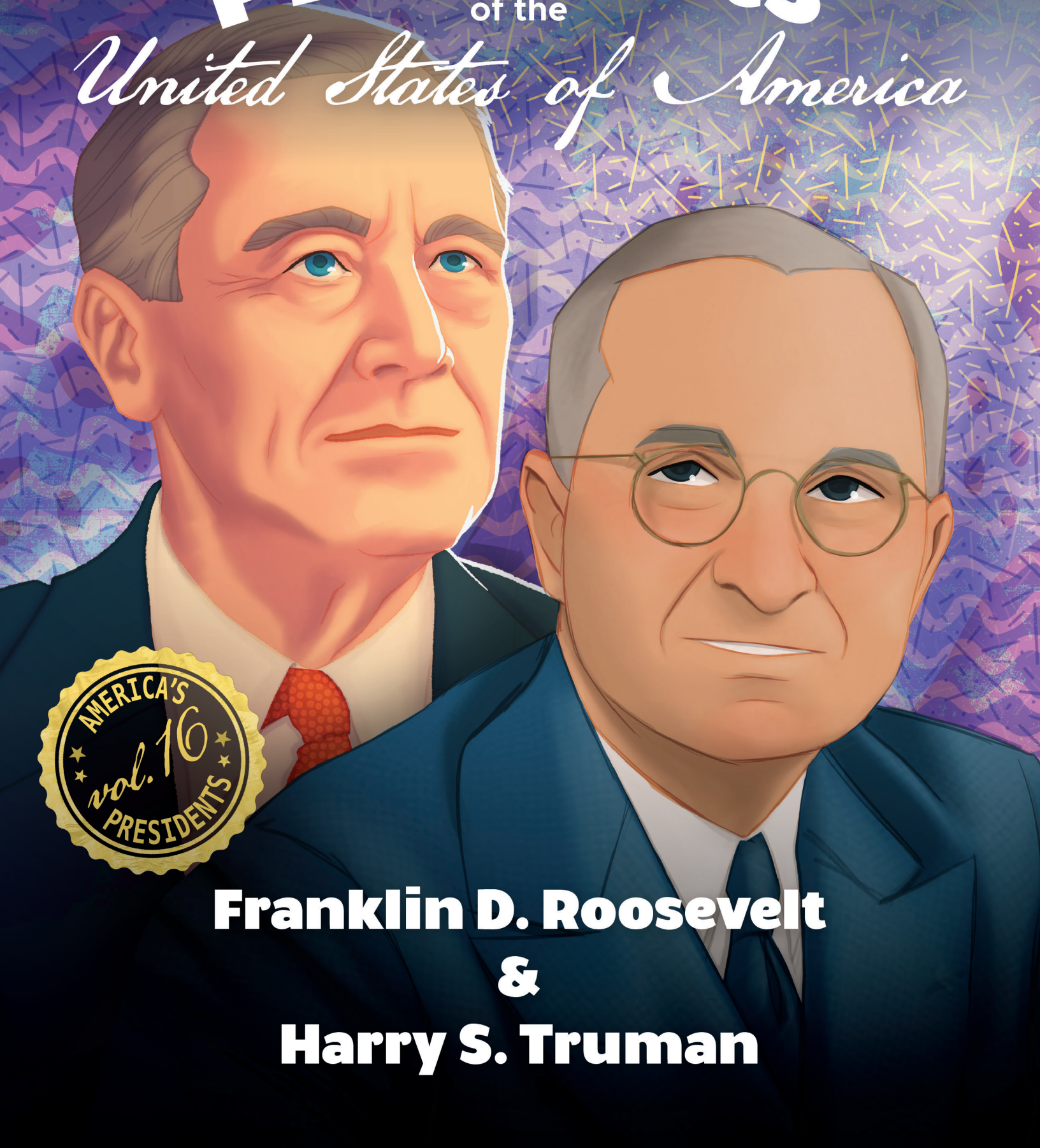


presidents of the *United States of America*



Franklin D. Roosevelt
&
Harry S. Truman



PragerU is redefining how people think about media and education. Watched millions of times every day, PragerU is the world's leading nonprofit with educational, entertaining, pro-American videos for every age. From intellectual, fact-based 5-Minute Videos and powerful personal storytelling to animated shows made just for kids—PragerU helps people of all ages think and live better.

