A Tie for President

Read, mark, and explain a turning point in U.S. elections

8.C.6.1 "Explain issues surrounding the electoral process of the presidential election of 1800, its resolution by the 12th Amendment, and the significance of a peaceful transfer of power."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the voting rule that caused the tie, circle how the House ended it, and put a star beside the new ballot rule and the peaceful transfer. Use your marks to trace how the problem led to change.

When Running Mates Tied

1. In 1800, the United States chose a president through electors selected under state rules. Each elector cast two votes for president, with no separate vote for vice president. Normally, the candidate with the most votes became president, and the runner-up became vice president. Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr ran on the same Democratic-Republican ticket, so their supporters wanted Jefferson as president and Burr as vice president. But both received 73 electoral votes. Their tie turned a planned partnership into a contest over who would lead the country.

2. The Constitution sent a tie for first place to the House of Representatives, where each state delegation had one vote. The House meeting in early 1801 still had many Federalists, the party of outgoing President John Adams. Some opposed Jefferson and preferred Burr, although Burr had been intended as Jefferson's running mate. Ballot after ballot failed to give either man enough states. On February 17, after 36 ballots, Jefferson won the presidency and Burr became vice president. The vote showed how the original election rules could turn allies into rivals.

3. The Twelfth Amendment, ratified in 1804, changed how electors vote: they now cast separate ballots for president and vice president. That change helps keep running mates from tying for the presidency simply because their supporters vote for both. It does not erase all election disputes, but it fixes the ballot problem exposed in 1800. The outcome also tested the young republic. Adams's Federalist administration gave way to Jefferson's Democratic-Republican administration peacefully. This transfer showed that rival parties could accept an election result and keep the constitutional system working.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the original voting rule allow Jefferson and Burr, who ran together, to tie for president?

2. Why did the House vote take 36 ballots to settle the tie?

3. How did the Twelfth Amendment address the ballot problem exposed in 1800?

4. Why was the peaceful change from Adams's administration to Jefferson's significant?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your school is choosing a student council president and vice president. Write four sentences proposing a voting rule based on the Twelfth Amendment, explaining how the 1800 election supports your rule, and telling students why they should accept the result even if their choice loses.

ANSWER KEY

A Tie for President

GRADE 8 · 8.C.6.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the voting rule that caused the tie, circle how the House ended it, and put a star beside the new ballot rule and the peaceful transfer. Use your marks to trace how the problem led to change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the original voting rule allow Jefferson and Burr, who ran together, to tie for president?	**Electors cast two votes for president and no separate vote for vice president, so supporters voting for both men gave each 73 votes.**
2	Why did the House vote take 36 ballots to settle the tie?	**Some Federalists opposed Jefferson and preferred Burr, so neither man won enough state votes until the 36th ballot.**
3	How did the Twelfth Amendment address the ballot problem exposed in 1800?	**It required electors to cast separate ballots for president and vice president, helping prevent running mates from tying for president.**
4	Why was the peaceful change from Adams's administration to Jefferson's significant?	**It showed that rival parties could accept an election result and keep the constitutional system working.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Students should cast separate votes for council president and vice president. In 1800, electors did not use separate ballots, and Jefferson and Burr tied even though they ran together. Separate votes would make each student's choice for each office clear. If my choice loses, I should accept the result so the new council can begin its work without a fight over who won.

For Part 3, accept a workable separate-ballot rule, an accurate connection to the 1800 tie, and a reason for accepting a loss. Students need not claim that the rule prevents every possible tie or dispute.