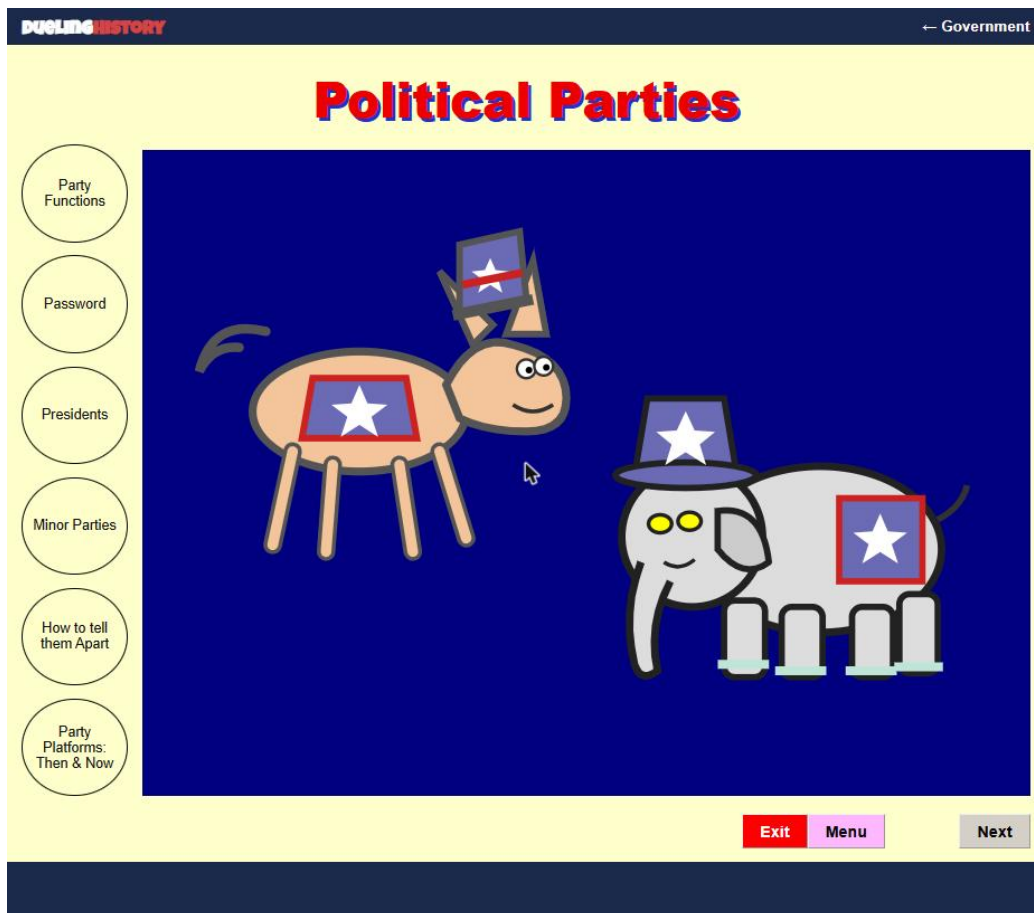


Political Parties

Teacher Guide | Government Unit, Chapter 5

A browser rebuild of the classic ToolBook "GovCh5" lesson. Twelve screens cover what parties do, how they are organized, minor parties, primaries, the presidents and their parties, and how the two major party platforms have changed from 2000 to 2024. Thomas Nast, the cartoonist who gave us the donkey and the elephant, hosts the Password Lightning Round.

Play it here: duelinghistory.com/government/PoliticalParties/ (free; works on any computer with a browser, no download or login).



Getting Around

- The **main menu** has six round buttons: Party Functions, Password, Presidents, Minor Parties, How to tell them Apart, and Party Platforms: Then & Now.
- **Next** and **Back** walk through all twelve screens in order, including six bonus screens the menu does not list (see the table below).
- **Menu** returns to the title screen. **Exit** returns to the Government section of the site.
- Projector-friendly: run it whole-class from the teacher computer, or let students work through it on their own devices.

