



Political Parties | Lesson Plan

What role do political parties play in the United States and how have their influence and functions evolved since the country's founding?

Students will understand the origin and history of political parties in the United States. They will explore their purpose and role in the American political system.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the foundational role of political parties in the American political system.
- Analyze the development and evolution of the two-party system since George Washington's presidency.
- Evaluate the impact of political parties on the electoral process, including primary elections and the Electoral College.
- Reflect on the viewpoints and criticisms of the Founding Fathers regarding political parties.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Political Parties:** Organized groups that attempt to influence government policy and elections.
- **Two-Party System:** A system where two major political parties dominate the political landscape.
- **Third Parties:** Minor political parties that challenge the two major parties on specific issues or during particular elections.
- **Electoral College:** The body of electors established by the Constitution, which formally elects the President and Vice President of the United States.
- **Grassroots:** The most basic level of an activity or organization, where the constituents of a political party, organization, or movement carry out actions.
- **Primary Elections:** Elections within a political party to select its candidate for the general election.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: Political Parties* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: Political Parties* (Click [Here](#))
- Sticky notes or stickers

Scan to watch episode:



Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Create a large poster or whiteboard divided into two columns: "Agree" and "Disagree."
2. Prepare a series of statements related to everyday topics or issues that might concern students, such as school rules, favorite school subjects, or extracurricular activities. For example:
 - Homework should be abolished.
 - Physical education should be a daily class.
 - School lunches should have more vegetarian options.
 - Students should have more say in school policies.
3. Provide each one with a small sticker or sticky note.
4. Explain that you will read out a series of statements, and students should place their stickers on the "Agree" or "Disagree" columns of the poster or whiteboard based on their personal opinions. Read aloud each statement one by one, giving students a moment to place their stickers accordingly.
5. After all the stickers are placed, allow students to discuss their selections.
6. Transition into the lesson on political parties by explaining that, like in the classroom activity, people in society often have varying opinions on important issues.
7. Ask the students what they know about political parties. What are they? How many are in the U.S.? What are the names of the two main political parties in the U.S.? When did they start? Why do you think there are two main parties in the U.S.?
8. Give each student a copy of the *Street Smarts: Political Parties* worksheet and display it on a screen.
9. Have the students work collaboratively as a large group to discuss the questions and fill in the answers they might already know in the spaces provided.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, confirming or correcting answers on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned about political parties in the United States.
2. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and have students complete it as they follow along with the video.