* powerful.
 - a. We have been granted extraordinary power by the Congress. And why? To save our nation!
 - b. When we took office, factories were closed. Banks were failing. Farmers could find no markets. Workers could find no jobs. *Despair was rampant.*
 - c. We have been able to reverse this. We have worked carefully with Congress. The result? We have put the young to work on conservation projects, we have decreased farm surpluses, we have insured bank deposits, we have helped industry set up fair production codes, we have provided work for the unemployed through public work projects, and we have provided security for the aged.
3. Could a *weak* administration have done all this?
4. I ask you: could Governor Landon, who has yet to put forward one constructive suggestion in this campaign, have done it?
5. There is a time for weak government. There is a time for strong government.
 - a. When families are starving, only the stupid or the cruel would suggest that the executive branch does not have the responsibility to act decisively. *This administration has chosen action.*

Issue 2: The fast-moving, free-spending New Deal

1. We are accused of moving too fast.
2. Critics claim there are “natural laws” of economics which must be given a chance to work their way out.
 - a. For almost four years under the Republican administration we have had the chance to watch these “natural laws” at work.
 - b. We saw people starving. Starving people cannot eat “natural laws.”
3. I am reminded of a primitive people dying of cholera because they do not believe it is “natural” to wash their hands.
4. We have not waited for nature to take its course. We have moved quickly.
 - a. And here are the results: More people are working at higher pay. Farm products have increased in value. A greater demand for consumer goods has been generated.