

Subject: Geography's Impact on the Evolution of Political Parties (1792-1972)

Key Words: political parties, geography, third parties, issues

Time Allotted: 90 minutes or segments tailored to time frame

Lesson Overview	This lesson will allow students to explore geography's impact on the development of political parties in the United States between 1789 and 1965. Looking at 11 separate layers, they will identify primary source documents and make inferences as to how those documents were either shaped by geography or, conversely, how they impacted the geography of their respective region.
Compelling Question	How and in what ways did geography impact the evolution of political parties in the United States between 1792 and 1972?
Supporting Questions	How did political parties impact the geography of the United States between 1792 and 1972?
Learning Objectives	Student will be able to critically identify key tipping points in the evolution of political parties. They will be able to connect this evolution to geographic elements and identify causation factors that led to this evolution.
C3 Standards & Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● D2.Geo.2.9-12 Use geospatial and related technologies to create maps to display and explain the spatial patterns of cultural and environmental characteristics.● D2.Geo.5.9-12 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.● D2.Geo.7.9-12 Analyze the reciprocal nature of how historical events and the spatial diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices have influenced migration patterns and distribution of human population.● D2.His.1.9-12 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
Materials/ Resources	Story Map Journal: https://arcg.is/18X51u0 Student Guide Student Guide Key
Modifications/ Extensions	Students can explore more recent elections using the same inquiry approach. Questions related to the continued entrenchment of geography and party identifications can be explored through: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Racial demographics● Socioeconomically dependent factors

Contextual Essay – TPS Story Map
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James Madison faced with opposition to the newly created Constitution argued eloquently in *The Federalist Papers* that the saving grace of our new country could be found in our huge expanse of territory. Once seen as a roadblock to governance, Madison argued just the opposite. He claimed that our vast size would protect us from ourselves. He stated that no one particular faction would be able to dominate such a large land mass. No fan of democracy, Madison stated that pure democracies have been “as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths” in *Federalist 10*. What Madison couldn’t have anticipated was that the body politic of the newly created United States would quickly coalesce in a two-party system. This evolution relates directly back to the huge expanse of land that Madison was so confident in. Political parties and their relationship to the geography of the United States has played a huge role in how the nation defines itself.

Prior to independence, the question of representation was dictated by geographical conditions. The first settlement at Jamestown in 1607 quickly evolved into a plantation economy. This was predicated on river systems that probed deep within the colony. This allowed for expansion into the western fringes of the colony far from the seat of government. Because of this geographical condition, settlers couldn’t be expected to travel hundreds of miles to vote on every single issue. This gave birth to representative democracy as manifested by the House of Burgesses established in 1619. Conversely, New England colonies, without the benefit of these river systems, were forced to establish closely knit towns where people could take part in town meetings. This gave birth to the notion of direct democracy. Both forms of representation were a result of geographical conditions.

Early on in the republic’s history, geographic distinctions led to our first political parties. The mercantile, trade oriented northern states were insistent on strengthening the hand of the federal government to protect their investments. The crisis over the creation of a National Bank brought into focus our first two party system. The Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton and the Democratic-Republicans led by Thomas Jefferson. Both men were emblematic of their respective geographic regions. The Virginian Jefferson calling for an economy based on yeoman farmers while New Yorker Hamilton insisting on a mercantile, industrial focus.

As the United States’ geography began to expand westward so did the evolution of political parties. The Federalists party, fearing a lack of control, argued against the Louisiana Purchase putting them at odds with the prevailing mood of the country. Embracing western settlement, the Republicans enjoyed what has been referred to fondly as “The Era of Good Feelings”. The pressures that geography played out by the Missouri Compromise (Jefferson called it “A fire bell in the night!”), eventually proved to be too much for the Democratic-Republican Party to bear. Into the breach came Andrew Jackson. Our first president from the “west”, Jackson embodied the frontier spirit that was capturing the nation. With him was born the modern Democratic Party. As the country pushed further westward, the strains began to show. The question of whether slavery should be allowed to take root in the west was first debated with Missouri. After the Mexican-American War, the issue became explosive. Neither the Compromise of 1850 nor the Kansas-Nebraska Act were able to curtail the coming sectional crisis. A political party would emerge reflective of this geographical tension. The modern Republican Party.

