THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICA'S TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

Discuss the development of the American two party system from the formation of the Constitution up until the Civil War.

I. **Concept number one:** Discuss the formative period of the two party system.
   A. The two-party system is such a familiar feature of American national government that it is difficult to realize that the men who formed the Constitution did not plan for it.

   1. In fact, almost all of the framers despised the idea of "factions." In the Constitution they tried to create a government that would discourage the formation of national parties.

   2. The framers of the Constitution knew that conflict between organized groups was bound to occur as it had occurred during the drafting of the document itself.

      a. Farmers would be pitted against merchants, slave holders against non-slave holders, the rich against the poor.

      b. Such divisions in society were bound to lead to factions, which would struggle to gain control over state and federal governments.

      c. These struggles would bring out people's worst failings: selfishness, ambition, and deceit. In order to gain the advantage, political parties and their leaders might stop at nothing.

         (i) They might mobilize their supporters by appeals to fear and greed.
(ii) People's loyalties would then not be to their country but to their party.

B. The framers of the Constitution tried to create a government that would be beyond the reach of factions and the different interests groups.

1. They believed that the system of checks and balances would make it impossible for any group to gain control of the whole federal structure.

   a. For example, the president would not be the tool of a political party because he was elected by the electoral college, not the people.

   b. Since federal judges were to be appointed for life, they would not depend on party support for their offices.

   c. The selection and structure of Congress was divided to make it more difficult for a party to control.

(i) The House of Representatives was and still is popularly elected and they must run for re-election every two years.

(ii) Senators are elected for terms of six years and are thus more independent than members of the House. Senators were at first chosen by the State Legislature until the passage of the 17th amendment to the Constitution in 1913 which made them popularly elected.

C. However, the very fears the Founding Fathers had about political factions developed in the very beginning over the forming and ratification of the Constitution. These factions were called Federalists and Anti-federalists.

D. The first national parties developed out of contests in Congress in the early 1790's over Hamilton's financial program. Madison and Jefferson first organized their opposition to Hamilton's program only in Congress and did not anticipate creating a permanent, popular party.

   1. But as their antagonism to Hamilton endured, and as the widely read newspapers of the day took sides between the two different interest groups and spread their political message, primitive semblances of political parties began to emerge.

   2. Hence, American political parties date their birth from the bitter clashes between Hamilton, Jefferson and Madison, over fiscal policy and foreign affairs.
3. These factions followed sectional lines. Northern congressmen supported the Bank of the United States by a margin of 33 to 1, while Southern representatives opposed it 19 to 6.

a. By 1793-94 these sectional factions and distinct ideological identities had acquired names... Federalists representing Hamilton's views, and Democratic-Republicans representing the views of both Jefferson and Madison.

b. These ideological identities consisted of:

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<th>Federalists</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
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<td>1. They believed in a loose interpretation of the Constitution and a strong central government.</td>
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<td>2. They believed in government by the rich for the rich.</td>
<td>2. They believed in government by the rich for the common man.</td>
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<td>3. They were strongest in New England and along the Atlantic sea coast.</td>
<td>3. They were strongest in the South and in the back country.</td>
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<td>4. They were pro-British and anti-French.</td>
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E. What the Founding Fathers failed to realize was that during the American Revolutionary War a fundamental transformation of the political needs of the country became clarified along distinct interests of various social groups and classes.

1. Simultaneously, the ideology of popular sovereignty and the political rhetoric during the war encouraged citizens to mobilize politically and develop high levels of expectations for the federal governments performance.

2. Also the free-wheeling of the newspapers (GATE KEEPING) on the various economic and social issues raised by Hamilton and Jefferson helped polarize people into one camp or another.

F. By 1794 both the Federalists and Republicans had recruited supporters in each state and were preparing for the election of 1796.
1. As president, Washington tried to stand above parties, but his pro-Hamiltonian beliefs exposed him to partisan attack.