PragerU Kids teaches history, civics, financial literacy, and American values to children across the K-12th grade spectrum. With kids shows, books, and educational resources for every grade, PragerU Kids offers content that parents and teachers trust and children love. Watch for free and learn more at PragerUkids.com.

All text and illustrations Copyright © 2024 Prager University Foundation.

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

PragerU is a registered trademark of Prager University Foundation.

Published by PragerU

15021 Ventura Boulevard #552

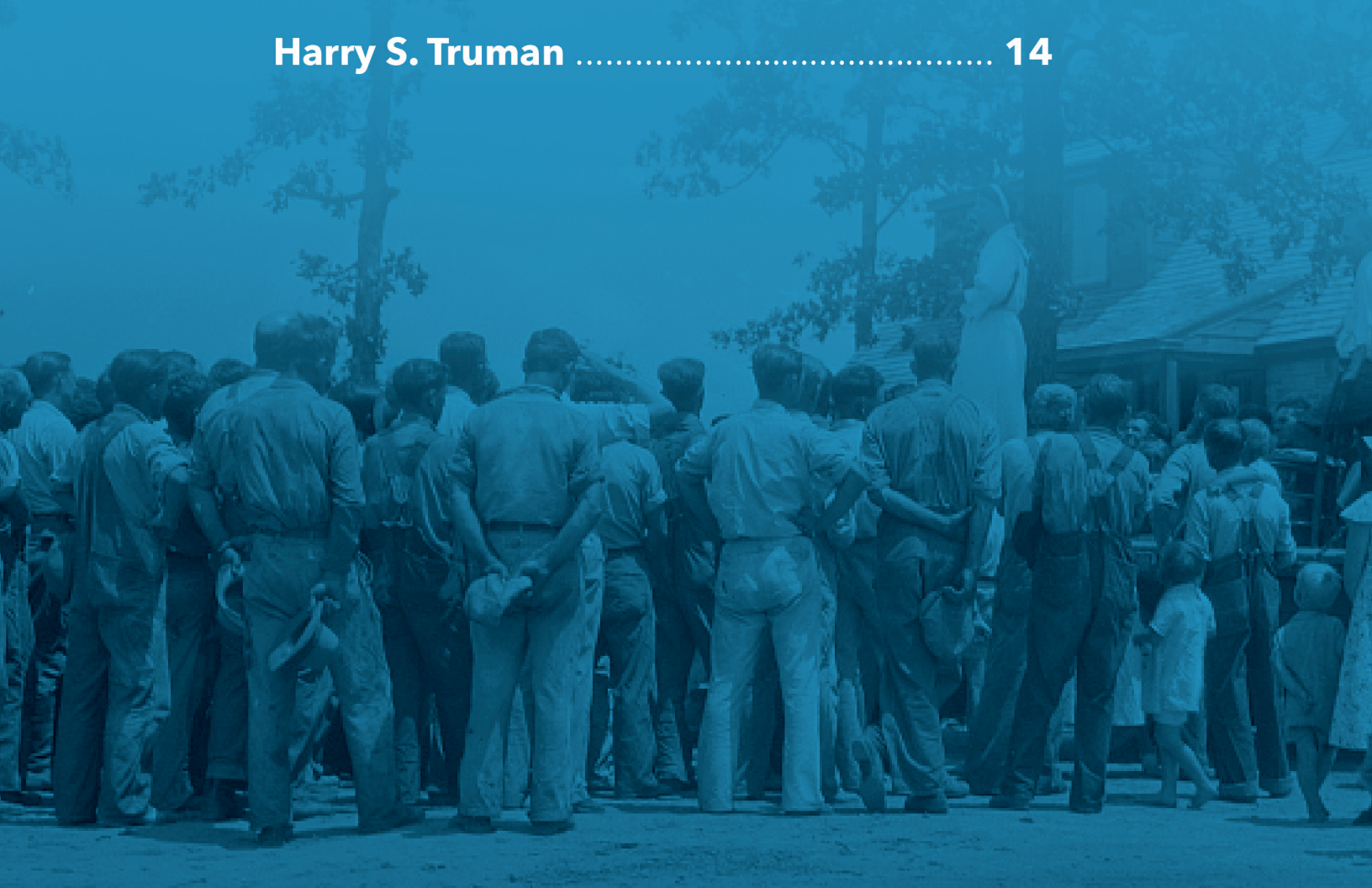
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403



