Political Parties

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to identify what political parties are and how the third party system has influenced American politics.

Primary resource for the first exercise in this lesson:
- PBS LearningMedia
(Crash Course video about the Political Party process in the United States)

1. Have students answer the following questions based on the resource from above:

   a. Why did the United States not have political factions during the first election?
   b. What were some of the differences between the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans?
   c. What is the main purpose of nominating conventions?
   d. When did the third party system come about? How long did it last?
   e. What were some of the concerns for the Populist party?
   f. Third parties often don’t win elections. Why?

2. Have students research the two big political parties, the Democrats and Republicans, and fill in at least 3 points for each side on the Venn diagram about the core beliefs of each party.

Where Democrats and Republicans Stand on Major Issues
Afterward, the teacher can lead a discussion around the similarities and differences between the two political parties.

3. In order for students to get a better sense of each political party, allow them to take this quiz from the Pew Research Center to determine which party they might be more likely to identify with. It is important to note this doesn't determine anyone's actual party affiliation.

4. Have your students write a 1 paragraph reflection summary on the results of their political party quiz.

   **Reflection Question:** Do you agree with the results you received on the political party quiz? Be sure to explain why or why not.

**Additional resource for this lesson:**
- Library of Congress
  *(This webpage has a quick history on the formation of American political parties.)*