

Name _____ Date _____

Political Parties

“Republicans and Democrats”

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. A political party is a group of people with common interests who seek representation in government. A platform is a list of views a party holds. This list can be helpful in attracting voters to a particular party. It gives a summary of the party’s positions on issues that voters may have strong opinions about. The platform is also a preview of what members of that party will fight for once they are in office.

Notes

2. The United States has two major parties: Democrats and Republicans. Democrats are more liberal, which means they believe that government should be active in supporting social and political change. Republicans are more conservative. They believe that the government should play a smaller role in people’s lives and value established practices and tradition in politics and society. Though particular political parties have changed over the years, there has generally been one more liberal party and one more conservative. Today, in addition to these two large parties, there are many smaller ones, such as the Libertarian Party, the Green Party and the Constitution Party. These smaller parties come together when individuals have a set of interests that are not represented by either of the two major parties.

Notes

3. The Founding Fathers didn’t plan for political parties in the US. But they disagreed over the size and power of the central government and, as a result, began to form separate groups. One group, which included Alexander Hamilton, believed in a stronger central government. The other, which included Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, believed that states’ rights were more important and that the central government should be limited. This led to the Federalist Party of Hamilton and Democratic-Republican Party of Jefferson and Madison.

Notes

4.



The Democratic Party today is known for its liberal platform. But it hasn't always been that way. In the 1800s, Democrats supported the established practice of slavery. And after the Civil War, Democrats opposed civil rights reforms to maintain white Southern voters' support. The party began to reinvent itself in the the 1930s when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office. Roosevelt created the New Deal, a series of policies and laws put in

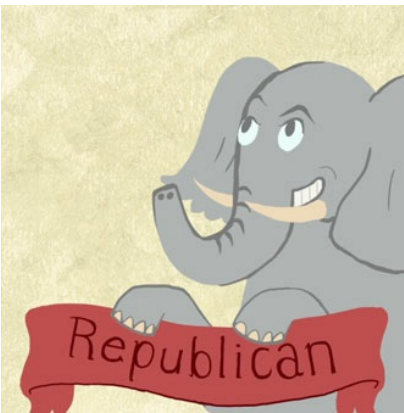
place during the Great Depression. The New Deal was based on the idea that government should play a role in the economy. The Democratic Party now supports unions, civil rights and most progressive reforms. The color blue represents the Democrats. A donkey has long been the party's unofficial mascot.

Notes

5. Democrats believe in a strong federal government that would help those in need. Democrats often support higher taxes, especially on the wealthy. They want to use these taxes to help pay for government programs like welfare, a national healthcare system and public education. Democrats emphasize change over tradition. They are generally more progressive on social issues. For example, they support the Equal Rights Amendment, which would prohibit discrimination based on sex.

Notes

6.



The Republican Party is now known for its conservative platform, but it wasn't always. In the 1800s, the Republican Party opposed extending the established practice of slavery beyond the Southern states. The Republican Party became the party of abolitionists in the late 1800s. Abolitionists wanted to immediately end slavery in the US. President Abraham Lincoln was part of

the Republican Party. During the 20th century, the party became associated with lower taxes, less government intervention in economics and conservative social policies. The Republican Party is represented by the color red and an elephant mascot.

Notes

7. The Republicans believe in smaller government. They emphasize the rights of states and individuals. Republicans often support lower tax rates, looser gun control laws, healthcare that is privately run and less regulation of the environment. Republicans believe that these ideologies give states and citizens more freedom instead of forcing them to follow government policies that they may not support. Republicans are also more conservative on social issues like legal protection from discrimination. They favor tradition over change.

Notes