presidents of the *United States of America*

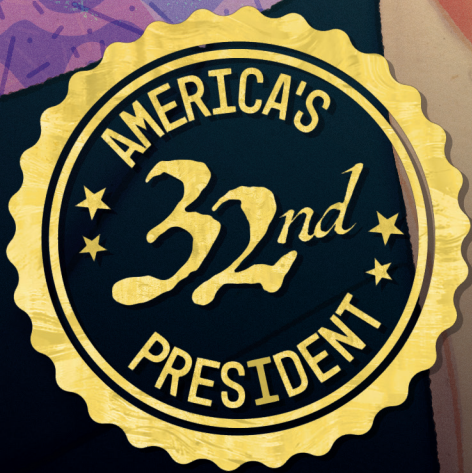
Table of Contents

Franklin D. Roosevelt	1
Harry S. Truman	14



Franklin D. Roosevelt

"I served as the 32nd President of the United States and led the nation through the Great Depression and World War II."



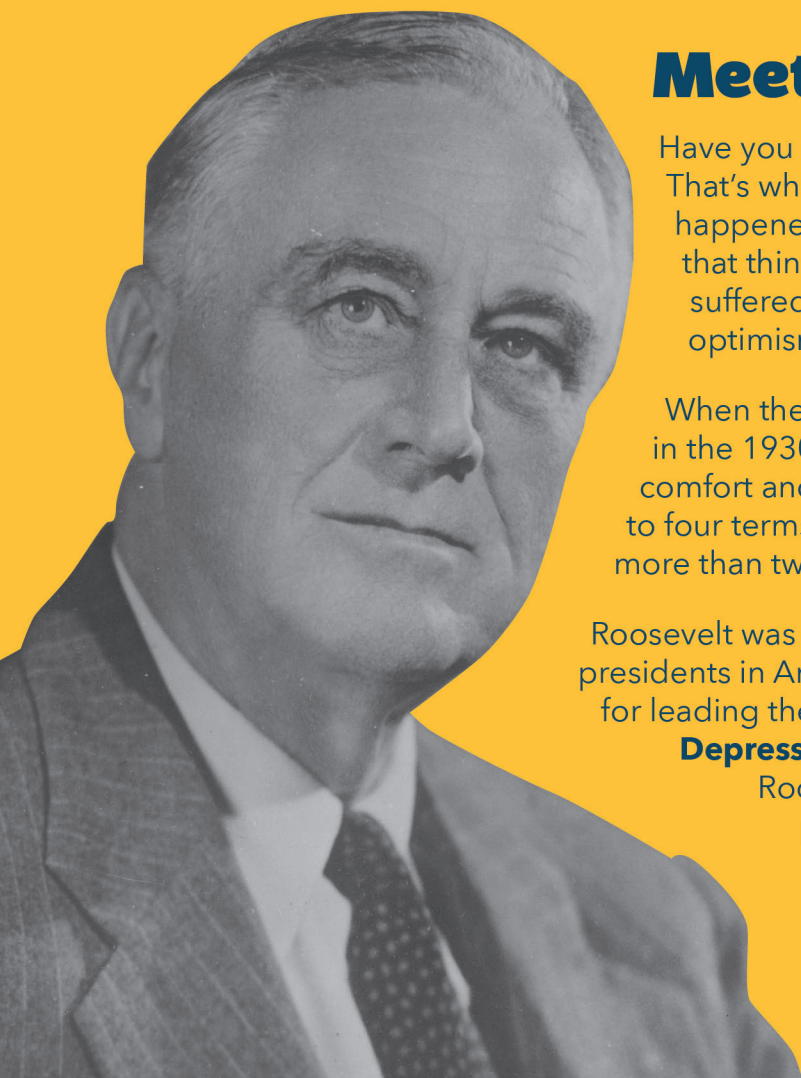


Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

In this magazine, you'll learn all sorts of facts about Franklin D. Roosevelt's life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

President Roosevelt had a Scottish Terrier as a pet. We need your help to find out what its name was. Your task is to help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this magazine carefully to find them, and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

— — — —
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!



Meet Franklin D. Roosevelt

Have you ever met someone who was always optimistic? That's what Franklin D. Roosevelt was like. No matter what happened, he was always smiling and seemed confident that things would work out for the best. Even when he suffered a paralyzing illness, he somehow maintained his optimism.

