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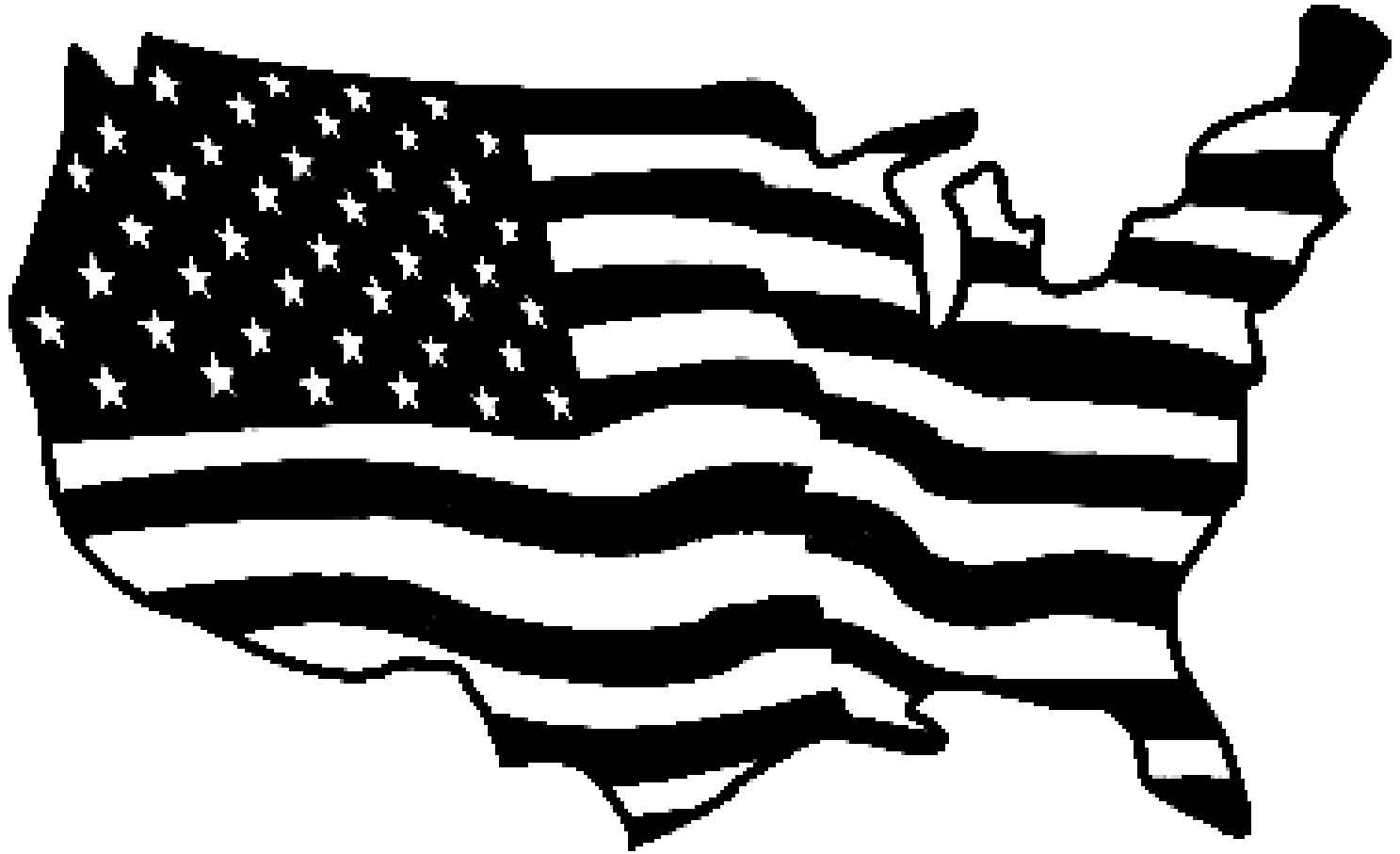
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i Think : U.S. History

21st Century Issues



by Sharon Coletti
and Kendra Corr

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Cover graphics by Sharon Coletti and Amy Hellen

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ISBN # 978-1-933558-20-2

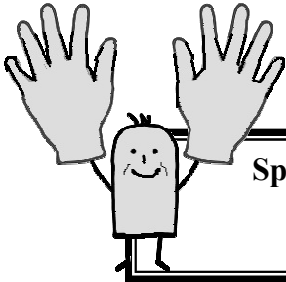
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Printed in the United States of America

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Knowing Your Left from Your Right

Springboard:

Students should read “A Look Back...” and answer the question.

(Answers may vary.)

Objective: The student will be able to describe liberal and conservative ideologies and give examples.

