

1990's

Introduction

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

The chronology and data analysis activities require 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 by textbooks. The critical thinking exercises that accompany these units require the students to evaluate the information.

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

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

There are ten units in this series.

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Directions

Below are some of the major events of the 1990's. Read them carefully, and, using the clues offered, arrange them in chronological order beginning with the earliest.

A. The Congressional Republicans were determined to impeach Bill Clinton. Even though he had only two more years to serve, the House drew up articles of impeachment and the Senate found Clinton not guilty.

B. In spite of Clinton's success early in his first term in getting NAFTA passed, the Republicans took control of Congress in the next election.

C. In retaliation for the bombing of U.S. embassies, Clinton ordered cruise missile attacks on Osama bin Laden's camps in Sudan and Afghanistan. Republicans accused Clinton of trying to divert attention from his impeachment trial.

D. Even though the Republicans controlled Congress, Clinton was re-elected for his second term.

E. Clinton takes action early in his first term on the economy by getting spending cuts and a tax increase passed by Congress.

F. U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed by followers of Osama bin Laden in Clinton's second term.

G. Clinton's first term ends on a low note. Lack of agreement between Republicans and Clinton forces a government shut-down.

H. Governor Bush of Texas defeats Al Gore in a hotly contested election for president.

I. Towards the end of his term President Bush sends troops to Somalia to protect food shipments.

J. Soon after Clinton takes office in his first term 18 U.S. soldiers are killed in Somalia. A few weeks later Clinton achieves success when NAFTA passes.

Answers

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Directions

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

General questions for both viewpoints

1. Which viewpoint favors Bill Clinton?
2. What evidence is used to indicate Clinton was a good president?
3. Which viewpoint(s) is critical of Clinton?
4. What evidence is used to indicate Clinton was not a good president?
5. What events 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 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 on 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 an invalid generalization. Use (CT) if you can't tell.

1. _____ Clinton was very popular.
2. _____ Republicans hindered Clinton by attacking him for his personal problems.
3. _____ Republicans were opposed to Clinton's economic program.

4. _____ Clinton helped the poor.
5. _____ The economy improved under Clinton.

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. _____ A good government attempts to protect the environment.
2. _____ It is good to have minorities and women in government.
3. _____ Having a prosperous economy is desirable even if not everyone benefits.
4. _____ The U.S. should be strong militarily.
5. _____ It is OK for a country to go into debt.

Emotional words

Certain words are used to influence the reader's feelings or show the author's biases. Identify these words in the statements below. Underline the words or phrases.

1. _____ Clinton brought prosperity to America.
2. _____ Clinton was an immoral liar.
3. _____ Clinton balanced the budget and produced a surplus to pay the country's debt.

When Bill Clinton was elected president in 1992 he offered the public a different type of policy from the traditional Democratic policy of helping the "working man" and minorities. Democrats had been losing ground in presidential elections for some time. Since the election of 1968 only one Democrat, Jimmy Carter, had occupied the White House and that for only one term.

Clinton was among a group of Democrats who saw the need to promote policies that benefited the middle class and promoted business and fiscal responsibility. These were "New" or "Centrist" Democrats.

Clinton was elected with only 43% of the vote. Ross Perot, who was highly critical of free trade collected almost 20% of the vote. Both Clinton and his opponent, George Herbert Walker Bush, favored free trade. The Democrats still enjoyed majorities in both the House and the Senate, though their majorities had been steadily declining. Congress had 58 Democratic senators and 258 Democratic representatives.

Clinton got off on the wrong foot. There were several standard liberal issues that had been vetoed by the previous president. The Family and Medical Leave Act required businesses to give up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for family emergencies. The Handgun Waiting Period Law, or "Brady Law," was also passed. Clinton got into trouble when he banned discrimination against homosexuals in the military by executive order. Many people complained. To prevent his executive order from being overridden he entered into negotiations. The result was the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. To those favoring homosexual rights and those opposed, this signalled a weakness in Clinton's leadership.

Another failure was Clinton's effort to reform the health program. Government medical costs rose in Medicare and Medic-

aid, programs that started with Lyndon Johnson in the 1960's. In 1971 medicine represented 9% of the federal budget. By 1991 it was 21%. Clinton appointed his wife to head a committee to produce a comprehensive reform in healthcare. The committee met in secret to avoid the influence of the various interest groups. They produced a huge report and the whole effort was roundly ridiculed.

Clinton also had difficulty in getting Congress to pass his economic program. Clinton had an economic stimulus program and a deficit reduction program. Clinton's stimulus package required spending \$30 billion to create 500,000 new jobs. Another \$230 billion was to be spent in tax breaks and spending to improve highways and bridges. The Republicans opposed and managed to defeat the stimulus package.

Clinton was more successful with his deficit reduction package. His goal was to reduce the deficit by \$704 billion by cutting spending by \$375 billion, and raising \$328 billion in tax increases. Republicans opposed tax increases. However, a compromise package of \$255 billion in spending cuts and \$241 billion was passed by a narrow margin. Clinton's program passed the House with 218-216 and the Senate 51 to 50.

