

DEBATE: TWO TERM PRECEDENTS?

LEVEL:

High School

TIMEFRAME:

One class period

OBJECTIVES:

Students will evaluate the practice of term limits for the American presidency.

Students will use context clues to determine the meaning of academic vocabulary in a primary source

Students will debate the merits of presidential term limits

Students will analyze the content and message of a political cartoon

STANDARDS:

Reading and Writing Literacy in
History/Social Studies

Integrate and Evaluate Content in Diverse
Formats.

Writing Standards

Speaking and Listening

Principles of Democracy

Power, Authority, and Governance

Time, Continuity, and Change

DEBATE:

1. To start, hold an informal classroom debate around the following question:
 - a. Should FDR have broken the two term precedent?
2. Encourage all students to speak at least once. Student comments should not only assert the student's own point but also explicitly support or challenge a previous speaker's assertion.

22ND AMENDMENT:

1. After FDR's death, Congress passed the 22nd amendment to the Constitution, limiting the number of terms a person may serve as president.
2. Have a couple student volunteers read the text of 22nd amendment to the class:
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxxii>

3. Check for understanding of the amendment by asking students to summarize its meaning in their own words.

SILENT DEBATE:

1. Students will have a silent debate about the merits of the 22nd amendment. The prompt of the debate is “Should presidents be limited to two terms by the Constitution?”
2. To complete a silent debate, students will be placed in pairs.
 - a. Assign one student of each pair to argue that presidents should, indeed, be limited to two terms by the Constitution.
 - b. The other student in the pair will argue that presidents should not be limited to two terms by the Constitution.
3. The student arguing in the affirmative will start with a sheet of paper. She will write a 1-2 sentence “opening argument” then pass the paper to her partner.
4. The partner will respond to the affirmative’s assertion briefly then make his own opening argument.
5. The students will pass the sheet of paper back and forth for 15-20 minutes, each time responding to the previous statement and adding to their own argument.
 - a. If students get stuck in their debate, ask leading questions such as “Should people be able to keep their leaders as long as they want?” and “What could go wrong if there were no limits?”
6. At the end of the debate, call on student pairs to share their debates aloud. Ask pairs which side won the debate and why.

Suggestions for extension:

- Have students read FDR’s July 19, 1940, “Radio Address to the Democratic National Convention Accepting the Nomination”: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/radio-address-the-democratic-national-convention-accepting-the-nomination>.
- Discuss why, according to FDR, he is running for a third term as president. Have students cite specific textual evidence to support their assertions.