



Harry S. Truman



## Teaching Guide

### SEGMENT 5, WEBISODE 13

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



#### Segment Overview

In 1948, Harry Truman, who became President of the United States after the death in office of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, wrote: “If I had heeded the desire of my family, I would have made plans to leave the White House at the end of my first term.”

Nevertheless, Truman did run, believing that he had unfinished business to take care of, namely the programs established under Roosevelt as well as foreign security and the fight against communism. He wanted to maintain a “vigilant Democratic administration.”

Few people believed that Truman could or would win the election of 1948. First, Truman’s civil rights proposals angered many Southern Democrats, yet they could not imagine voting for Truman’s Republican opponent Thomas E. Dewey, the governor of New York. So they formed a new party called “The Dixiecrats.” Other Democrats thought that Truman was too hard on communism and that he should form a better relationship with Russian leader Joseph Stalin. Meanwhile, the campaign continued in full swing with Truman riding trains across the United States making whistlestops and giving speeches in small towns along the way. Dewey rode trains, too, but he did not put much effort into campaigning. Because everyone told him he would win, Dewey believed it too.

Everyone was wrong, including the *Chicago Tribune* a major national newspaper that ran a large banner headline that read: “Dewey Defeats Truman.” Even radio commentators like H.V. Kaltenborn announced on the morning of November 3, 1948, that Dewey would win. Although election results were broadcast on television for the first time, very few Americans had sets, and the election tallies came from the same sources used by radio stations. Truman fooled everyone, yet he was no “accidental president.” He won the campaign with hard work and direct appeals to the people of the United States.

#### Teacher Directions

1. Ask the students.

- How did Truman and Dewey get their messages to the people?
- Do you think it would be helpful for candidates today to use trains for campaign trips across the country? Why or why not?



#### Let's Discuss

Let's Discuss, Cont.

- In addition to giving speeches, how did the candidates use other media?
- What similarities do you see between the election of 1948 and the election of 2000? What differences?

2. Make sure the students understand the following points.

People depended on train travel during the 40s and 50s; air travel was still quite new and expensive. Many trains criss-crossed the United States at that time. Both men spoke from the back of the train, called the caboose. Train stations in small towns were friendly, busy places. Today, however, trains follow only certain, limited routes.

3. Discuss the limitations of the media at that time. Few people had television sets (election events and results were broadcast for the first time.)
4. Stress the limits of technology. Votes were counted by hand, not by information fed into computers. Members of the press were assigned to each candidate, rode on the train, and called in their stories by telephone or wire. All reporters wanted to scoop stories, which would then gain them and their papers national recognition. Slower presses limited newspapers. E-mail, of course, was unknown. Because he was expected to win, Dewey's train contained ninety-eight journalists compared to half that for Truman.
5. Most students will have some memory of the 2000 election. Initiate discussions either as a class or in teams regarding their memories gathered from television, parents, and teachers.
6. Discuss similarities and differences among the candidates in 1948 and 2000.

Thomas E. Dewey and Al Gore shared personalities that were similar. Both were dignified, well-educated attorneys, long accustomed to politics. Both were regarded as being a bit stuffy in front of the public. Both were expected to win.

Harry Truman and George W. Bush revealed more out-going and flamboyant personalities. Neither were attorneys. Both reached out to grass roots America.

Candidates in the 2000 election traveled by private planes and even helicopters. However, in both elections large groups of journalists followed the candidates.



### History Sleuth

#### Teacher Directions

1. Students read Joy Hakim's *All the People*, Chapter 1, "The Making of a President."
2. Using this reading, with books open, students work in teams to research the following questions. Students should have pens and paper handy to take notes on their findings.

Team One: What difficulties did Harry Truman face in his lifetime?

Team Two: Make a list of assets and qualities that a good president should have.

Team Three: Make a list describing Harry Truman's childhood and family life.

Team Four: After reading about his life, make a list of reasons why Truman's experiences helped him win the election.

3. As students work, visit each team making sure that all students are participating and writing their responses.
4. Students share their findings with the class by answering the questions that they researched. Stress the Truman family life component as character building.

#### Teacher Directions

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Quotes and the Candidates*.
2. Working in small teams or independently, students read the quotes and form their own opinions about:
  - The meaning of the quote
  - The connection to the Truman-Dewey campaign of 1948
  - How the quote can be applied today
  - How the quote can be applied to the students' lives



### What do you Think?



## Moving Toward Freedom

### Teacher Directions

1. Write the following quotation by Harry Truman on the board or chart paper.  
 “Our fifth (goal) is to achieve world peace based on principles of freedom and justice and the equality of all nations.”  
 Next to Truman’s statement write, “and all the people.”
2. Using Think-Write-Pair-Share (each student thinks about the task, writes a response, and then shares the written response with a partner), students list groups of people in the United States today or in the past who have been denied freedoms or been discriminated against.
3. Students read the Student Sheet: *Communist Leaders—Yesterday and Today* and list people throughout the world today or in the past who have been denied freedoms or have been discriminated against.
4. The class discusses one group presently enduring discrimination and what steps can be taken to help remedy the situation. Or, assign students in their teams the task of finding ways to remedy the discrimination directed toward one particular group. The teams report findings to the class as a whole.

