

## The Election of 1948 Lesson Procedures

What was the biggest factor in President Truman successfully winning the election of 1948?  
Was it due to his campaign strategy, the failure of his opposition, or public support for his actions of 1948?



### Lesson Procedures

#### Step 1: Hook

1. Project the “Pre-election Poll” for students to look at. Ask them to make a prediction about who won the election and what percentage of the results each candidate received. Have the students discuss with a partner, and then discuss the results as a class.
2. Give students a copy of the “Letter from Lucille”. Have students read the letter to themselves and make a list of questions that they have about the letter and the results of the election.

#### Step 2: Background

- Give students a copy of the background essay to read to get a general idea about the election of 1948.
- Select one of the videos from this list to use as a general explanation about the election of 1948.

#### [Election of 1948 - Hip Hughes History](#)

Keith Hughes’ explanation of the 1948 Presidential Election (13:40)

#### [Truman Story](#)

The Truman Story. Video produced for the campaign; Dewey had one also. Addresses Truman’s civilian background, military background, and presidential decisions, such as the Marshall Plan, Civil Rights, etc. (9:29)

#### [Dewey Story](#)

The Dewey Story. Video produced for the campaign; Truman had one also. Addresses Dewey’s personal background, as well as his political and legal history. (8:20)

## [Truman Beats Dewey](#)

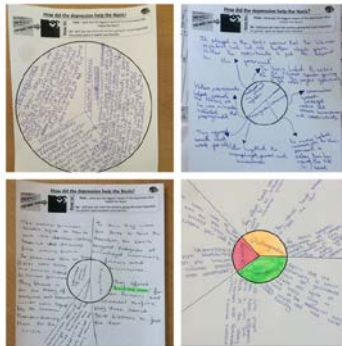
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It was a presidential election the polls and press got wrong. “Dewey Defeats Truman” read the November 2, 1948, Chicago Tribune newspaper headline. Republican New York Governor Thomas Dewey was on a clear path to victory against the unpopular President Harry Truman. But unbeknownst to those who thought Dewey had it in the bag, Truman’s whistle stop tour weeks before the election gained momentum and delivered enough votes to win. (6:31)

## [Our World 1948](#)

This is part 4 of a 4 part series that was televised in 1987. This episode examines major events in 1948. Note to teacher - the episode begins with a speech by Strom Thurmond in which he uses the “n” word repeatedly, please be aware and edit as needed. (9:59)

**Step 3: Essential Question** - What was the biggest factor in President Truman successfully winning the election of 1948? Discuss the essential question and explain that results are not usually based on just one factor. Perhaps relate this to the student’s decision of clothing they wore today. What factors did they consider when making that choice? (what was clean, what other students would find appropriate, what the school would allow, what they would be comfortable in) Use the “Pie chart Analysis” to show that their decision of clothing probably had several factors.



**Step 4: Sources** (Suggest that documents be handed out individually and not as a packet)

1. Give students Source 1 - Point out to students the sourcing information. Give students time to read the source. Teacher should then model how to annotate the source using the following code: TCS = Truman’s Campaign Strategy, OC = Opposition Candidates, PS = Public support (Suggest that students highlight small sections of strong text to support the factors.)
2. Students should then look at the rest of the sources, annotating using the same code, highlighting, and annotating.

**Step 5: Graphic organizer**

After reading all sources students should complete the Pie Chart Analysis which is found in the Original Documents folder.

**Step 6: Group discussion** - hold a class discussion about the essential question. Discussion could be held in different ways:

- ❖ Divide students into small groups and let them compare their graphic organizers. Let each student defend their answer to the essential questions using text based evidence.
- ❖ Label three walls in the classroom with the three factors which could explain Truman's victory. (Truman's campaign strategy, failure of opposing candidates, or public support for his actions of 1948) Have students go to the wall that they believe was the MOST influential in Truman's victory in the election of 1948. Then, students can discuss their reasons for moving to that wall.

### **Step 7: Student outcome**

1. Students will create a pie chart analysis which answers the essential question "What was the biggest factor in President Truman successfully winning the election of 1948? Was it due to his campaign strategy, the failure of his opposition, or public support for his actions of 1948?"

### **Additional Student Outcomes:**

1. Write a claim - Students should write a claim addressing the essential question, using text based support from multiple sources as evidence. Students should cite sources used. At the end of this step students should have the information they need to write a thesis or a claim.
2. Allow students to use the RAFT format, guiding them to select some or all of the following variables for student writing: Role, Audience, Format, Topic. Example:
  - a. Students becomes a reporter (role), writing an opinion article (format), for the K.C. Star (audience), addressing the reason for Truman's victory. (topic)
3. Direct students to write an argumentative essay based on the essential question.
4. Ask students to evaluate the documents provided in the activity, ranking the usefulness of each in answering the essential question.
5. Have students research to discover additional details about the people involved in Truman's success, and then report to the class.
6. Facilitate a more open socratic seminar using framing questions to allow students to share their thinking on the topic.
7. Have students research current polling data related to presidential elections. What conclusions can they draw that might help predict the outcome of a future election?