2. The bitterness of party strife contributed to Washington's decision not to seek a third term in 1796 and opened the way for the first political contest for the presidency.

II. Concept number two: Discuss the break-up of the Federalist party and the rise of the Republicans by the election of 1800.

A. Alexander Hamilton was the best-known member of the Federalist party, now that Washington had bowed out. But his financial policies, some of which had fattened speculators, and his suggestions that the president and senators be elected for life had made him so unpopular that he could not hope to be elected president.

B. The Federalists were forced to turn to the experienced but ungracious John Adams who had no appeal to the masses and had no desire to cultivate any.

C. Adams suffered from several handicaps, one of which was following in the footsteps of Washington. Another was he was hated by Hamilton who secretly plotted with some of Adams' cabinet members against him.

TWO EVENTS RUINED ADAMS POLITICAL CAREER

D. The first was in foreign policy and involved the X, Y, Z Affair. Foreign affairs immediately occupied Adams' full attention. The French government regarded the Jay Treaty signed by the United States during Washington's administration with the British an affront, particularly after the French effort during the American War for independence.

1. Relations between the two countries steadily deteriorated and in 1797 French privateers began seizing American ships; and within a year they had captured more than 300 vessels.

2. In order to avoid further conflict Adams sent a three man commission to negotiate with the French. At the start of negotiations the American commissioners were insulted by demands for bribes by the three French commissioners. The American opted to come home.

3. The diplomatic humiliation suffered by the three commissioners set off a domestic political explosion when Adams presented the commissioners report to Congress. The three Frenchmen were dubbed Mr. X, Y, and Z in the report that spelled out the demand for bribes and lead to the Federalists in Congress to cry for war.

4. The X, Y, Z Affair did lead to an undeclared war (Quasi-War) from
1798-1800. But Adams brought an end to the war against the desires of many of his own party members (Hamilton's supports) in a treaty called the Convention of 1800. He also threatened to resign if his party did not support his efforts. As a result the Federalists party split beyond repair and this helped make it possible for the Republicans to win the election of 1800.

E. The second event which impacted Adams' presidency involved domestic policy and centered around the Alien and Sedition Acts. Because of the results of the X, Y, Z Affair with France, and the undeclared war that followed, the passions of domestic politics became very heated during Adams' (1797-1801) administration. The Federalists had meanwhile capitalized on the anti-French frenzy to drive through Congress a series of laws in 1798 designed to silence their Jeffersonian foes of political criticism.

1. These laws were called the Alien and Sedition Acts. The acts gave the president the power to deport foreigners who were critical of the President, Congress or the country in general.

2. The Acts were aimed at the political activity of the pro-French immigrants or anti-British Irish. Besides threatening to deport the immigrants one of the acts (Naturalization) raised the residence requirement for American citizenship from 5 to 14 years. The act was aimed at keeping the aliens from voting Republican.

3. The last of the Alien Acts and the one that caused Adams and the Federalists the most terrible was the Sedition Act. The act was intended to silence Republican newspapermen and provided for a fine and or imprisonment for anyone who tried to "impede the operation of any law" or who uttered any "false, scandalous and malicious" criticism of high government officials.

a. Under the act, about 25 persons were arrested and 10 convicted, most of them Republican editors who were conveniently got out of the way by heavy fines or jail sentences.

(i) A tavern loiterer in Newark, New Jersey, was jailed for expressing the wish that the wadding of the cannon shot fired in the President's honor might ledge in Adams' backside.

(ii) The Sedition Act made martyrs for the Republican Party an made the Federalists and John Adams very unpopular which helped the Republicans and Jefferson win the election of 1800.
b. The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions were the Republican reaction to the Sedition Act. The resolutions appealed to the first amendment of the Constitution which forbids Congress to pass any law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press.

(i) The Federalist layers adopted Blackstone's definition that freedom of the press meant merely freedom from censorship prior to publication.