When the American people went through very tough times in the 1930s and 40s, they wanted someone who would comfort and inspire them. That's why they elected Roosevelt to four terms as president. He is the only president to serve more than two terms.

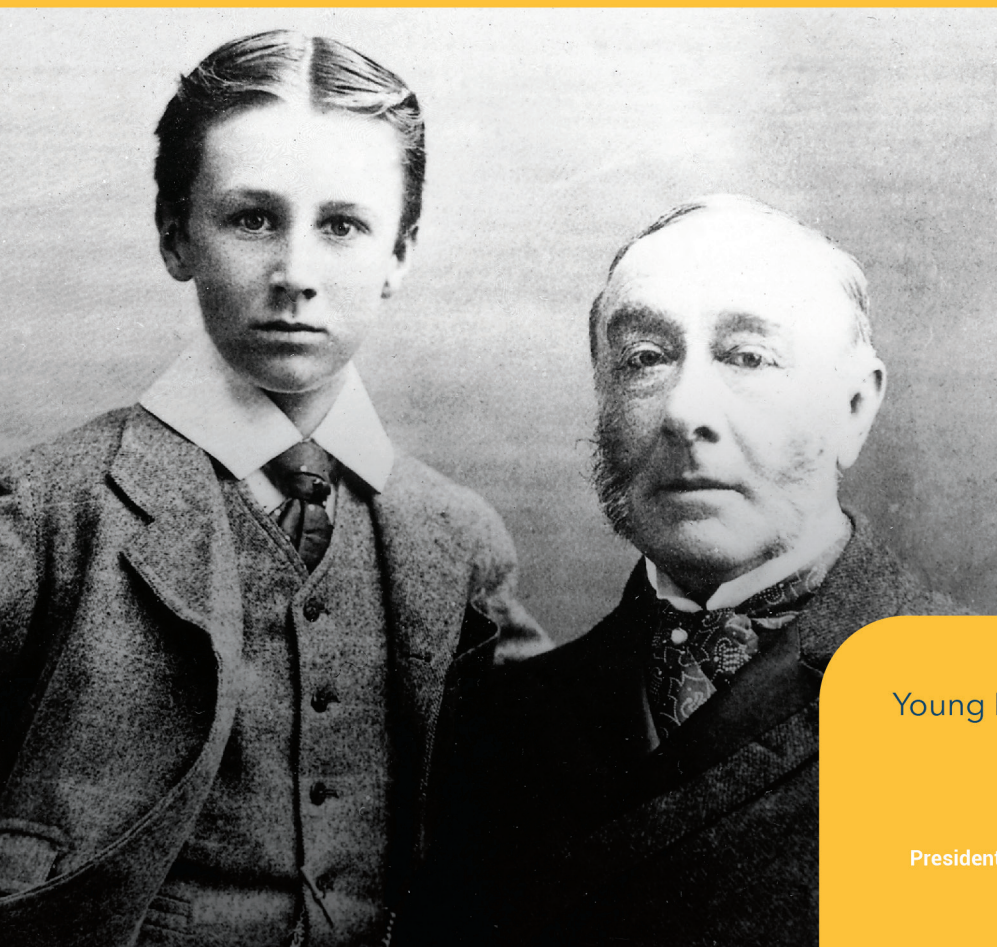
Roosevelt was one of the most popular and important presidents in American history. Many Americans remember him for leading the nation through two great crises: the **Great Depression** and **World War II**. At the same time, Roosevelt made many decisions that expanded the power of the federal government beyond what the Constitution allows. This threatened the freedom of the American people and may have actually made the Depression worse. Roosevelt's story shows us that optimism and charisma don't always benefit the country.

Young Franklin

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was born on January 30, 1882, in Hyde Park, New York. He was the only child of James and Sarah Roosevelt. Young Franklin came from a prominent and wealthy family. His father was a businessman and an active member of the Democratic Party. When Franklin was five, he and his father visited the White House and met President Grover Cleveland. The President patted young Franklin on the head and said, "My little man, I am making a strange wish for you. It is that you may never be President of the United States."

Franklin studied under tutors on his family's large estate. When he was 14, he began attending a private school named Groton. Then, in 1900, he left home to attend Harvard University. Sadly, his father, James, passed away that same year.

