

Decade of the Democrats

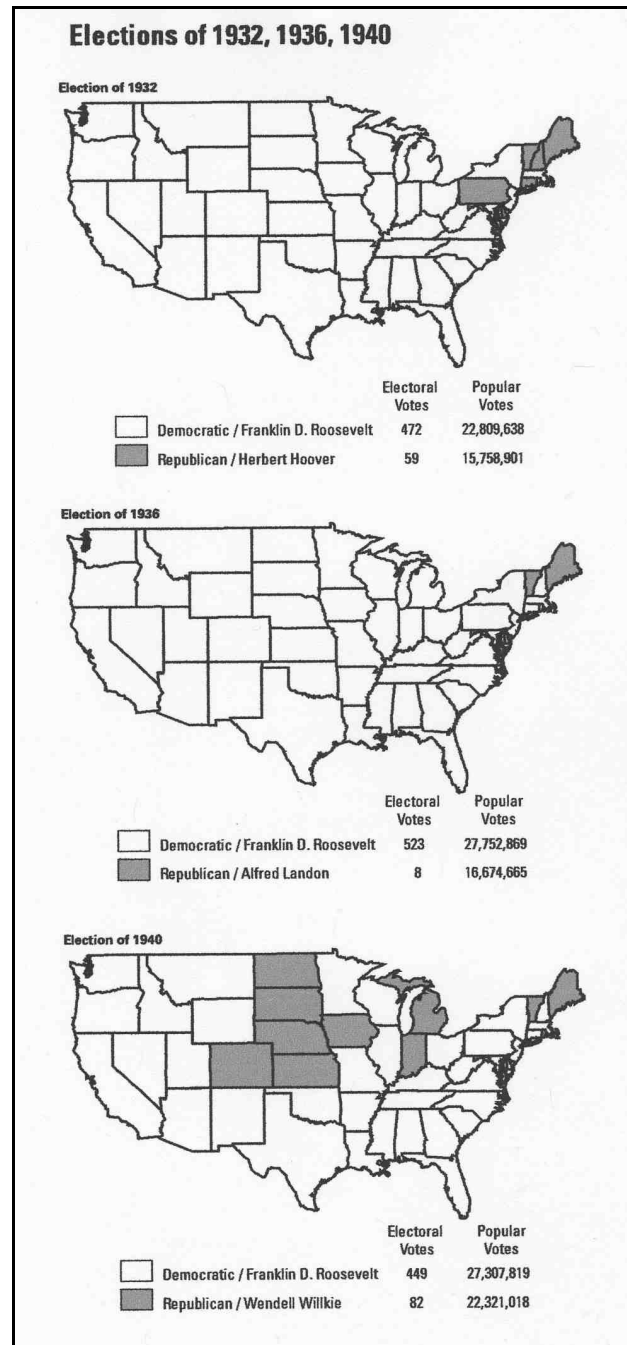
Read the paragraphs below and study the maps carefully.
Then answer the questions that follow.

The Democratic Party controlled the federal government for most of the 1930s. The Republicans' mostly voluntary programs to remedy the ravages of the Great Depression had failed, so in 1932 Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president. Only the Northeast, a Republican stronghold, did not endorse Roosevelt. Elsewhere, his support was overwhelming.

The Democrats had put together a new coalition of voters: urban immigrants, blue-collar workers of the industrialized North, African Americans, farmers of the Midwest and Great Plains and citizens in the "Solid South" joined to give the Democratic Party a national majority for the first time since the Civil War.

These people had voted for change, and they got what they wanted. To put the nation on the road to economic recovery, Roosevelt pushed through a collection of work programs, often called "alphabet soup" for initials such as WPA and CCC. The mid-1930s marked the high point of these New Deal programs. Millions of people were put back to work, and many economic-recovery projects were in full swing.

By the end of the 1930s, however, the situation had changed. The country, slowly climbing out of the depths of the Great Depression, had suffered another period of economic decline in 1937–1938, and unemployment was once again a major problem. Business leaders and Congress had become more vocal in their criticism of the New Deal, and many of its programs were ended. By the 1940 presidential election, eight states—all in the agricultural Midwest and Great Plains—had switched their support from Roosevelt to the Republican candidate, Wendell Willkie. Though Roosevelt's popularity remained strong elsewhere, particularly in the Democratic stronghold of the South, it would take the U.S. involvement in World War II to jolt the nation's economy into the full recovery that Roosevelt had been seeking.



Assign # _____ Name _____ Due Date _____ Pts _____

1. Which part of the country failed to support Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1932 presidential election?
2. Which states remained Republican in all three elections?
3. What regions of the United States remained solidly Democratic in all three elections?
4. The 1936 election is a good example of the frequent disparity between popular and electoral totals. Roosevelt received more than 65 times as many electoral votes as Landon. But was the popular vote for Roosevelt about 90 times as great, 9 times as great, or 1.5 times as great as that for Landon?
5. Compare Roosevelt's victory in 1940 with his victory in 1936. In what respect did he lose ground?
6. In which election did the Democratic Party achieve its greatest popularity?
7. What do you think was the main cause of Herbert Hoover's loss in 1932?
8. What trend do you notice in the Democratic vote in the 1940 election?