(ii) The Republicans' protest was led by Jefferson and Madison, who proposed the resolutions. The resolutions attacked the Federalist broad interpretation of the Constitution and supported the Republican's weak interpretation, which gave justification for states' rights.

(iii) The resolutions claimed that the states composing the United States had entered into a compact (the Constitution) to which the states were equal parties and thus had equal rights to judge for themselves when the compact had been violated.

(iv) The resolutions were sent to the other state legislatures with hope that they might receive favorable action, but nothing happened as the resolutions just faded away when the Federalists stopped enforcing the Sedition Act.

(v) The net effect of the resolutions was that they made clear to the public the policies of each party as to how the government should be run.

(vi) The influence of the resolutions did not die as almost every politician between 1798 and 1860 appealed to the doctrine of states rights when his section seemed oppressed.

(vii) The Civil War was supposed to have killed the resolutions, but their theme has been quoted from the civil rights movement in the 1960's to the present.

III. Concept number three: Discuss the significance of Jefferson's and Madison's presidencies and show how they helped lead to the downfall of the Federalist party and the development of the "Era of Good Feeling".

A. Part of the significance of both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison as presidents lie in their pragmatism in adjusting their political philosophy to the needs of the country.
B. They were both able to see the need for a loose interpretation of the Constitution to meet the countries domestic and foreign needs as can be demonstrated by Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase of 1803, his Embargo Act of 1807 and his attempt to win respect for American right on the high seas with his war with Tripoli in 1801.

C. Madison as the leader of the Republican party continued to narrow the gap between the two parties by approving two of Hamilton's economic proposals of the 1790's. In 1816 the Republicans created the Second Bank of the United States and passed a protective tariff that Hamilton had recommended in his Report on Manufactures in 1791. Thus, by 1816 the Republicans were doing many things that the Federalists had been advocating for years.

D. With the growing unpopularity of the Federalists party, particularly after the Hartford Convention of 1814, the Federalist party was a dying machine by 1816. The death of the Federalists party and the adjustments made by the Republican party led to a period of political stagnation between 1816-1824 often called the "Era of Good Feeling".

1. The term "Era of Good Feeling" was a term used by a Boston newspaper to politically describe the Monroe presidency. The term was used because Monroe invoked an enthusiastic response from both Federalists and Republicans.

   The term for the era is somewhat misleading, despite the aura of overriding nationalism, as political factionalism was on the increase as a result of underlying economic problems and sectional differences.

2. However, the result of this political stagnation was a one-party system in the United States form 1816 until 1825 when today's Democratic party was formed by Andrew Jackson.

3. It became evident by the early 1820's that American politics could not long continue in this placid pattern. New forces were transforming the geographical sections (North, South, and West) of the country as a series of sharp and bitter conflicts brought out underlying sectional antagonism. By 1824, the sections had again become defined as they began to defend the stand they were to take until the Civil War.

IV. Concept number four: Discuss the election of 1824 and show how it lead to the development of today's Democratic party.

A. The election of 1824 reflects that politically the end of the "Era of Good Feeling" had past. By this time the country was split very badly over the three economic issues of what was called by Henry Clay the American System.
Clay insisted that the only way the nation could be strengthened was on a sound economic program that would enable the United States to become independent of the rest of the world. The system had three parts:

1. The first was a national bank to provide a sound uniform financial system.
   a. In 1811, the first Bank of the United States passed out of existence as its charter expired. Madison, a Republican, was against the bank and would not renew its charter.
   b. Between 1811 and 1816, the number of state banks tripled. These banks had no governments checks upon them.
   c. Under the circumstances, many of the state banks went wild in issuing bank notes--$28 million in 1811 and $68 million in 1816.
   d. Thus, the instability in the economy made Republicans and businessmen alike aware of the need for a national bank to stabilize American currency.
   e. A bill signed into law by President Madison in 1816 created the Second Bank of the United States.
   f. The function and structure of the Second Bank were essentially the same as those of the first Bank.

