

# HISTORICAL ANALYSIS – Comparing / Contrasting ...the First and Second Two Party Systems

## Thesis Formulas adapted for Comparison

### Although X, Y because AB

What similarities and differences are there between the two things, are there more similarities or differences, and why, account for those similarities or differences?

X = more similar or different, your counter-argument explained thoroughly with a piece of specific evidence

A, B = similarities or differences between the two things, broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

With this skill, it important to remember that you are identifying and explaining similarities and differences AND what there was MORE of (unless the prompt explicitly limits you). For this activity, review the notes, **highlight events that reveal causes, effects, beliefs, and goals of each party**, then complete the Venn Diagram and writing portion of the activity.

Although George Washington, our first President, did not belong to a political party, the nation essentially began with two political parties — the FEDERALISTS and the DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICANS, WHICH FORMED DURING WASHINGTON'S FIRST TERM. During early American history politicians tended to take sides, starting with the debate over the Constitution, and continuing with the disagreements between two of George Washington's cabinet members — Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. The tendency has persisted throughout American history.

### FIRST TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

#### Federalists v. Democratic-Republicans, 1790s-Era of Good Feelings

##### Federalists

(Hamiltonians - John Adams)

1. Favored strong central government.
2. "Loose" interpretation of the Constitution.
3. Encouragement of commerce and manufacturing.
4. Strongest in Northeast.
5. Favored close ties with Britain.
6. Emphasized order and stability.

##### Democratic-Republicans

(Jeffersonian Republicans - Jefferson, Madison, Monroe)

1. Emphasized states' rights.
2. "Strict" interpretation of the Constitution.
3. Preference for agriculture and rural life.
4. Strength in South and West.
5. Foreign policy sympathized with France.
6. Stressed civil liberties and trust in the people

[In practice, these generalizations were often blurred and sometimes contradicted.]

## The Era of Good Feelings and the end of the First Two-Party System to the Jacksonian Democrats and the Second Two Party System (Adapted from UShistory.org)



James Monroe's Administration did not recognize the new republics in South America until 1822. Monroe wanted to wait until after Spain had ceded Florida to the U.S. The War of 1812 closed with the **Federalist Party** all but destroyed. The 1816 presidential election was the last one when the Federalists' ran a candidate. He lost resoundingly. The 1818 Congressional election brought another landslide victory for Democratic-Republicans who controlled 85 percent of the seats in the U.S. Congress. James Monroe, yet another Virginian, followed Madison in the Presidency for two terms from 1817 to 1825. Although this period has often been called the **ERA OF GOOD FEELINGS** due to its one-party dominance, in fact, Democratic-Republicans were deeply divided internally and a new political system was about to be created from the old Republican-Federalist competition that had been known as the **FIRST PARTY SYSTEM**.

Although Democratic-Republicans were now the only active national party, its leaders incorporated major economic policies that had been favored by **Federalists** since the time of **Alexander Hamilton**. President Monroe continued the policies begun by Madison at the end of his presidency to build an **American System** of national economic development. These policies had three basic aspects: a national bank, protective tariffs to support American manufactures, and federally-funded internal improvements.

The first two elements received strong support after the War of 1812. The chartering of the **Second Bank of the United States** in 1816, once again headquartered in Philadelphia, indicates how much of the old Federalist economic agenda the Democratic-Republicans now supported. Whereas Jefferson had seen a national bank as a threat to ordinary farmers, the leaders of his party in 1816 had come to a new understanding of the need for a strong federal role in creating the basic infrastructure of the nation. The cooperation among national politicians that marked the one-party Era of Good Feelings lasted less than a decade. A new style of American politics took shape in the 1820s and 1830s whose key qualities have remained central to American politics up to the present. In this more modern system, political parties played the crucial role building broad and lasting coalitions among diverse groups in the American public. Furthermore, these parties represented more than the distinct interests of a single region or economic class.

The New York politician **MARTIN VAN BUREN** played a key role in the development of the **Second Party System**. He rose to lead the new Democratic party by breaking from the more traditional leadership of his own Democratic-Republican party. He achieved this in New York by 1821 and helped create the system on a national scale while serving in Washington D.C. as a senator and later as president. Van Buren perceptively responded to the growing **DEMOCRATIZATION** of American life in the first decades of the 19th century by embracing mass public opinion. As he explained, "Those who have wrought great changes in the world never succeeded by gaining over chiefs; but always by exciting the multitude. The first is the resource of intrigue and produces only secondary results, the second is the resort of genius and transforms the face of the universe." Rather than follow a model of elite political leadership like that of the Founding Fathers, Van Buren saw "genius" in reaching out to the "multitude" of the general public.



Like other new party leaders of the period, Van Buren made careful use of newspapers to spread the word about party positions and to ensure close discipline among party members. In fact, the growth of newspapers in the new nation was closely linked to the rise of a **competitive party system**. In 1775 there had been just 31 newspapers in the colonies, but by 1835 the number of papers in the nation had soared to 1200. Rather than make any claim to objective reporting, newspapers existed as **PROPAGANDA** vehicles for the political parties that they supported. Newspapers were especially important to the new party system because they spread information about the **PARTY PLATFORM**, a carefully crafted list of policy commitments that aimed to appeal to a broad public.

