

**Theme:** How did Truman's past prepare him for the Presidency?

**Gallery:** Area 3a (early life)

**Significant topics to cover**

1. Childhood, education, family
2. Farming
3. Early jobs

**Artifacts to be highlighted**

Letters to Bess  
School pennant and books  
Farming tools

**People to be highlighted**

Parents, grandparents, Bess

**Historical context and anecdotes**

Family history  
Dating Bess  
Early education and jobs  
Earliest memory  
Glasses, reading books

**Addressing the theme and questions**

His education and his love of reading gave him a love of history. It can be argued this prepared him for the future as he was very familiar with presidents and other world leaders and their decisions.

His farming experience was useful in his 1948 election campaign

He had no college degree and was self-educated, was he fully prepared for the presidency?

Did his ordinary background make him more appealing or less appealing to voters?

He did not have a college degree but he was a great reader of history. How did this help or hinder him in the future?

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**Gallery:** Area 3b (World War I)

**Significant topics to cover**

1. Leadership
2. Volunteerism
3. Camaraderie

**Artifacts to be highlighted**

ID card  
Army issued uniform  
Truman photos  
Letters home

**People to be highlighted**

Bess (letters home)  
Eddie Jacobson (canteen)  
Pendergast family introduction

**Historical context and anecdotes**

World War I background  
Areas of France Truman encountered  
Story of his glasses/receipt in New York before leaving for France  
Battle of Who Run?

**Addressing the theme and questions**

Leadership in World War I gave him confidence in himself and that he could lead others.

How did his World War I experience prepare him for the presidency?

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**Gallery:** Area 3c (Soldier to VP)

**Significant topics to cover**

1. Haberdashery
2. County judge
3. Senator

**Artifacts to be highlighted**

Haberdashery display

Margaret's toys

Long hand notes about Pendergast, corruption

**People to be highlighted**

Bess (and Margaret's birth)

Eddie Jacobson

Pendergast family

FDR

**Historical context and anecdotes**

Rise from haberdashery to VP - 1919 to 1944/5

Failed business

Elected official

Road building

Courthouses

Truman Committee

Democrat convention 1944

World War II timeline

**Addressing the theme and questions**

Wide ranging experiences from owning a business, county politics, raising a family, representing his home state in the Senate gave him an insight into different people's lives and their experiences

How did this range of experiences prepare him for the presidency?

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**Gallery:** Area 4 - First four months and Atomic Bomb

**Significant topics to cover**

1. German surrender
2. United Nations
3. Potsdam Conference/Test in New Mexico
4. Atomic Bomb Decision

**Artifacts to be highlighted**

1. Safety plug
2. Paper crane

**People to be highlighted**

Stimson  
Stalin, Churchill  
Sadako

**Historical context and anecdotes**

Potsdam conference and successful test  
Conversations with Churchill and Stalin about the bomb  
Letters home to Bess  
Decision to use the bomb  
Lack of preparation – only 82 days as VP and met FDR only twice

**Addressing the theme and questions**

Did the past prepare him for this momentous decision?  
Could anyone be prepared for this?

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**Gallery:** Area 5 – Post war world

**Significant topics to cover**

1. Japan surrender
2. World in disarray
3. Truman's solutions

**Artifacts to be highlighted**

1. Exhibits on Truman Doctrine, Marshall plan and Berlin
2. Cold War video theater

**People to be highlighted**

Stalin

People (US and globally)

Marshall, Acheson

**Historical context and anecdotes**

Cold War, UN and NATO

Truman Doctrine - Opposed to communism

Marshall Plan

Berlin airlift - Rebuilding Europe was paramount and set US on a different course of foreign policy

Domestic issues (strikes, reconversion)

**Addressing the theme and questions?**

Past experiences

Truman believed in the UN and felt it could provide peace (had seen failure of League of Nations)

As a veteran he sympathized with GIs coming home and needing work

Did Truman learn from Wilson and post WWI treatment of Germany?

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**Gallery:** Area 6 – Israel

**Significant topics to cover**

1. Recognition of Israel
2. Disagreement in his own cabinet
3. Pressure from both sides

**Artifacts to be highlighted**

1. Torah, scroll
2. Silver piano?

**People to be highlighted**

Eddie Jacobson  
Chaim Weizmann

**Historical context and anecdotes**

Background of Palestine situation back to World War I and Balfour Declaration  
(There is a timeline in the display)

**Addressing the theme and questions?**

How did Truman's relationship with Eddie Jacobson influence his thinking?  
How did Truman's religious background influence his decision?

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**Gallery:** Area 7 – Civil Rights and 1948 Election

**Significant topics to cover**

1. Civil Rights program and decisions
2. Election campaign and victory

**Artifacts to be highlighted**

1. Campaign items
2. Rockwell painting/ 48 Campaign video
3. Civil Rights letters/video

**People to be highlighted**

Family on campaign trail

Isaac Woodard

Dewey

80<sup>th</sup> Congress

**Historical context and anecdotes**

The greatest upset in election history?

Role of Civil Rights in an election year

**Addressing the theme and questions?**

How did Truman use his past to help him in the campaign (military service, farming, business owner)

How did he tailor his speeches for his audience?

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**Gallery:** Area 8 – Second term, Red Scare and Korean War

**Significant topics to cover**

1. McCarthyism
2. Korean War
3. Firing of MacArthur

**Artifacts to be highlighted**

1. Korean War materials
2. Banning letter and Purple Heart

**People to be highlighted**

McCarthy  
MacArthur  
Ridgeway

**Historical context and anecdotes**

Background on Red Scare, HUAC, Korean War

**Addressing the theme and questions?**

Did Truman's experience fighting on the ground in France make him reluctant to commit troops into Korea?

How did past experiences inform his decision?

Why did he fire MacArthur? How did this reflect his views on the presidency?

**Additional highlights to cover the theme**

Oval Office - look at symbol of presidency where the decisions are made

Working Office - legacy of Truman

Grave site - legacy of Truman