Clinton enjoyed success with his crime and welfare proposals. During his 1992 campaign Clinton promised to put 100,000 new policemen on the street. Congress passed his proposal in 1993. Clinton proposed in the campaign that he would abolish welfare as we know it. His goal in welfare was to transfer people from welfare to work.

Clinton's second term was plagued by scandals and his impeachment. However, the economy flourished as jobs increased and the stock market soared.

In 1992 Bill Clinton was elected President. He proved to be one of the worst presidents of the century. He was elected by only 43% of the people. A third party candidate, Ross Perot, took 19% of the vote. Those 19% would have voted for George Bush if Perot had not been running. Clinton already had a questionable reputation as governor in Arkansas. He was a notorious womanizer. He and his wife used their positions to make money in the infamous Whitewater Fraud.

When he became president he appointed his wife, the liberal Hillary Clinton, to be in charge of health care reform. She appointed a secret commission to create a government-run health program. The commission finally produced a 1,300 page report that was soundly rejected by Congress.

One of Clinton's first moves was to pay off his homosexual supporters. He approved of allowing homosexuals in the military. There was a huge cry of protest from the military. Finally Clinton modified his executive order to "Don't Ask-Don't Tell." This meant the military could not ask a soldier if he or she were homosexual and soldiers should not tell about their sexual preferences.

Meanwhile Clinton asked Congress to pass his economic package of spending and tax increases. The Republicans managed to reject his "pork barrel" spending proposals. His tax increase passed by just a few votes. Clinton's free trade proposal, the North American Free Trade Association, was passed with the support of Republicans who believe in free trade. After the first two years Clinton had accomplished little. He offended many labor Democrats with his free trade proposal and many conservative Democrats with his pandering to homosexuals.

In 1994 the Republicans took control of Congress. The Republican Speaker was Newt Gingrich. Gingrich was a fire-brand conservative from Georgia. He produced a ten-point plan which he called the "Contract With America." Its basic points included a stronger military, a balanced budget, and lower taxes.

Democrats agreed with Republicans by adopting a "Pay-go" provision for all tax and spending bills. Pay-go means that you have to identify the source of money for a program and what programs you will reduce to balance the budget. This enabled the government to balance the budget. The balancing of the budget allowed the government to run a surplus.

Clinton's second term was dominated by scandal. Ken Starr, a special counsel appointed by Clinton's own Attorney General, began investigating the Whitewater scandal. Soon he was investigating Paula Jones' accusations that Bill Clinton sexually harassed her. The investigation expanded even further when a White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, revealed that she had a sexual relationship with Clinton. Clinton lied about this to the public.

The House prepared impeachment charges which were sent to the Senate. The Senate found Clinton not guilty of the impeachment charges on a party line vote. The Democrats voted to protect Clinton.

Clinton could not run for reelection. Vice president Gore ran against George W. Bush. The American public was disappointed with the immorality of the Clintons and elected George Bush president.

For many Americans the Democrats and the Republicans failed the American people during the 1990's. Republicans moved increasingly to the right. They were opposed to taxes and did not care about any social programs that benefited the poor. The Republican Party had increasingly fallen into the clutches of corporations. Corporations had become increasingly multinational. Profits and appeasing shareholders became more important than maintaining jobs in America.

Under the leadership of Clinton's Centrist Democrats the Democratic Party became more beholden to corporate interests. In fact, the Democrats co-opted the old Republican positions. The Democrats pressed for a balanced budget. The Democrats also pushed for welfare reform. Clinton claimed victories in promoting free trade through NAFTA and the World Trade Organization. The Republicans were left without a program. Clinton took their positions and Congress passed them. The only thing left for Republicans to do was to attack Clinton personally, and Clinton gave them plenty of opportunity to do that.

The needs of Americans were neglected during the 1990's. In the area of medical reform Clinton's health plan was a disaster. The Republicans did not offer one of their own but simply criticized Clinton's. While there was an increase in jobs during the 1990's and the economy flourished, high-paying manufacturing jobs went overseas. Little was done to improve the lives of American working people. Voices began to speak up in protest. One was Ross Perot.

Ross Perot, a millionaire businessman, financed the formation of the Reform Party. Perot ran as a third party candidate in 1992. He gained 19% of the vote.

Perot's chief complaint was free trade. He ardently opposed NAFTA saying that it would "suck" jobs out of the United



Ross Perot

States. He had plenty of support from labor unions who opposed NAFTA and conservative Republicans who did not like "globalization."

The Green Party was another growing phenomenon in the 90's. It was opposed to corporate power and greed. The Green Party favored strict limits on campaign financing, claiming that "big money" controlled politics. It also favored more gasoline-efficient cars and increasing reliance on alternative fuels. It also opposed free trade with countries which did not provide environmental protections and the right of workers to organize unions.