

Inauguration Day: 1933

Grade Levels: 10, 11

Time Commitment: 70 Minutes

Subject(s): U.S. History, Democracy

Overview: The U.S. Presidential Election of 1932 represented a change in leadership during a time of national crisis. During this transition, FDR prepared to enter the White House while Hoover left defeated. Students will analyze this transition by examining visual and textual primary sources.

Materials: • Student Handouts • Smartboard or Projector • Writing Utensils
• Printer • Highlighters (Optional)

Opener (10 Minutes):

1. Project an electoral map from the 1932 U.S. Presidential election (<https://www.270towin.com/1932-election>) and begin a class discussion about the context, issues, and results of the election.
 - a. Key items to reinforce with the students:
 - i. Herbert Hoover lost the election in November of 1932, but remained in office until Inauguration Day on March 4, 1933.
 - ii. The Great Depression began on October 29, 1929 while Hoover was in office.
 - iii. FDR was a Democrat and Hoover was a Republican. Both had differing views on the role of government.
2. Students should take two minutes to silently write down a list of their “top ten” things they know or notice about the 1932 election. These lists will then be used for informal discussion to recap the results and why they are significant.

Activity (45 Minutes):

1. Students will receive a copy of the Visual Artifacts Sheet (Page 3), which includes a photograph and The New Yorker Magazine draft cover depicting the same scene.
 - a. The New Yorker Draft Cover depicts the outgoing President Hoover and incoming President Roosevelt on March 4, 1933. Although the proposed cover was not used, students can observe the shift in American politics and attitudes after the 1932 election.
 - b. The photograph also conveys a sense of change as Hoover’s somber demeanor contrasts to the smiling face of FDR.
2. Students should compare and contrast the two images using the “Image Analysis Worksheet” (Page 4).
3. Next, hand out the “Reading: Herbert Hoover to FDR, February 18, 1933” (Pages 5-6) and the “Reading Analysis Worksheet” (Page 6, attached to reading).
 - a. While reading, students should follow the annotation guide reprinted at the top of the transcript. After reading, students should fill out the worksheet and participate in an informal discussion about their findings.

Inauguration Day: 1933

Grade Levels: 10, 11

Time Commitment: 90 Minutes

Subject(s): U.S. History, Democracy

Closer (15 Minutes):

1. Students should write a response to Hoover as FDR. In their responses, students should address at least two specific parts of the letter.
 - a. This activity will encourage students to demonstrate a grade-level understanding of the economic situation in 1933 and the changing political attitudes in the U.S. represented in the 1932 Presidential Election.

Tips & Tricks for the Activity

- Some students might need a refresher on the term “Irony.” A quick vocabulary lesson and reminder with examples could help students better prepare for this part of the lesson.
- With the letter-writing activity, students might need a template provided or direct instruction on letter writing (Salutation, Body, etc).
 - Although this is a fictional letter, students should learn to format it like an actual letter.

Extension Activity Ideas

- Have students draw their own political cartoon to accompany their letter to Hoover.
- Explore [FDR’s inaugural address](#) on March 4, 1933. Compare it to Hoover’s letter and see what FDR may have taken from it or ignored.

Modified Activity Ideas

- Students might benefit from reading the letter in groups or as a whole class in order to pause and discuss the content as they go.
- You can pick and choose which activities to do (the cartoons, the letter, or both) if you’re running short on time and/or depending on student needs.

Inauguration Day: 1933

Visual Artifacts

Name: _____

Block: _____

2



<https://magazines.hachettelearning.com/magazine/hindsight/23/1/the-1932-us-election/>



<https://magazines.hachettelearning.com/magazine/hindsight/23/1/the-1932-us-election/>

Inauguration Day: 1933

Image Analysis Worksheet

Name: _____

Block: _____

Fill out the following chart and answer the Analysis Questions.

For each part of the chart, add 3-4 examples.