2. The second leg of the American System was a protective tariff.
   a. When the Republicans adopted the protective tariff of 1816, they adopted another one of Hamilton's and the Federalist Party's ideas.
   b. Reasons:
      (i) During the early 1800's with Jefferson's embargo plus the War of 1812, the United States found it difficult to get goods from Europe.
      (ii) This problem stimulated the industrial revolution in the United States.
      (iii) After the war, the British merchants wanted to recapture their one-time American trade, so in 1815 they dumped a lot of low cost goods on the American market in hopes of running their American competition out of business.
American businessmen were not about to be driven out of business, so in 1816 they put pressure on Congress to pass a protective tariff to protect their interests.

The Tariff Act had the support of both John C. Calhoun (South) and Henry Clay (West) and put import duties of 15 to 30% on cotton, textiles, leather, paper, pig iron, wool and other goods that mostly benefited the North.

3. The final phase of the American System was a plan for internal improvements for transportation.
   
a. The Embargo Act of 1807 and the War of 1812 disrupted coastal shipping and demonstrated the inadequacy of the country's internal transportation system for both interstate commerce and national defense.
   
b. In the West high transportation costs still deprived many farmers of outside markets and tied them to an economy of pioneer self-sufficiency. The greatest demand for federal help came from this area.
   
c. In 1817, John C. Calhoun proposed the Bonus Bill, which provided that $1.5 million be distributed among the states for local internal improvements.
   
d. Madison considered the Bill unconstitutional and vetoed it in March just before he left office.
   
e. This killed the internal improvement phase of the American System and left such improvements up to the state governments and private enterprise.

B. As a result of these three issues there were four candidates in 1824 for the presidency and all were claiming to be Republicans.

1. Three of the candidates were representatives from the three different sections of the country.
   
a. Andrew Jackson from the West.
   
b. John Q. Adams from the North.
   
c. William H. Crawford from the South.
2. The fourth, Henry Clay, thought of himself as a national candidate representing the interests of all three sections of the country with his American System.

C. There was a possibility of 261 electoral votes of which 131 were necessary to capture the presidency. However, none of the candidates received that number, (Clay 37, Crawford 41, Adams 84 and Jackson 99) so according to the Twelfth Amendment to the constitution the election had to be decided between the top three candidates in the House of Representatives.

1. Henry Clay was Speaker of the House of Representatives and thus was in a position to pick the next President of the United States.

2. Since Clay was not eligible because he came in fourth, he gave his support to John Q. Adams who thus won the presidency.

3. Adams responded by making Clay Secretary of State. (What about the previous Secretaries of State?)

   a. After Adams appointed Clay Secretary of State, Jackson's followers claimed that a "corrupt bargain" had been made, although James Buchanan of Pennsylvania had already tried to make a similar deal with Clay for Jackson and failed.

   b. The charge represents a half-truth as both Clay and Adams acted in what they felt was politically best for the party and the country as their political views were very close. However, Clay did see the post of Secretary of State as a steppingstone to the presidency.

   c. Clay opposed the election to the presidency of a military leader like Jackson, because he doubted that losing only 71 casualties and "killing 2,500 Englishmen at New Orleans' qualified a man for the presidency." To complement this, the Secretary of Stateship went to Clay, according to Adams: "An appointment due to Mr. Clay's talents and services." "It was the politicians who elected J.Q. Adams, not the people."

4. Jackson felt he had been cheated out of the Presidency and as a result of this belief, he resigned from Congress in 1825 and began a three-year campaign to win the Presidency in 1828.

5. During this three-year period, Jackson formulated what was to be called the "grass roots" method of campaigning as he set up campaign offices all over the country when he formed a new political party called the Democratic-Republican party. Later the term was shortened to just
Democratic.

