

21st Century Skills Activity



The Jefferson Era

Lesson 1 *A New Party in Power*

Learning and Innovation: Identify Problems and Solutions

Learning the Skill

Problems are issues that need to be resolved. During the election of 1800, a problem arose. People did not want the same problem to happen again. Read the passage below to learn more about the problem and the solution.

During the election of 1800, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr received an equal number of electoral votes. The electors had intended Jefferson to be president and Burr to be vice president. But under the Constitution at that time, electors did not vote for the president and vice president separately. They cast two ballots, and the candidate with the most votes became president and the candidate with the second highest vote total became vice president. Because of the tie, the task of choosing the president went to the House of Representatives. After many votes in the House, Jefferson was chosen to be president.

To avoid this problem again, Congress passed the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution in 1803. This amendment says, in part,

“The Electors shall meet in their respective states, and vote by ballot for President and Vice-President, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as President and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President.”

In this passage, the first paragraph identifies the problem, and the second paragraph explains the solution.

Practicing the Skill

Reread the passage and answer the questions that follow.

1. What problem arose during the election of 1800?

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2. What rule about voting caused the problem?

3. How did the Twelfth Amendment solve the problem?

Applying the Skill

With a group of your classmates, research one of the following problems related to elections.

- People do not elect the president directly. The president is chosen by a group of people called electors. Some people want to change this system. Explain why people want to change the system and what kinds of changes are suggested.
- In the presidential election of 2000, a very close election between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush came down to disputed results in the state of Florida. This dispute went to the Supreme Court. Learn why the case went to court and what the court decided.
- According to the Twenty-sixth Amendment, U.S. citizens who are eighteen years or older can vote. Some people think younger citizens should be able to vote. What would have to happen to make this possible?

Explain the solution or possible solutions to the problem.

Problem

Solution(s)