The Twelve Screens

#	Screen	What students do	On menu?
1	Party Functions	Drag five function labels onto the descriptions they match.	Yes
2	Password Lightning Round	Thomas Nast reads a clue; click the matching vocabulary term. Timed or practice.	Yes
3	Presidents and Their Parties	Pick the president for each term from 1945 to 2025, then mark D or R.	Yes
4	American Minor Parties	Drag 14 minor parties into Ideological, Single-Issue, Economic, or Splinter.	Yes
5	How the National Party Is Organized	Click each level of the national organization to read about it.	Next only
6	Wards and Precincts	Read the definitions, then click six houses to "get out the vote."	Next only
7	Direct Primaries	Drag six statements into the Open or Closed primary box, then Check.	Next only
8	The Three Parts of a Party	Read about the party in government, the organization, and the electorate.	Next only
9	Straight Ticket or Split Ticket?	Fill out a sample ballot and see whether it is a straight or split ticket.	Next only
10	Party Platforms: Then & Now	Click seven planks to compare the 2000 and 2024 Democratic and Republican platforms.	Yes
11	Thomas Nast: the Symbols	Nast tells how the donkey and the elephant became party symbols.	Next only
12	How to tell 'em Apart	Old-time jokes about Democrats and Republicans, revealed one line at a time.	Yes

Suggested Flow (one or two class periods)

- **Hook (5 min):** Open on screen 11 and let Nast tell the donkey-and-elephant story. Ask: "Why would a cartoon stick better than an editorial?"
- **Content (20-25 min):** Screens 1 and 5-9 with the student handout. Pause on Direct Primaries and the ballot to ask what kind of primary your state uses.
- **Review (10 min):** Password in Practice mode first, then a timed round for the Winner's Circle.
- **Then & Now (15 min):** Screen 10. Pairs pick two planks and explain what changed and why. A natural tie-in to the November 3, 2026 midterm elections.
- **Close (5 min):** Screen 12. Reveal the jokes and ask which ones are stereotypes that still hold up and which do not.

Screen by Screen

1. Party Functions

Students drag each yellow label to the pink rectangle it describes. **Grade me** checks their work, **Show answers** fills in the key, and **Initialize** resets the board.

Function	Description (answer key)
Nominating	This is the activity that most clearly sets political parties apart from other political groups.
Informer - Stimulator	Parties share this function with the news media and interest groups.
Seal of Approval	Once its candidates are elected, the party must prod them to perform well or it may suffer with them in the next election.
Governmental	Party connections help the executive and legislative branches of government cooperate with one another.
Watchdog	The party out of power criticizes the party that controls the government and urges voters to "throw the rascals out."

2. Password Lightning Round



- **Practice:** no clock. If a student misses, Nast names the answer and makes the square flash.
- **Start:** the clock runs and every wrong click adds **5 seconds**. Finishers type a name for the **Winner's Circle** (top 10 fastest times).
- **Nast's Voice** toggles the read-aloud of each clue on and off.
- Clues are drawn in random order each round, so students cannot memorize a sequence.

Teacher Setup

Teacher passcode: **nbsmj** (lowercase; keep this page away from students)

- Click the blue **Setup** button under the board and enter the passcode.
- Edit any of the 15 terms and Nast's clues, then click **Save**. The board updates right away. Use your own vocabulary to turn this into a review for any chapter or subject.
- **Print** opens a printable list of the current terms and clues. **Restore Defaults** brings back the original Chapter 5 list.
- To wipe the Winner's Circle for a new class, open Winner's Circle, click **Clear Board**, and enter the passcode.
- **Note:** custom terms and Winner's Circle names are saved in *that browser on that computer only*. Set up the teacher machine you will project from, or set up each student computer.

Default Terms and Clues

Term	Nast's clue
Patronage	The practice of giving government jobs and favors to loyal party supporters.
Proportional Representation	Each party wins seats in proportion to its share of the popular vote.
Political Parties	Groups of people who try to control government by winning elections and holding office.
National Party Convention	The big summer meeting where a party names its presidential ticket and adopts its platform.
Divided Government	One party holds the White House while the other controls one or both houses of Congress.
Dealignment	Voters drift away from both major parties and call themselves independents.
Party Column Ballot	A ballot that lists candidates side by side under their party's name, so straight-ticket voting is easy.
Nomination of Candidates	Naming the people who will run for office. It is the job that most sets parties apart.
Office Block Ballot	A ballot that groups candidates by the office they seek, not by party.
Nonpartisan	Free from party ties, like many city council and school board elections.
Minor Party	A smaller party, like the Libertarians or the Greens, with little chance of winning the presidency.
Realigning Elections	Elections where a new coalition takes power for a long time, as in 1860 and 1932.
Soft Money	Unlimited "party-building" donations. The 2002 McCain-Feingold law banned them for national parties.
Winner-Take-All	The candidate with the most votes in a state wins all of that state's electoral votes.
Party Functions	Nominating, informing, seal of approval, governing, and watchdog are all examples of these.

3. Presidents and Their Parties

For each term, students choose the president from the drop-down and then click the Party button to choose Democrat or Republican. **How did I do?** scores the table.