V. Concept number five: Discuss the rise and fall of the Whig party and show how its downfall led to the creation of today's Republican party.

A. The controversies that revolved around Andrew Jackson stimulated the formation of the Second American party system.

B. The term "Whig" was first used in 1832 by the anti-tariff leaders of South Carolina, but it soon came to be applied to all elements that found themselves opposed to the Jacksonian Democratic party. The Whigs first emerged as an identifiable group in the Senate, where Clay and Calhoun joined forces in 1834 to pass a motion censuring Jackson for his removal of federal deposits from the Second Bank of the United States.

1. The Whigs soon evolved into a potent national political force by attracting other groups into a loose coalition alienated by Jackson: (1) National Republican supporters of Clay, Adams, and the "American system"; (2) southern planters and states' rights groups led by Calhoun who were opposed to Jackson's stand on nullification; (3) former administration supporters alienated by Jackson's bank policy; (4) Northern industrialists, whose views were represented by Daniel Webster from Massachusetts; and, after 1836, (5) the remnants of the Anti-Masonic party.

   a. Thus, Jackson's economic and political practices inspired opposition from all three sections of the country, giving the Whig party a truly national character.

   b. The name Whig was chosen because it suggested that, as the Whigs of the 1770's had stood up against King George III, so the Whigs of the 1830's were fighting for liberty against "King Andrew I".

2. The Whigs believed it was natural for a relatively few individuals to acquire a large share of the wealth. They believed the increasing concentrations of power and wealth that accompanied the advance of modern banking, manufacturing, and transportation furthered the welfare of the entire community.

3. The northern Whigs attempted to reconcile their elitism with republican ideals in several ways.

   a. First, they asserted that American society was really classless because it did not ascribe permanent status to groups and individuals and because its institutions fostered upward mobility.
b. Second, they argued that it was natural in a republic for wealthy individuals to represent other citizens. Constrained by a republican Constitution and by the moral influence of religion, elites would govern in the best interests of all.

c. Third, the Whigs argued that the ruling class promoted industrialization and economic growth, which in turn strengthened the republic by creating a more prosperous citizenry and by merging the interests of labor and capital.

4. The southern Whigs represented by Calhoun argued that the northern Whig ideal of equal opportunity contradicted the realities of slavery and of industrial society.

Calhoun felt that southern slave owners and northern factory owners belonged to the same privileged class and faced the same threat from below. He therefore urged northern factory capitalists to join a defensive alliance with the planters.

a. Calhoun's view was that social harmony was possible only with recognition, acceptance, and reinforcement of existing, sharp distinctions of class.

b. Whigs, he argued, ought to unite around a common defense of privilege and social order.

5. The significance of the Whig party was that it was a national party that represented the interest of BOTH the large industrialist and planter aristocracy at once and provided a means by which the two economic groups could possibly work out their differences.

6. The Whigs criticized Jackson and the Democrats for underestimating possibilities for upward mobility, for pitting the poor against the rich, and for disrupting social harmony.

a. They attacked Jackson's strong presidency by warning against strong, highly individualistic executives.

b. As an alternative, the Whigs offered legislative rule and a program of governmental intervention in the economy. They wanted to see a more vigorous national government, with Congress, rather than the president, exercising leadership.

c. They attempted to turn Jackson's republican rhetoric against him. (They were able to do this against Jackson's successor, Martin Van
7. The Whigs found to their delight that the Panic of 1837 and the rapid industrialization that was taking place in the United States had a marked impact on politics.

a. The industrialization strengthened the commitment of the urban middle class and prosperous farmers of the North to the values of the business elite, to the Whig party and to their economic programs of the American System.

b. With William Henry Harrison's presidential victory over Martin Van Buren in the election of 1840, the Whigs' political future looked bright.

c. The Whigs lost their opportunity, however, when Harrison died of pneumonia in 1841, one month after his inauguration. His successor was Vice-President John Tyler, a Virginian who was not a true supporter of the American System.