Materials: A Look Back at 20th Century Presidents (Springboard handout)
What Kind of Idea Is That? (2-page handout)
Where Do You Stand? (handout)

Terms to know: **progressive** - one who favors reforms
reforms - changes to improve conditions in society
trust - group of companies that work together to control prices and business in an industry
industry - all who make or sell a product or service
corporation - a company with its own legal rights and privileges separate from its members
ideology - bodies of ideas

Procedure:

- During discussion of the Springboard, make sure student(s) note the two political parties and explain that America actually has many political parties, some of which win elections. Even so, the government basically functions on a 2-party political system. Each is characterized by certain ideologies (review term) it represents: Democrats TEND TO BE more liberal, while Republicans TEND TO BE more conservative. Go on to explain that in this lesson the student(s) will learn about liberal and conservative ideologies.
- Distribute the “What Kind of Idea Is That?” handouts and review the directions. The student(s) should work individually, in pairs, or small groups to try to identify the positions.
- Review (odd number questions list the liberal view first and the conservative second; even numbers have conservative first and then liberal) and discuss what liberals and conservatives TEND TO think. *(Liberals usually favor government answers to social problems, education, separation of church and state, consumer and worker protection, aid to the poor and middle classes, etc. Conservatives tend to want small government, low taxes, business-friendly policies to spur the economy, a tough military and legal system, etc.)* Go on to explain that nothing in politics, however, is clear-cut or carved in stone! Views change and parties holding them can as well. Refer back to the Springboard and have the student(s) identify liberal Republican actions and conservative Democratic ones. *(Republicans, T. Roosevelt and W.H. Taft, acted as liberals likely would today, while Clinton reformed welfare and balanced the budget.)*
- Distribute “Where Do You Stand?” and review the directions. Have the student(s) complete the handout individually and then discuss where they tend to fit. *(Many students, as do many Americans, likely fall in the middle.)*

A Look Back at 20th Century Presidents

TERM	PRESIDENT	PARTY	“GREATEST” ACCOMPLISHMENTS *
1901-1909	Theodore Roosevelt	Rep.	A progressive who busted trusts; expanded public lands; increased U.S. influence abroad
1909-1913	William Howard Taft	Rep.	A progressive who signed many anti-trust laws; started taxing corporations
1913-1921	Woodrow Wilson	Dem.	Led the nation through World War I and formed the League of Nations
1921-1923	Warren Harding	Rep.	Worked out a global arms treaty in 1922
1923-1929	Calvin Coolidge	Rep.	Slashed federal taxes and spending; scaled down Germany’s required war payments
1929-1933	Herbert Hoover	Rep.	Introduced programs later copied by Roosevelt in his New Deal
1933-1945	Franklin D. Roosevelt	Dem.	Rescued nation from the Depression; led U.S. through World War II
1945-1953	Harry S. Truman	Dem.	Aided Europe after W.W. II; helped set up NATO; integrated armed forces
1953-1961	Dwight D. Eisenhower	Rep.	Quietly led the nation through a period of peace and prosperity
1961-1963	John F. Kennedy	Dem.	Defused the Cuban Missile Crisis; inspired Americans; established the Peace Corps
1963-1969	Lyndon Johnson	Dem.	Passed Medicare, Medicaid, Civil Rights Act, and Voting Rights Act
1969-1974	Richard Nixon	Rep.	Opened relations and talks with China and the Soviet Union
1974-1977	Gerald Ford	Rep.	Ended the “long nightmare” after Nixon resigned; pulled U.S. out of Vietnam
1977-1981	Jimmy Carter	Dem.	Helped work out peace agreement between Israel and Egypt
1981-1989	Ronald Reagan	Rep.	Confronted the Soviet threat; reduced American reliance on government
1989-1993	George H.W. Bush	Rep.	Organized international invasion to free Kuwait from Iraqi control in the Gulf War
1993-2001	Bill Clinton	Dem.	Balanced U.S. budget; economic prosperity; required work for welfare recipients

* As described in a 1998 historians’ survey by Time Magazine @ www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988154,00.html

Explain three things that can be learned from studying this chart:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What Kind of Idea Is That?



DIRECTIONS: For each numbered pair of statements, mark which you think represents the L - liberal viewpoint and which is the C - conservative position.