At no point in United States history has geography played more of a role than in the Civil War. Southern slave holding states, reflective of their geographical location, decided that the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln in 1860 was the final straw. The latter half of the 19th century was dominated (on the national level) by the Republican Party. Their harsh role in subjugating the south during Reconstruction cemented what was then referred to as “the solid south”, meaning solidly Democratic.

As the nation headed into the early years of the 20th century, geography played a vital role. The dynamics that were most prevalent were those between urban and rural areas. Rural regions, dominated by the Democratic Party, pushed back unceasingly against what they pejoratively referred to as “modernism”. Republicans on the other hand dominated industrial regions and embraced the era of the big city. This tension was played out with the Scopes Trial in Tennessee and eventual adoption of the 18th Amendment prohibiting the sale, manufacturing, transportation, or the use of alcohol in the country.

Rising from the ashes of the Great Depression, the Democratic Party emerged triumphant with the election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932. His “New Deal Coalition” was heavily focused on geography as he was able to keep a tenuous hold on western farmers, southern planters and eastern industrialists. What’s most fascinating about this dynamic is the role that southern blacks played. Traditionally loyal to the Republican Party (the party of Lincoln), southern blacks began a massive shift to the Democratic Party during the 1930s. Geography played a major role in this evolution.

The sea-of-change of the Civil Rights Movement and its roots in the geography of the United States, largely define the evolution of the political parties in post WWII America. The embracing of northern and western Democrats of early civil rights legislation radically transformed the political landscape of the nation. This coupled with the abandonment of civil rights as a priority amongst northern Republicans brings into focus a clear distinction within our contemporary political party structure. When President Lyndon Johnson said, after signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that “we have lost the South for a generation”, he was prophetic.

If there is one reason I’m excited about pursuing this story map it’s that I am constantly being asked by my students how the Democratic Party is looked to as sympathetic to civil rights while the Republican Party is not. What happened to the party of Lincoln? The party of Reconstruction and early Amendments guaranteeing freedoms for blacks? How could the Democrats, so long associated with Jim Crow and racial violence throughout the south, now be looked on so differently?

To paraphrase former advisor to Bill Clinton, “it’s the geography stupid”.

Teacher Preparation Instructions:

Depending on the student level the story map can be divided into sections, and the teacher can guide the entire class through the activities. Students can also independently complete the response guide or discuss with other students.

This lesson is for either a United States history class, or a Government class. This lesson is situated in between 1792 and 1972. Its focus is the political, socio-economic and geographic impact on the evolution of political parties in the United States.

Instructional Procedures/Process

1. Students discuss what role political parties play in our society. They will ponder questions such as:
 - Why is it important to have opposition parties?
 - How would our process be different if we had just one political party?
 - Why aren’t there more than two viable political parties?
 - How have third parties impacted the electorate and the history of the U.S.?
2. The teacher will explain that students will explore how political parties have evolved and trace geography’s impact on this evolution.
3. Students will complete the student response guide as they work with the provided materials in the story map. The teacher will decide if this is done as a class, small groups, partners, or as individuals.
4. The teacher will collect the student response guides to check for understanding.
5. The teacher will decide whether to assign the extension activity on the Dust Bowl and its impact on the growth of the Democratic Party.
6. The teacher will conduct a classroom discussion (organization is up to the teacher) on teacher created questions or on student created questions from the story map activity.

Closure

The teacher can start by directing the students back to the Story Map. Using the measuring tools, have the students measure the size of the United States prior to 1803. Then they should measure it after 1803. Begin a discussion, based on their understandings of the philosophies of both the Federalist and Democratic-Republicans, how this growth would impact the respective parties. This discussion can be broadened out to incorporate issues such as land use, the role of the federal government, migration patterns and immigration.