(i) Tyler opposed the urban commercial interests in his own state and had become a Whig because of his disgust with Jackson's nationalism and his own enthusiasm for states' rights.

(ii) As president, Tyler's prime objective was to block the nationalizing economic program of his own party. He succeeded, vetoing two bills sponsored by Henry Clay to re-establish the national bank. He also blocked major protective tariffs.

(iii) Tyler limited Whig successes to the repeal of the independent Treasury in 1841 and a modest increase in tariffs in 1842. As a result, the Whig party broke with Tyler and his cabinet resigned with the exception of Secretary of State Daniel Webster.

(iv) Tyler appointed Democrats to replace them but kept Webster in the cabinet in order to maintain a tie with New England and to claim that he had bipartisan support.

8. In 1844, James K. Polk, a Jacksonian Democrat from Tennessee, defeated the Whig candidate, Henry Clay, in the presidential election. Clay's defeat was the final blow to the American System and the Whig's economic program.
9. The issues of the annexation of Texas and of the extension of slavery into the western territories in time proved a menace to the solidarity of the party. The stage was now set for the replacement of Clay's American System by the issue of free-soil (keeping slavery out of the new territories) as the central economic issue. This NEW issue led to sectional disputes between the southern Whigs (Cotton Whigs) who were pro-slavery, as opposed to the northern Whigs (Conscience Whigs) who were opposed to the expansion of slavery.

10. During the 1840s, conflict over the legal status of slavery resulted when both northerners and southerners moved into western areas that were to be organized as territories in preparation for statehood.

a. To southern planters, the chance that Americans could seize northern Mexico and secure it for slavery seemed a possible solution to their anxiety over the abolitionist threats to slavery.

b. The South's ambitions produced a major fracture in the Whig party, and a lesser break in the Democratic party, between southerners loyal to slavery and northerners who supported free-soil.

c. During the 1840's and 50's, as both northern and southern Whigs became more entrenched in their positions, they drove a wedge between themselves that undermined the party's national base.

d. The end came for the Whigs and America's national two party system in the 1850's. With the passage of the Compromise of 1850 (which made California into a free state and allowed for fugitive slaves to be returned to their owners from the North), the Whig party barely survived as a result of the hard feelings and lack of trust that developed out of the debate and the formation of the compromise. Four years later the Kansas-Nebraska Act (which provided for the possibility of slavery in Kansas which had been forbidden under the Missouri Compromise) effectively destroyed the Whigs and lead to the formation of today's Republican party.

11. Underlying the rapid growth of the Republican party was the strong and growing appeal of its position on slavery in the territories.

a. Republicans viewed the unsettled West as a land of opportunities, a place to which the ambitious and hardworking could migrate in the hopes of improving their social and economic position.

(i) Free-soil would serve as a guarantee of free competition or "the right to rise." But if slavery was permitted to expand,
the rights of "free labor" would be denied. Slave holders would monopolize the best land, use their slaves to compete unfairly with free white workers, and block efforts at commercial and industrial development.

(ii) Some Republicans also pandered to race prejudice: they presented their policy as a way to keep blacks out of the territories, thus preserving the new lands for exclusive white occupancy.

b. Although passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act raised the territorial issue and gave birth to the Republican party, it was the turmoil associated with attempts to implement popular sovereignty in Kansas that kept the issue alive and enabled the Republicans to increase their following throughout the North and to become a strong second party by the election of 1856.

c. The sectional quarrel deepened and became virtually "irreconcilable" in the years between the Democrats' election of Buchanan in 1856 and the Republicans' victory with Lincoln in 1860.

1. A series of incidents provoked one side or the other, heightened the tension, and ultimately brought the crisis to a head.

2. Behind the panicky reaction to public events lay a growing sense that the North and South were so different in culture and so opposed in basic interests that they could no longer coexist in the same nation.