1. Government role:
☐ The role of government should be to improve the lives of citizens.
☐ Government should be limited only to those functions that impact everyone.
2. Religion:
☐ Prayer should be allowed in schools and public meetings, as people desire.
☐ America is founded on freedom of religion and separation of church and state.
3. Taxes:
☐ Taxes are necessary; they allow the government to run and provide services.
☐ Taxes are a necessary evil but should be kept as low as possible.
4. Taxing Americans:
☐ A flat tax should be charged so everyone pays an equal share.
☐ A graduated tax means people who can afford it should pay more.
5. Tax breaks:
☐ Tax breaks to middle and lower-class earners means more money to spend.
☐ Wealthy businesses and owners should get tax breaks to encourage hiring.
6. Guns:
☐ The Constitution guarantees the right for all people to bear arms.
☐ Guns pose a danger to society and laws should help control the threat.
7. School curriculum:
☐ School districts should make decisions about what is taught or read.
☐ Parents have the right to decide what their children read and study.
8. School choice:
☐ Parents should choose the schools their children attend, paid by their taxes.
☐ Taxes should only be used for public schools which all students can attend.
9. Freedom of speech:
☐ Freedom of speech, even if unpopular, must be protected under the law.
☐ Freedom of speech has limits; anything against the nation must be curtailed.
10. The poor:
☐ Private agencies and charities are responsible for the poor.
☐ Government is responsible for caring for the nation's poor.
11. Welfare:
☐ Provide job training and child care so people can get off welfare.
☐ End benefits after two years and limit payments to two children.
12. Reducing government debt:
☐ Cut funding to education and the arts.
☐ Cut spending for the armed forces.

13. Immigration:
___ America is a nation of immigrants and remains so today.
___ Immigration should be strictly controlled to protect Americans.
14. Privacy:
___ Privacy can be limited in cases of safety, security, or public decency.
___ The government has no right to violate an individual citizen's privacy.
15. Legal issues:
___ The legal system must be flexible so it can address the needs of individuals.
___ Tough laws like "three strikes and you're out" get criminals off the streets.
16. Juvenile law:
___ A violent child criminal should be treated like an adult in court.
___ Children may not always be able to decide right from wrong.
17. The death penalty:
___ The death penalty is "cruel and unusual" punishment and should be abolished.
___ Fear of the death penalty can help reduce murders and other serious crimes.
18. Legal cases against companies.:
___ There should be a cap on the amount juries can award injured parties.
___ The threat of large payouts helps keep companies, doctors, etc. honest.
19. Labor unions:
___ Labor unions play an important role in protecting American workers.
___ Labor union demands often cause jobs to be moved out of the U.S.
20. Striking workers:
___ Strikes hurt companies, so they should be able to replace striking workers.
___ Strikes are the best tool labor unions have in defending workers' rights.
21. Rules and regulations:
___ It's the government's job to ensure companies treat their customers fairly.
___ Tough government rules on business hurt the economy and can raise prices.
22. Fair treatment in the workplace:
___ Unfair practices of the past should not impact businesses and workers today.
___ Women and minorities need special consideration to "catch up" to white males.
23. Core values:
___ American values are based upon freedom and human rights.
___ Love of God, family, and country should guide the nation.
24. Foreign policy:
___ We should always work to serve American interests in the world.
___ We should promote democracy and human rights around the world.
25. America's role in the world:
___ America should work with the global community to address problems.
___ America must do whatever is needed to keep the nation safe and strong.



Where Do You Stand?

DIRECTIONS: Now that you know something about liberal and conservative views, where do you stand? Mark an X anywhere along the line to show your view of each issue numbered on the “What Kind of Idea Is That?” handout.

Liberal (or “the Left”)

Conservative (or “the Right”)

1.	←————→
2.	←————→
3.	←————→
4.	←————→
5.	←————→
6.	←————→
7.	←————→
8.	←————→
9.	←————→
10.	←————→
11.	←————→
12.	←————→
13.	←————→
14.	←————→
15.	←————→
16.	←————→
17.	←————→
18.	←————→
19.	←————→
20.	←————→
21.	←————→
22.	←————→
23.	←————→
24.	←————→
25.	←————→

Lean to the Left



Springboard:

Students should read “_____” and answer the questions.

Objective: The student will be able to describe some liberal and conservative policies of the Clinton presidency.

Materials: _____ (Springboard handout)
This President's Policies (2-page handout)

Terms to know:

- recession** - period of economic downturn with high unemployment, less spending and saving, and great hardship for many
- deficit** - debt
- policies** - government decisions and actions
- tariff** - tax paid on goods entering or leaving a country
- budget** - a plan for spending
- welfare** - money paid to poor people and others in need
- bipartisan** - proposed and / or supported by both Democrats and Republicans
- moderate** - favoring the “middle” in political ideology

Procedure:

- While reviewing the Springboard, explain that *in this lesson the student(s) will examine some policies enacted by President Bill Clinton, who served from 1993-2001.*
- Distribute “This President's Policies” and review the lesson terms. Then student(s) should work individually, in pairs, or small groups to read about each policy and complete the handout as directed.
- Student(s) should share / compare their ideas. (*Answers may vary somewhat, if justified, but deficit reduction, free trade, and limiting welfare are generally conservative approaches; the others would likely be viewed as more liberal.*)
Discuss the following questions in a follow-up discussion:
 - ? Based on what you now know, would you say Clinton was more of a liberal, conservative, or moderate, meaning middle-of-the-road? (*Answers may vary, though his policies did cross ideologies.*)
 - ? Why do you think a “liberal” Democrat would adopt “conservative” policies? (*Answers will vary, but this point is examined further in the next lesson.*)



“ _____ ”

If asked, many Americans would say William Jefferson Clinton was a "liberal" president. His term in office was sandwiched between George Herbert Walker Bush and his son, George W., two strong "conservatives." Yet the terms "liberal" and "conservative" can be misleading.

When Americans went to the polls to elect a president in 1992, the country was stuck in a deep economic recession. The federal **deficit** had spiraled out of control, as the U.S. borrowed more and more money. It was these conditions that allowed a relatively unknown governor from Arkansas to become the 42nd president of the United States. The "southern boy" from Hope, Arkansas, defeated the once-popular George Bush who, only two years earlier led the nation and its allies through the Gulf War to free Kuwait from Iraqi control.

Yet despite Bush's success, Clinton was able to take advantage of the public's hunger for economic recovery. He stressed his belief that a better economy would improve peoples' lives and strengthen American society. The economy was such an important issue that a Clinton advisor hung a sign at campaign headquarters that said, "It's the economy, stupid!" to keep everyone on message.

Once in office Clinton set to work on economic recovery and other issues. During his two terms, he signed a number of laws that might have been seen as "conservative" had a Republican held the White House. He sent U.S. forces to war-torn Bosnia and bombed Iraq when its leader halted U.N. inspections for nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. He also opened up international trade, launched a global campaign against drug trafficking, and more.

An appropriate title for this reading would be

- A. "Liberals and Conservatives: Who Are They Really?"
- B. "Bill Clinton: Not Your Average Liberal."
- C. "The Life of President William Jefferson Clinton."
- D. "Sandwiched between Conservatives."

Which inference can be made from the reading?

- A. Bill Clinton caused the economic recession in 1992.
- B. President Clinton grew up in the backwoods of Arkansas.
- C. The recession began after the Gulf War freed Kuwait.
- D. Candidate Clinton thought America's economy was "stupid."

The word "deficit" in the second paragraph refers to

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| A. political polls. | C. a spinning top. |
| B. the U.S. debt. | D. important issues. |

Based on the passage, Clinton could be described as

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| A. complex. | C. the best president. |
| B. unknown. | D. a Southern "redneck." |



“

Answers & Explanations

If asked, many Americans would say William Jefferson Clinton was a "liberal" president. His term in office was sandwiched between George Herbert Walker Bush and his son, George W., two strong "conservatives." Yet the terms "liberal" and "conservative" can be misleading.

When Americans went to the polls to elect a president in 1992, the country was stuck in a deep economic recession. The federal **deficit** had spiraled out of control, as the U.S. borrowed more and more money. It was these conditions that allowed a relatively unknown governor from Arkansas to become the 42nd president of the United States. The "southern boy" from Hope, Arkansas, defeated the once - popular George Bush who, only two years earlier led the nation and its allies through the Gulf War to free Kuwait from Iraqi control.

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An appropriate title for this reading would be

- A. "Liberals and Conservatives: Who Are They Really?"
- B. "Bill Clinton: Not Your Average Liberal." *
- C. "The Life of President William Jefferson Clinton."
- D. "Sandwiched between Conservatives."

(Choices A and C are too broad for the information, and D is a detail. The main idea of the reading is that much of what Clinton did was not all that "liberal.")

Which inference can be made from the reading?

- A. Bill Clinton caused the economic recession in 1992.
- B. President Clinton grew up in the backwoods of Arkansas.
- C. The recession began after the Gulf War freed Kuwait.*
- D. Candidate Clinton thought America's economy was "stupid."

(Choices A and D are false, and B cannot be determined. C is true, since the "once-popular" President Bush lost to Clinton because of the economic downturn.)

The word "deficit" in the second paragraph refers to

- A. political polls.
- B. the U.S. debt. *
- C. a spinning top.
- D. important issues.

(The sentence in which it's used says the U.S. "borrowed more and more money.")

Based on the passage, Clinton could be described as

- A. complex. *
- B. unknown.
- C. the best president.
- D. a Southern "redneck."

(He was complex because as a liberal, he took many conservative actions.)