	NOTICE...(What do you notice about the image?)	WONDER...(What does it make you wonder?)
New Yorker cover		
Inauguration Photo		

Analysis Questions

1. What do the visual depictions of the 1933 Presidential Inauguration have in common?
2. How do the visual artifacts represent political change in the United States, as evidenced by the 1932 U.S. Presidential election results?

Inauguration Day: 1933

Name: _____

Reading: Herbert Hoover to Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 18, 1933

Block: _____

1

Annotate the Text:

- UNDERLINE words/phrases you don't understand.
- HIGHLIGHT (or circle) words/phrases that are important to the main idea of the address.

A most critical situation has arisen in the country of which I feel it my duty to advise you confidentially. I am therefore taking this course of writing you myself and sending it to you through the Secret Service for your hand direct as obviously its misplacement would only feed the fire and increase the dangers.

The major difficulty is the state of the public mind, for there is a steadily degenerating confidence in the future which has reached the height of general alarm. I am convinced that a very early statement by you upon two or three policies of your administration would serve greatly to restore confidence and cause a resumption of the march of recovery.

The large part which fear and apprehension play in the situation can be well demonstrated by repeated experience in the past few years and the tremendous lift which has come at times by the removal of fear can be easily demonstrated.

One of the major underlying elements in the broad problem of recovery is the re-expansion of credit so critically and abruptly deflated by the shocks from Europe during the last half of 1931. The visible results were public fear, hoarding, bank failures, withdrawal of gold, flight of capital, falling prices, increased unemployment, etc. Early in 1932 we created the agencies which have steadily expanded available credit ever since that time and continue to expand it today, but confidence must run parallel with expanding credit and the instances where confidence has been injured run precisely with the lagging or halting of recovery.

With the election, there came the natural and inevitable hesitation all along the economic line pending the demonstration of the policies of the new administration. But a number of very discouraging things have happened on top of this natural hesitation. The breakdown in balancing the budget by the House of Representatives; the proposals for inflation of the currency and the wide spread discussion of it; the publication of R.F.C. loans and the bank runs, hoarding and bank failures from this cause; increase in unemployment due to imports from depreciated currency countries; failure of the Congress to enact banking, bankruptcy and other vital legislation; unwillingness of the Congress to face reduction in expenditures; proposals to abrogate constitutional responsibility by the Congress with all the chatter about dictatorship, and other discouraging effects upon the public mind. They have now culminated to a state of alarm which is rapidly reaching the dimensions of a crisis. Hoarding has risen to a new high level; the bank structure is weakened as witness Detroit and increased failures in other localities. There are evidences of flight of capital and foreign withdrawals of gold. In other words we are confronted with precisely the same phenomena we experienced late in 1931 and again in the spring of 1932. The whole has its final expression in the increase of unemployment, suffering and general alarm.

Inauguration Day: 1933

Name: _____

Reading: Herbert Hoover to Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 18, 1933

Block: _____

1

I therefore return to my suggestion at the beginning as to the desirability of clarifying the public mind on certain essentials which will give renewed confidence. It is obvious that as you will shortly be in position to make whatever policies you wish effective, you are the only one who can give these assurances. Both the nature of the cause of public alarm and experience give such an action the prospect of success in turning the tide. I do not refer to action on all the causes of alarm but it would steady the country greatly if there could be prompt assurance that there will be no tampering or inflation of the currency; that the budget will be unquestionably balanced even if further taxation is necessary; that the government credit will be maintained by refusal to exhaust it in issue of securities. The course you have adopted in inquiring into the problems of world stabilization are already known and helpful. It would be of further help if the leaders were advised to cease publication of R.F.C. business.

I am taking the liberty of addressing you both because of my anxiety over the situation and my confidence that from four years of experience that such tides as are now running can be moderated and the processes of regeneration which are always running can be released.

Analysis Questions:

1. What is the main idea of Hoover's letter to FDR on February 18, 1933?

2. Given the context, what is ironic about the letter?

This Lesson Plan was:

Created by Luke Sundermeier
2026 Summer Fellow