

## Introduction

This unit emphasizes writing and critical thinking. There are basically three types of activities. The news stories, writing exercises and telegrams require students to evaluate, prioritize and write about historical events. They must actually **use** the information rather than just memorize it.

The chronology activity requires students to detect trends and draw conclusions.

The viewpoints and issues activities present different views of the same event rather than just the single view often presented in textbooks. The critical thinking exercises that accompany these units require students to evaluate information.

Many of the activities deal with popular news stories of the decade that are usually not covered in textbooks.

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### Creative Activities for Teaching Critical Thinking and Writing U.S. History: The 20th Century

There are nine units in this series.

SS140 1900's	SS144 1940's
SS141 1910's	SS145 1950's
SS142 1920's	SS146 1960's
SS143 1930's	SS147 1970's
SS148 1980's	

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The 1940's

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# 1940's Truman Viewpoints Questions

## Directions

Read both viewpoints on the following pages and answer the questions below.

## General questions for both viewpoints

1. Which viewpoint favors Harry Truman?
2. What evidence is used to indicate Truman was a good president?
3. Which viewpoint is critical of Truman?
4. What evidence is used to indicate Truman was not a good president?
5. What events and generalizations are mentioned in the favorable viewpoint that are not mentioned in the unfavorable viewpoint?
6. What events and generalizations are mentioned in the unfavorable viewpoint that are not mentioned in the favorable viewpoint?
7. Are there any events and generalizations which are agreed upon by both viewpoints? If any, what are they?

## Valid generalizations

Which statements are valid generalizations? A generalization is a conclusion based upon the facts. It may also include a value judgment or opinion. A valid generalization is supported by the facts. An invalid generalization is not supported by the facts and tends to be more of an opinion. Mark (V) for valid and (I) for invalid generalizations. Use (CT) if you can't tell.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Truman took some very unpopular actions.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Truman allowed the communists to take over.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Truman wanted to increase the power of the Federal government.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ Truman helped rebuild Europe.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ Truman was a strong anti-communist.

## Viewpoint A author's biases and assumptions

An assumption is something that is believed to be true without proof. Our values and beliefs influence our generalizations about things. This is called bias. Often an author's values and assumptions are not openly stated. Which statements would the author of Viewpoint A agree with? Mark an (A) for those that you think the author would agree with and a (D) for those you think the author would disagree with. Use (CT) if you can't tell.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Labor unions should not have too much power.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Federal government should not have too much power.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Republicans could have done a better job than Truman.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ Truman should have done more to help minorities.

Harry Truman took office just before the end of the war. Soon after the war Truman was faced by the same problems that Roosevelt faced in the Depression of the 1930's. Truman attempted to deal with the problems of unemployment and rising prices with the same methods of Roosevelt during the New Deal. However, Truman attempted to out-New Deal the New Deal. Truman's Fair Deal was a long step toward socialism.

Truman's Fair Deal introduced the idea of "socialized medicine." Every American was guaranteed free medical care. Truman even wanted to create government owned steel mills to compete with privately held steel mills. He also wanted to expand the Tennessee Valley Authority to every major river basin in the country. The TVA built publicly owned power plants to compete with privately held utilities. Truman was unable to persuade Congress to pass his Fair Deal proposals.

Truman's desire to increase the control of the Federal government over the economy was evident in his method of handling strikes in crucial industries. He had the federal government seize control of the coal mines in 1947 and it was the federal government that negotiated a contract with the United Mine Workers Union giving the miner's union almost everything it wanted.

Truman was unable to manage the economy during the post-war years. Inflation climbed rapidly. Labor strife reached its high point in 1946. By the end of January 1946 at least 1,650,000 workers were on strike and at least twice that number were out of work because of the strikes.

The public demanded an end to the power of labor. Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act which curtailed the irresponsible use of the strike by unions. Truman vetoed the bill and Congress easily overrode the veto. Truman's popularity plummeted.

In battling communism abroad and at home Truman also failed. The Soviet Union

cemented its control over eastern European countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia. In China the communists took control in 1949 as Truman withdrew military support of the anti-communist government.

At home it was discovered that a Soviet spy ring passed A-bomb secrets to the Russians. The spies were caught and convicted.

Truman was not given much of a chance of winning the election in 1948. He was one of the most unpopular presidents in history. The Republicans were over-confident and did not campaign as hard as Truman. Truman won reelection by the narrowest margin since 1916.

Truman's troubles did not end. It was revealed by the House Un-American Activities Committee that a high State Department official, Alger Hiss, was a communist and had leaked secrets to the Soviets. Hiss was convicted for perjury before a grand jury and sentenced to prison. Many felt that Truman did not do enough to rid the government of communists and communist sympathizers.

The Korean War did nothing to improve Truman's popularity. While he acted quickly to stop communist aggression in Korea, Truman limited the ability of the American military to fight the war. When the Chinese communists entered the war in the winter of 1950, Truman refused to allow General MacArthur to bomb Chinese military bases in China.

The Republicans easily won the election of 1952 defeating another Democratic liberal, Adlai Stevenson.

### Questions

1. What is the main point of the article?
2. What evidence does the author use to support her point?