Year	President	Party	Year	President	Party
1945	Roosevelt, Franklin / Truman	D	1989	Bush, George H. W.	R
1949	Truman, Harry	D	1993	Clinton, Bill	D
1953	Eisenhower, Dwight	R	1997	Clinton, Bill	D
1957	Eisenhower, Dwight	R	2001	Bush, George W.	R
1961	Kennedy, John F.	D	2005	Bush, George W.	R
1965	Johnson, Lyndon B.	D	2009	Obama, Barack	D
1969	Nixon, Richard	R	2013	Obama, Barack	D
1973	Nixon, Richard / Ford	R	2017	Trump, Donald	R
1977	Carter, Jimmy	D	2021	Biden, Joe	D
1981	Reagan, Ronald	R	2025	Trump, Donald	R
1985	Reagan, Ronald	R			

4. American Minor Parties

Students drag each party into one of four kinds. **Reset** starts over.

Kind	Parties (answer key)
Ideological	USA Green Party (1972 - present); Socialist Party (1900 - present); Libertarian Party (1972 - present); Socialist Labor Party (1892 - 1972); Communist Party (1928 - 1988)
Single-Issue	Know Nothing Party (1856 only); Free Soil Party (1848 - 1852); Prohibition Party (1869 - present)
Economic	Populist Party (1892 - 1908); Greenback Party (1876 - 1884); Reform Party (1996 - present)
Splinter	Dixiecrat Party (1948 only); American Independent Party (1968 - present); Bull Moose Party (1912 only)

Discussion: ideological parties are built on a broad set of beliefs; single-issue parties focus on one cause; economic parties grow out of hard times; splinter parties break away from a major party, often around one strong personality (Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose).

5. How the National Party Is Organized

- **National Convention:** meets every presidential election summer; nominates the ticket, adopts the rules, writes the platform.
- **National Committee (RNC / DNC):** runs party affairs between conventions; a committeeman and committeewoman from each state, plus state chairs and others.
- **National Chairperson:** heads the committee for a four-year term and directs party headquarters and staff.
- **Congressional Campaign Committee:** works to re-elect its own incumbents and unseat the other party's; members serve two-year terms.

6. Wards and Precincts

A **precinct** is the smallest unit of election administration; everyone in it votes at the same polling place, and each party has a precinct captain. A **ward** is a city division, usually for electing a council member, made of several precincts. Students click six houses to "get out the vote."

7. Direct Primaries

Statement	Box
Permits Crossovers	Open
Any voter can vote	Open
Republicans & Independents can vote in the Democratic primary	Open
Democrats & Independents can't vote in the Republican primary	Closed
No Crossovers	Closed
Must be registered in the party to vote	Closed

8. The Three Parts of a Party

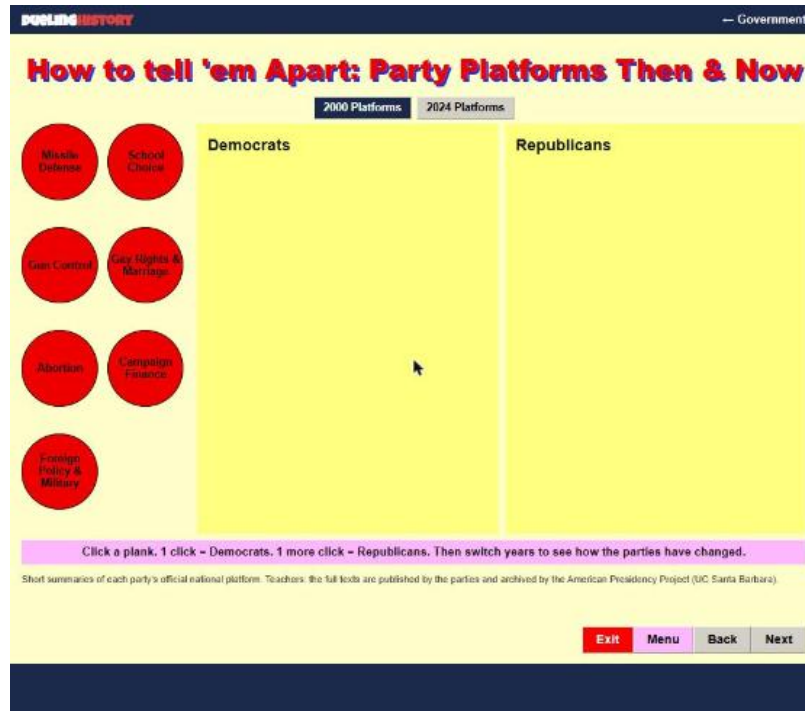
- **The Party in Government:** members who hold elective and appointive offices at every level.
- **The Party Organization:** party committees, officers, and workers.
- **The Party in the Electorate:** citizens who support and identify with the party.