The changing character of American politics can be divided into two time periods separated by the War of 1812. In the early republic that preceded the war, "**REPUBLICANISM**" had been the guiding political value. Although an unquestioned assault on the aristocratic ideal of the colonial era, republicanism also included a deep fear of the threat to public order posed by the decline of traditional values of hierarchy and inequality. While it seems surprising today, at the start of the early republic many people, and almost all public leaders, associated democracy with anarchy (mob rule). In the early national period following the War of 1812, democracy began to be championed as an unqualified key to improving the country. The formerly widespread fear of democracy/mob rule was now held only by small and increasingly isolated groups in the 1820s. Although a belief in democratic principles remains at the center of American life today, the growth of democracy in the early national period was not obvious, easy, or without negative consequences. The historical context of the emerging party system in the Jackson Era included the economic boom of the **Market Revolution** which distributed wealth in shockingly unequal ways that threatened the independence of **WORKING-CLASS** Americans, the development of a stronger **American Protestantism** in the **Second Great Awakening**, and **western expansion** which drove increased attacks on **American Indian communities** as well as the massive expansion of **slavery**.

Keep in mind that the expansion of democracy essentially means the expansion of representative democracy (republicanism).



The **presidential election of 1828** brought a great victory for **ANDREW JACKSON**. Not only did he get almost 70 percent of the votes cast in the electoral college, popular participation in the election soared to an unheard of 60 percent. This more than doubled the turnout in 1824; Jackson clearly headed a sweeping political movement. His central message remained largely the same from the previous election, but had grown in intensity. Jackson warned that the nation had been corrupted by "**SPECIAL PRIVILEGE**," characterized especially by the policies of the **Second Bank of the United States**. The proper road to reform, according to Jackson, lay in an absolute acceptance of **majority rule** as expressed through the democratic process. Beyond these general principles, however, Jackson's campaign was notably vague about specific policies. Instead, it stressed Jackson's life story as a man who had risen from modest origins to become a successful Tennessee planter. Jackson's claim to distinction lay in a military career that included service as a young man in the Revolutionary War, several anti-Indian campaigns, and, of course, his crowning moment in the **Battle of New Orleans** at the end of the War of 1812. Jackson's election marked a new direction in American politics. He was the first westerner elected president, indeed, the first president from a state other than Virginia or Massachusetts. He boldly proclaimed himself to be the "**CHAMPION OF THE COMMON MAN**" and believed that their interests were ignored by the aggressive national economic plans of Clay and Adams.

Van Buren, perhaps even more than Jackson, helped to create the new Democratic party that centered upon three chief qualities closely linked to **Jacksonian Democracy**. First, it declared itself to be the party of ordinary farmers and workers. Second, it opposed the special privileges of economic elites. Third, to offer affordable western land to ordinary white Americans, and the necessity of removing Indians. (birth of the reservation system)

The **WHIG PARTY** soon arose to challenge the Democrats with a different policy platform and vision for the nation. Whigs' favored active government support for economic improvement as the best route to sustained prosperity. Thus, the Whig-Democrat political contest was in large part a disagreement about the early Industrial Revolution. Whigs defended economic development's broad benefits, while Democrats stressed the new forms of dependence that it created. The fiercely partisan campaigns waged between these parties lasted into the 1850s and are known as the **SECOND PARTY SYSTEM**, an assuredly modern framework of political competition that reached ordinary voters as never before with both sides organizing tirelessly to carry their message directly to the American people. A new era of American politics began with Jackson's election in 1828, but it also completed a grand social experiment begun by the American Revolution. Although the Founding Fathers would have been astounded by the new shape of the nation during Jackson's presidency, just as Jackson himself had served in the **American Revolution**, its values helped form his sense of the world. The ideals of the Revolution had, of course, been altered by the new conditions of the early nineteenth century and would continue to be reworked over time. Economic, religious, and geographic changes had all reshaped the nation in fundamental ways and pointed toward still greater opportunities and pitfalls in the future. Nevertheless, **JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY** represented a provocative blending of the best and worst qualities of American society. On the one hand it was an authentic democratic movement that contained a principled **egalitarian thrust**, but this powerful social critique was always cast for the benefit of white men. This tragic mix of egalitarianism, masculine privilege, and racial prejudice was a central quality of American life.

## SECOND TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

Democrats v. Whigs, 1836 – 1850

*Democrats form after Corrupt Bargain in 1824, Whigs take longer to form*

### Democrats

(The Party of Andrew Jackson)

1. The party of tradition.
2. Looked backward to the past.
3. Spoke to the fears of Americans
4. Opposed banks and corporations as. state-legislated economic privilege
5. Opposed state-legislated reforms and preferred individual freedom of choice.
6. Were Jeffersonian agrarians who favored farms and rural independence and the right to own slaves.
7. Favored rapid territorial expansion over space by purchase or war.
8. Believed in progress through external growth.
9. Democratic ideology of agrarianism, slavery, states rights, territorial expansion was favored in the South.

