



## Harry Truman | Lesson Plan

What difficult decisions did Harry Truman make during his presidency and how did these decisions shape the course of American history?

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Students will understand how Harry S. Truman made crucial decisions during some of the most challenging periods in U.S. history, including the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War, and how his leadership helped shape the modern world.

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify the key life events of Harry S. Truman.
- Explain how Truman's decisions during his presidency impacted the United States and the world.
- Compare the key hardships and achievements of Harry S. Truman that defined his presidency.
- Evaluate Truman's leadership style and decisions, especially his approach to ending World War II and combating the spread of communism during the Cold War.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Cold War:** The conflict between America and the Soviet Union, characterized by political tension and threats of war.
- **Atomic Bomb:** A powerful weapon used by the U.S. to force Japan's surrender in World War II.
- **Communism:** A political and economic system where the government controls all property and resources.
- **Dictatorship:** A government system where a single leader or group holds absolute power.
- **Stalemate:** A situation in a conflict where neither side can secure a decisive victory.
- **Marshall Plan:** A U.S. initiative to help rebuild European economies after World War II to prevent the spread of communism.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2

**Academic Subject Areas:** Biography, U.S. Presidents, Historical Figures

### What You'll Need

- Video: *Guess or Mess: Harry S. Truman* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Guess or Mess: Harry S. Truman* (Click [Here](#))
- PragerU Kids biographical book: *Harry S. Truman* (Download [Here](#))
- Large paper or poster board for each group, along with markers



Scan to watch episode:

## **Lesson Plan: Read and Discuss (60 minutes)**

### **Introduction to Truman: (5 minutes)**

1. Begin with a brief discussion about U.S. presidents and the qualities that make a great leader. Ask students if they know any presidents who were known for making tough decisions during difficult times.
2. Display the Harry S. Truman digital book using an electronic device. Briefly highlight Truman's significance as the 33rd president, his leadership during the end of World War II, and his role in the beginning of the Cold War. Show images from the digital book to give a visual overview of his life and achievements.

### **Truman History Huddle: (25 minutes)**

1. Read the "Meet Harry S. Truman" section together as a class, with the teacher leading this page to model fluent reading and set the tone for the lesson.
2. After completing the teacher-led reading, explain that students will now explore other key aspects of Truman's life in small groups.
3. Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different section of the digital book to explore:
  - Group 1: Young Harry, Early Career
  - Group 2: Rise to Power, Senator to Vice President
  - Group 3: Truman as President, End of World War II
  - Group 4: The Cold War Begins, Truman's Policies
  - Group 5: The Marshall Plan and Korean War
  - Group 6: Legacy and Retirement
4. Allow time for each group to read their assigned section, taking turns reading aloud. As students read, they should discuss the main ideas.
5. Provide each group with a large piece of paper or poster board and markers to write down key points and any interesting facts or quotes they find.
6. Allow each group one to two minutes to present their findings to the class. After each presentation, provide time for classmates to ask questions and discuss the content.

### **Worksheet Workshop: (15 minutes)**

1. Hand out individual copies of the worksheet to each student. Explain how to fill out each section of the worksheet with these instructions:
2. **Timeline:** Students should select key dates and events mentioned throughout the digital book. The following are recommendations, but the teacher and students can use many other dates mentioned in the book:
  - 1884 - Birth of Harry S. Truman
  - 1945 - Becomes President, End of World War II
  - 1947 - Start of the Cold War
  - 1952 - End of Truman's Presidency
  - 1972 - Death of Harry S. Truman

3. **Interesting Quote:** Have students choose a meaningful quote from the book to fill in the quote section on their worksheet.
4. **Interesting Fact:** Ask students to select an interesting fact about Harry S. Truman that stood out to them and write it in the space provided.
5. **Vocabulary Builder:** Instruct students to choose a word from the glossary and use it in a sentence that conveys its meaning.
6. **Multiple Choice:** Explain that students should complete the multiple-choice section of the worksheet individually. (Note: The multiple-choice section corresponds to the *Guess or Mess* episode about Harry S. Truman and can also be used to play along while watching. See “Extension Activity” below.)

### **Reflection Round-Up: (10 minutes)**

1. Briefly summarize the key points covered about Harry S. Truman, focusing on his life, presidency, and legacy.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to recall one fact about Harry S. Truman and share it with a partner. Encourage them to discuss why that fact was significant.
3. Give each student a sticky note or index card and ask them to answer one of these three sample reflection questions:
  - What did you find most interesting about Harry S. Truman?
  - How do you think his presidency impacted the United States and the world?
  - Can you think of a modern issue that relates to something Truman dealt with?
4. **Bonus Activities:** If time allows, let students complete the puzzle on page 2 by finding hidden letters throughout the book. They can also explore and engage with other interactive activities included in the book.

### **Extension Activity: (20 minutes)**

*Guess or Mess* Trivia Show: After the lesson, students can participate in the *Guess or Mess* trivia show for Harry S. Truman—direct students to the multiple-choice section of the worksheet. Students can play along with the contestants to see if they can answer the trivia questions correctly.

### **PragerU 5-Minute Videos:**

Did you know that PragerU has a comprehensive video catalog of U.S. Presidents in an easy-to-watch 5-minute format? Enhance this lesson plan with one of our insightful, engaging, and educational videos, which provide students with a deeper dive into the lives and legacies of America’s leaders. To view *Harry Truman: Dropping the Bomb*, click [here](#), and *Harry Truman: Containing Communism*, click [here](#).

### **Don’t have time for a full lesson? Quick Activity (30 minutes)**

Read the *Harry S. Truman* book together as a class, with students taking turns reading aloud. Then, watch the *Guess or Mess* video and play along with the trivia questions.