



## ***Pivotal U.S. Elections: Then and Now*** **Curriculum Guide**

### **Overview**

*Pivotal U.S. Elections: Then and Now* was a 2016 series of [public forums](#) across Texas that examined the political forces, issues, and consequences of critical presidential elections in U.S. history and their relevance to current conditions of our national life.

This curriculum from Humanities Texas provides activities and lessons to integrate the content of *Pivotal U.S. Elections* into the classroom with expectations for reading, writing, and using accepted social studies conventions and practices. Lessons are designed to support the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) but are also widely relevant to common core standards.



### **Introduction to Curriculum**

The *Pivotal U.S. Elections* curriculum is a series of eleven lessons, each focusing on one presidential election cycle. Each lesson is built around primary source analysis with a set of five primary sources for each election. At least one of these sources is a visual source, and some elections also feature an audio or video source. Lessons are designed to be completed in a single 45- to 60-minute class period.

Critical to each lesson is the opportunity for students to engage with primary sources in multiple ways. With this in mind, the extended exploration for each lesson offers three engagement options that are designed to meet the needs of multiple learning styles. Engagement options are expressed as “Write,” “Speak,” and “Draw” and are aimed to support visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners.

Each lesson includes:

- An essential question, objectives, key vocabulary, and TEKS correlation
- Suggested warm-up, extended exploration, and lesson closure activities
- An “election snapshot”
- A primary source set packaged with questions for each source (includes teacher answer key)

All components are available as PDF documents. The warm-up exercise and election snapshot are also provided as a teacher slide deck for use as a group class activity.

Additionally, the *Pivotal U.S. Elections* curriculum offers teachers and students the chance to explore any of the included elections in greater depth through an additional resources document as well as optional extension activities.



### **Essential Questions**

Each lesson seeks to answer one essential historical question through primary source analysis and discussion. These historical questions ensure that each election is seen in the broader context of U.S. history and that the lesson is anchored within TEKS-based social studies standards.

- **Election of 1800: Origins of American Political Parties:** In what ways did the election of 1800 signify that political parties had become an important part of national politics?
- **Election of 1828: Andrew Jackson and an Expanded Electorate:** How accurate is the characterization of this period in U.S. history as the era of the “common man”?
- **Election of 1860: Lincoln’s Evolving Ideas:** How did Abraham Lincoln’s views about slavery and the balance of state and federal authority change following the election of 1860?
- **Election of 1876: The End of Reconstruction:** How did the election of 1876 solve an immediate political crisis, and did that solution indicate that the Reconstruction amendments had failed to achieve their goals?
- **Election of 1896: The Populist Movement:** What were the political and economic issues that led to the beginnings of Populism, and how did the emergence of the Populist Party impact U.S. society?
- **Election of 1912: The Progressive Era:** What were the competing visions for how the federal government could resolve the problems of American society?
- **Election of 1932: The Great Depression:** How did the Great Depression shape the election of 1932, and how did the election foreshadow an expanded role for the federal government in U.S. society?
- **Election of 1960: A Vision for the Future:** To what extent can the election of 1960 be seen as a barometer of Americans’ views about the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War, both during the election and in the years immediately following?
- **Election of 1968: Conservative Response:** In what way can the election of Richard M. Nixon be understood as a response to the growing discontent about race relations and U.S. involvement in Vietnam?
- **Election of 1980: Conservative Resurgence:** In what ways did Reagan’s victory in the presidential election of 1980 represent a resurgence of conservative values and the end of the New Deal coalition in U.S. society?
- **Election of 2000: The Supreme Court and the Presidency:** How did the outcome of the election of 2000 represent the evolving relationship among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government?



## Student Skills

Each lesson also provides students with the opportunity to use and acquire new critical thinking skills. In every lesson:

- Students will engage with primary sources to understand the topic related to the essential historical question.
- Students will use multi-modal engagement strategies to develop their historical thinking skills.
- Students will analyze, organize, and use information from a variety of primary sources and communicate that analysis through writing and discussion.



## TEKS

All eleven lessons support a variety of social studies skills TEKS. For quick reference, they are listed by number below. Full details can be found in the TEKS Correlation document.

**United States History Studies Since 1877**

113.41.28.A–E  
113.41.29.A,B  
113.41.30.A,B  
113.41.31

**United States Government**

113.44.19.A–E  
113.44.20.A,B  
113.44.21

**Ethnic Studies: African American Studies**

113.51.17.A–E  
113.51.18.A,B  
113.51.19.A,B  
113.51.20

Social studies knowledge TEKS by lesson are also included by number below for quick reference. Full details can be found in the TEKS Correlation document.

**1800**

113.44.2.A,B; 113.44.10.A,B; 113.44.15.A

**1828**

113.41.19.B; 113.41.22.A,C  
113.44.1.F; 113.44.7.A–C,E–H; 113.44.9.A,B; 113.44.14.A–C

**1860**

113.44.1.F  
113.51.3.A,C,E

**1876**

113.41.2.A  
113.51.4.B

**1896**

113.41.3.A–C; 113.41.5.C

**1912**

113.41.4.A; 113.41.5.A,C

**1932**

113.41.16.B–D

**1960**

113.41.8.B,D; 113.41.9.B–F,I  
113.51.5.C,D,H,I; 113.51.9.D,E; 113.51.10.A–C

**1968**

113.41.8.D–F; 113.41.9.B,C,E,H,I

113.51.5.C,H,I; 113.51.9.E; 113.51.10.B,C

**1980**

113.41.10.B,D,E; 113.41.18.A

113.44.1.F

**2000**

113.41.11.C; 113.41.19.B

113.44.7.A–C,E–H; 113.44.9.A,B