**Note to the Teacher:** Using lessons from previous chapters in *A History of US* or from other sources, encourage students to broaden their lists with such examples as

- Black and Hispanic Americans.
- Indian Americans (from India)
- Native American Indians
- Women
- The elderly
- The physically challenged
- Russian, Yugoslavian, and Romanian peasants
- Students who march to the beat of different drummers
- And the list goes on....

### Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

**Language Arts** — Students write a list poem using the following directions. Using a sheet of lined notebook paper, students use the left hand margin and list one to four words or more (beginning with caps) thus finishing a complete declarative sentence, line by line, responding to the following prompt:

If I were the president of the United States, I would...

Never have to eat broccoli again.

Get to swim in the White House Pool.

Send all drug dealers to jail.

Make sure I never had spinach in my teeth before I appeared on television.



## Connections

Connections, Cont.

**Art** — Students draw their own political cartoons using crayons or colored pencils. Make sure that they use a ruler and a black ink marker to box in their creations. Students write captions for their cartoons.

**Music** — Harry Truman played the piano. He was from Missouri. Students find the music and lyrics for “The Missouri Waltz,” which he loved to play. Students write one stanza of their own lyrics celebrating their own state.

**Language Arts/Library/Internet** — Students research the lives of Bess Truman and Eleanor Roosevelt. Each student writes one paragraph about Bess; one paragraph about Eleanor; and one paragraph showing how the two were different or similar in their roles as the wives of presidents.

## Quotes and the Candidates The Election of 1948

*“If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”*

Harry S. Truman

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*“Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”*

Harry S. Truman quoting Mark Twain

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*“Mr. Truman’s time is short; his situation is hopeless. Frankly, he’s a gone goose.”*

Clare Booth Luce

\* \* \*

*“America’s future – like yours in Arizona—is still ahead of us.”*

Thomas E. Dewey

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*“Dewey Defeats Truman”*

Chicago Tribune, November 3, 1948

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*“Reports of my political death were greatly exaggerated.”*

Washington Post political cartoon caption

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*“The buck stops here.”*

Harry S. Truman

## ***Communist Leaders –Yesterday and Today***

### **Slobodan Milosevic**

Slobodan Milosevic, the former president and dictator of Yugoslavia, became involved in communist politics as a young man. He was born in 1941 in a small village, the son of a defrocked Serbian Orthodox priest. His mother was a schoolteacher, yet he lived in poverty in a small, unheated house. His parents were two very unhappy people who eventually separated. Both committed suicide. Slobodan eventually did achieve a law degree at Belgrade University. By then he was very active in the communist party. He also met and married Mirjana Markovic, who came from a very unhappy family. According to a news article written shortly after Milosevic's arrest in April 2001, both Mira and Slobodan, as they were called, were "made for each other." Together they stole millions of dollars from their impoverished country, allowed their country to be ravaged by war, controlled the media and the schools, and cared little that Yugoslavians had little to eat. Yet, Mira and Slobodan lived lavishly in private villas.

### **Nicolae Ceausescu**

Nicolae Ceausescu was born in 1918, the son of Romanian peasants. His father was an alcoholic who gave several of his children the same name because he was drunk each time he went to the birth registry in their small village. Nicolae completed only elementary school. As an adolescent he became active in the Young Communists' League, and during this time he met Elena Petrescu who was the daughter of poor peasants. Elena disliked school, failed most of her subjects, and went to work in the fields. Amazingly, after Nicolae and Elena rose to power during the 1960s, they took control of the school system and forced Romanian educators not only to write all textbooks from the communist point of view, but also presented themselves as highly educated individuals. Throughout the years of their rule, from 1965 to 1989, they squeezed the life out of the Romanian people by exporting almost all agricultural products; denying the people heat, fuel, and food; forbidding families to use birth control; and creating a force of secret police to maintain order. Even today, Romanian orphanages are full of unloved and unwanted children whose parents could not care for them. Not surprisingly, Nicolae and Elena lived very well. While their people were starving, they built enormous palaces and villas filled with gold, tapestries, and art. Finally, in December, 1989, the Romanian people had had enough. They revolted, first in small villages and then in Bucharest. The Ceausescus tried to escape by helicopter, but were arrested and executed.

### **Vladimir Lenin**

Vladimir Lenin was born in 1870 in a small Russian village where his father was a director of schools. His mother was a housewife. Both parents were considered highly educated, and they taught their children to fight against social injustice and for human rights. In time, Lenin became a free thinker involved in student revolutionary activities. He was arrested as a youth and exiled to Siberia. After graduating from St. Petersburg University in 1891, he formed The League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. He and his wife N.K. Krupskaya spent their lives writing about class struggles. He died in 1924 denouncing Stalin but unable to stop Stalin's rise to power.

### **Joseph Stalin**

Joseph Stalin was born in 1879, the son of a poor shoemaker. After briefly attending a religious seminary, he was expelled for taking part in illegal activities. He then joined a youth organization called The Social Democratic Organization. After participating in the revolutionary underground, he was exiled to Siberia. In 1922, Stalin became General Secretary of the Communist Party. During his tenure as leader of the Soviets, he established purges of people thought to be enemies of the state. In trying to industrialize Russia, he took control of all agricultural products, an act that resulted in the deaths of nearly a million peasants. They had no food. Stalin also took control of all newspapers and media. He was considered rude and aggressive. Stalin died in 1953 of a stroke.