A short reading follows on parties in Congress (majority party controls leaders, committee chairs, and the floor; "the other side of the aisle"; the Vice President breaks a 50-50 Senate tie, as after 2000 and 2020), the executive and judicial branches, state and local government, and **dealignment**.

9. Straight Ticket or Split Ticket?

Students pick one candidate for each of six offices. All one party is a **straight ticket**; mixing parties is a **split ticket**. More voters split their tickets after the 1960s, a sign of weaker party ties.

10. Party Platforms: Then & Now



Click a red plank once to show the Democrats' position, again for the Republicans'. Switch between the **2000** and **2024** tabs to see what changed. The summaries are short; the full platform texts are archived by the American Presidency Project at UC Santa Barbara.

Plank	2000 Democrats	2000 Republicans	2024 Democrats	2024 Republicans
Missile Defense	Supported a limited national missile defense if the technology worked and it fit with arms-control treaties.	Deploy an effective national missile defense as soon as possible; called the 1972 ABM Treaty outdated.	Not a major plank; stressed NATO, alliances, and arms control.	Build a "great Iron Dome missile defense shield" over the United States.
School Choice	Supported public school choice and charter schools; opposed private-school vouchers.	Supported school choice, including vouchers ("opportunity scholarships") for students in failing schools.	Strongly support public schools and teachers; oppose using public money for private-school vouchers.	Universal school choice in every state; expand parents' rights in education.
Gun Control	Called for child safety locks, closing the "gun show loophole," and photo licenses for new handgun buyers.	Defend the Second Amendment; enforce existing gun laws; instant background checks but no federal licensing or registration.	Universal background checks, a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and red-flag laws.	Protect the Second Amendment, including the right to keep and bear arms.
Gay Rights & Marriage	Supported adding sexual orientation to hate-crime laws and banning job discrimination against gays and lesbians.	Supported the traditional definition of marriage as one man and one woman; opposed special legal standing based on sexual preference.	Pass the Equality Act; protect marriage equality (legal nationwide since Obergefell v. Hodges, 2015).	Dropped the 2016 call to define marriage as one man and one woman; opposes men in women's sports and some gender-transition policies.
Abortion	Supported a woman's right to choose, consistent with Roe v. Wade.	Supported a human life amendment to the Constitution and opposed partial-birth abortion.	Restore the protections of Roe v. Wade (overturned by Dobbs in 2022) into national law.	After Dobbs, abortion is for the states to decide; opposes late-term abortion.

Plank	2000 Democrats	2000 Republicans	2024 Democrats	2024 Republicans
Campaign Finance	Supported the McCain-Feingold bill to ban soft money.	Supported full and quick disclosure of donations and "paycheck protection" for union members; warned against limits on free speech.	Overturn Citizens United (2010), by constitutional amendment if needed.	Little on campaign finance; focused on election integrity, with voter ID, paper ballots, and same-day voting.
Foreign Policy & Military	Pointed to Clinton-Gore record; maintain a strong, ready military and lead through alliances like NATO.	"Peace through strength": rebuild the military, raise troop pay, and restore readiness.	Strengthen NATO, support Ukraine against Russia's invasion, and stand with Israel's security.	"Peace through strength": prevent World War III, rebuild the military, and secure the border.

What Changed

Plank	Change
Missile Defense	Republicans went from "deploy as soon as possible" to an "Iron Dome" for the whole country.
School Choice	Republicans moved from vouchers for failing schools to universal school choice.
Gun Control	Democrats moved from safety locks to an assault-weapons ban.
Gay Rights & Marriage	The Supreme Court made same-sex marriage legal in 2015. Democrats now defend it, and Republicans dropped their marriage definition.
Abortion	The Dobbs decision (2022) sent abortion back to the states, and both platforms changed.
Campaign Finance	The Citizens United decision (2010) changed the fight over campaign money.
Foreign Policy & Military	Both still promise a strong military. The new issues are Ukraine and the border.

Keep it balanced: ask students to describe each party's position in that party's own terms before they evaluate it.

11 and 12. Thomas Nast and How to tell 'em Apart

Nast introduces himself: in 1870 he drew the Democrats as a donkey in "A Live Jackass Kicking a Dead Lion," and in 1874, in "The Third-Term Panic," a frightened elephant marked "The Republican Vote." He also helped bring down Boss Tweed and drew the round, jolly Santa Claus.

The last screen holds eight old-time jokes contrasting Republicans and Democrats. Use **Show** to reveal them one line at a time from the bottom up, and **Hide** to cover them again. They are gentle stereotypes from another era; a good closing question is which still ring true, which never did, and why stereotypes about parties persist.