### Whigs

(The Anti-Jackson Party & led by Henry Clay)

1. The party of modernization.
2. Looked forward to the future.
3. Spoke to the hopes of Americans.
4. Wanted to use federal and state government to promote economic growth, especially transportation and banks.
5. Advocated reforms such as temperance and public schools and prison reform.
6. Were entrepreneurs who favored industry and urban growth and free labor.
7. Favored gradual territorial expansion over time and opposed the Mexican War.
8. Believed in progress through internal growth
9. Whig ideology of urbanization, industrialization, federal rights, commercial expansion was favored in the North.

## WHAT ABOUT THIRD PARTIES? THEY ARE SIGNIFICANT AS THEY DEVELOP DURING THE ERA OF THE COMMON MAN!

From the beginning, American political parties have had a tarnished reputation. In his **1796 FAREWELL ADDRESS** to the nation, **GEORGE WASHINGTON** warned against "the baneful effects of the spirit of party" as inciting American citizens "with ill-founded jealousies." Today many Americans take pride in their status as "**INDEPENDENT VOTERS**," partly because they see parties as lacking vision for the country. Since many Americans have become disenchanted by partisan politics, they avoid identification as a "loyal Democrat" or a "staunch Republican." These negative attitudes toward parties are rooted in the roles that they play in American politics.

### Roles of Political Parties

- **Running candidates for political office.** Parties select candidates for many elected positions in American politics. With so many officials to choose, most voters would be overwhelmed by the decisions they would have to make if candidates did not wear party "labels." Parties present policy alternatives for voters. Some voters even choose a straight ticket, or candidates from the same party for all positions in that election.
- **Checking the other party.** A party that does not hold the majority in Congress often keeps the party in power from taking complete control. Party leaders can publicly criticize actions of a President who was elected by the opposite party. The criticism of "**PARTISANSHIP**" comes from this party role because many Americans think that the "checking" becomes petty and self-serving.
- **Informing the public.** Parties take stands on issues and criticize the points of view of the other parties. Their well-publicized discussions help to inform citizens about important issues and present alternative ways of solving societal problems.
- **Organizing the government.** Congress and the state legislatures are organized according to party affiliations. **LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVES** usually support their party's position when considering potential laws and policies, and most votes fall roughly along party lines. Virtually all candidates run for public office with party labels that define their behavior after they win.

**The Winner-Take-All System.** The single most important reason for a **TWO-PARTY SYSTEM** is the **WINNER-TAKE-ALL** electoral system. In contrast to systems with proportional representation, the winner in American elections is the one who receives the largest number of votes. The winner does not need to have more than 50 percent, but only one vote more than his or her opponents. If a third party receives 15% of the vote for every contested Senate seat, that party wins zero seats in the United States Senate. Consequently, one of the two major parties almost always wins a **PLURALITY**, and third parties are completely shut out of national offices.

(Plurality means: the excess of votes received by the leading candidate, in an election in which there are three or more candidates, over those received by the next candidate)

### MID-19TH CENTURY POLITICAL CRISIS

**Disputes over slavery in the territories first erode, then destroy what had become America's second two-party system.**

The erosion began in the 1840s as various factions opposed to the post-Jackson Democratic political coalition began to form.

**Liberty Party** Ran abolitionist candidate James Birney, for president in 1844. Won only 2% of the vote but drew votes from the Whigs, especially in New York.

**Free Soil Party** Not abolitionist but opposed to expansion of slavery in the territories. Won 10% of the popular vote with Martin Van Buren as their candidate in 1848. Lost 50% of their support in 1852 when their candidate repudiated the Compromise of 1850.

**Whigs-SPLIT-end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Two Party System** They split over slavery into: Southern, "Cotton" Whigs who joined the Democratic Party and Northern, "Conscience" Whigs who moved to the Free Soil Party then the Republican Party. *Lincoln was a Whig, then a Free-Soiler, then a Republican.*

**American Party** Popularly known as the "**Know Nothing**" Party. Nativist party based on opposition to immigration and on temperance. Run Millard Fillmore in 1856 and won 21% of the popular vote. Absorbed into the **Republican Party** after 1856.

# Comparing the First and Second Two Party Systems

Prompt: To what extent were the First and Second Two Party systems similar in their goals, beliefs, and developments?

First Two Party System

Second Two Party System

Strong political personalities:  
FIRST: Hamilton & Jefferson  
SECOND: Henry Clay & Andrew Jackson

Both impacted by Marshall Court decisions (supporting Federalists and Whigs, mainly)

Both party systems were split on the issues of a national bank and tariffs.  
(Hamilton's Plan and American System)

Both split on issue of 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment (states rights) and elastic clause (federal power)

Are there more similarities or differences? (circle one)

To what extent were they similar? \_\_\_\_\_

Which category will you use for your X?: \_\_\_\_\_

Which will you focus on for your Y? \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_

Write your Thesis:

*Although* \_\_\_\_\_,

*the Second Two Party system was similar to the First Two Party System to a \_\_\_\_\_ extent, because* \_\_\_\_\_