Franklin was not a great student, but he was very active on campus. He became the editor of the campus newspaper, *The Crimson*. He was also thrilled when his fifth cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, became President of the United States in 1901. The charismatic Theodore was, for Franklin and millions of Americans, a hero worthy of imitation.



Interesting Facts

- He is the longest-serving president in American history.
- He was a member of the Democratic Party.
- He is often referred to as "FDR."
- He was fifth cousins with President Theodore Roosevelt.
- He was the first president to appoint a woman, Frances Perkins, to his Cabinet.
- He was an avid stamp collector and collected almost one million stamps in his lifetime.
- He was the first president to ride in an armored car, which was built for him during World War II.
- He was the first president to travel by airplane while in office.
- He was the first president to appear on television.

Young Franklin and his father

Early Career

After graduating from Harvard in 1903, he attended Columbia Law School. Around this time, he began courting his fifth cousin, Eleanor Roosevelt. Eleanor was a very intelligent and serious-minded young woman. She was also Theodore Roosevelt's niece. The two fell in love and married in March 1905. At the wedding, Theodore gave the bride away. Franklin and Eleanor eventually had six children.

Franklin began practicing law, but he was bored and more interested in getting into politics—just like his famous cousin. In fact, he wanted to follow in Theodore's footsteps and become president.

He won a seat as a Democrat in the New York State Senate, serving from 1911 to 1913. Like Theodore, Franklin earned a reputation as a **progressive** who wanted to expand the power of government.

In 1913, the new president, Woodrow Wilson, appointed him as Assistant Secretary of the **Navy**—the same position Theodore once had. It was the perfect job for him since he loved the sea and loved sailing. Franklin served in this position during World War I and helped mobilize the Navy for the conflict.

Franklin was recognized as an exciting, up-and-coming leader in the Democratic Party. The Party chose him as their vice presidential nominee in the 1920 election, along with presidential nominee James Cox. That year, he and Cox lost in a landslide to Republican candidates Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Still, many people felt Franklin's future was bright.



Paralysis

Roosevelt's life plans fell apart in 1921. While he was on vacation, he began suffering from a fever. Soon, he found himself paralyzed from the waist down. He was diagnosed with **poliomyelitis**. It was a devastating blow, and he would never regain the use of his legs. Roosevelt spent the next several years in intense rehabilitation. Eventually, with the help of leg braces and wheelchairs, he learned how to move around without his legs.

Rise to Power

Despite this setback, he and Eleanor still believed that he could achieve his goal and become president. He took a major step towards that goal when he was elected Governor of New York in 1928. Now he was the governor of the most populous state in the nation, which made him a potential presidential candidate.

In his first year as governor, the stock market collapsed, which triggered the Great Depression. Across the country, millions of Americans lost their jobs, and banks and businesses collapsed. It was the worst economic crisis in the nation's history. Republican President Herbert Hoover signed various laws to deal with the Depression, but nothing seemed to work. Governor Roosevelt signed similar laws, such as providing government jobs and financial relief for the unemployed. He was re-elected in 1930 by a wide margin.



The 1932 Presidential Election

Roosevelt's record as governor helped him earn the Democratic nomination in the 1932 presidential election. More than any politician at the time, he knew how to connect with voters and inspire them. He knew that the people were depressed and fearful about the future and wanted an energetic leader—someone who could give them confidence.

Unlike previous candidates, Roosevelt flew to the convention and personally delivered his acceptance speech. He promised "a new deal for the American people." When the voters heard his booming voice on the radio, they were thrilled. The term "**New Deal**" became the name of FDR's program to get the country out of the Depression. In November, he defeated Hoover in a landslide.

Unemployed men lining up outside a soup kitchen in Chicago





Depression President

On March 4, 1933, Roosevelt delivered his inaugural address and boldly declared, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” He immediately went to work implementing his New Deal programs. He had a close group of advisors, mostly lawyers and professors, called the **Brain Trust**, who encouraged him to expand government to fix the Depression.

Over the next few years, Roosevelt signed laws doing exactly that. These laws created new rules for businesses to follow and gave money to certain groups of people to help them deal with hardship. In 1935, he signed the **Social Security Act**, which provided money for people who were retired or unemployed.

Roosevelt explained many of his policies to the American people on the radio in speeches called “Fireside Chats.” This made him a

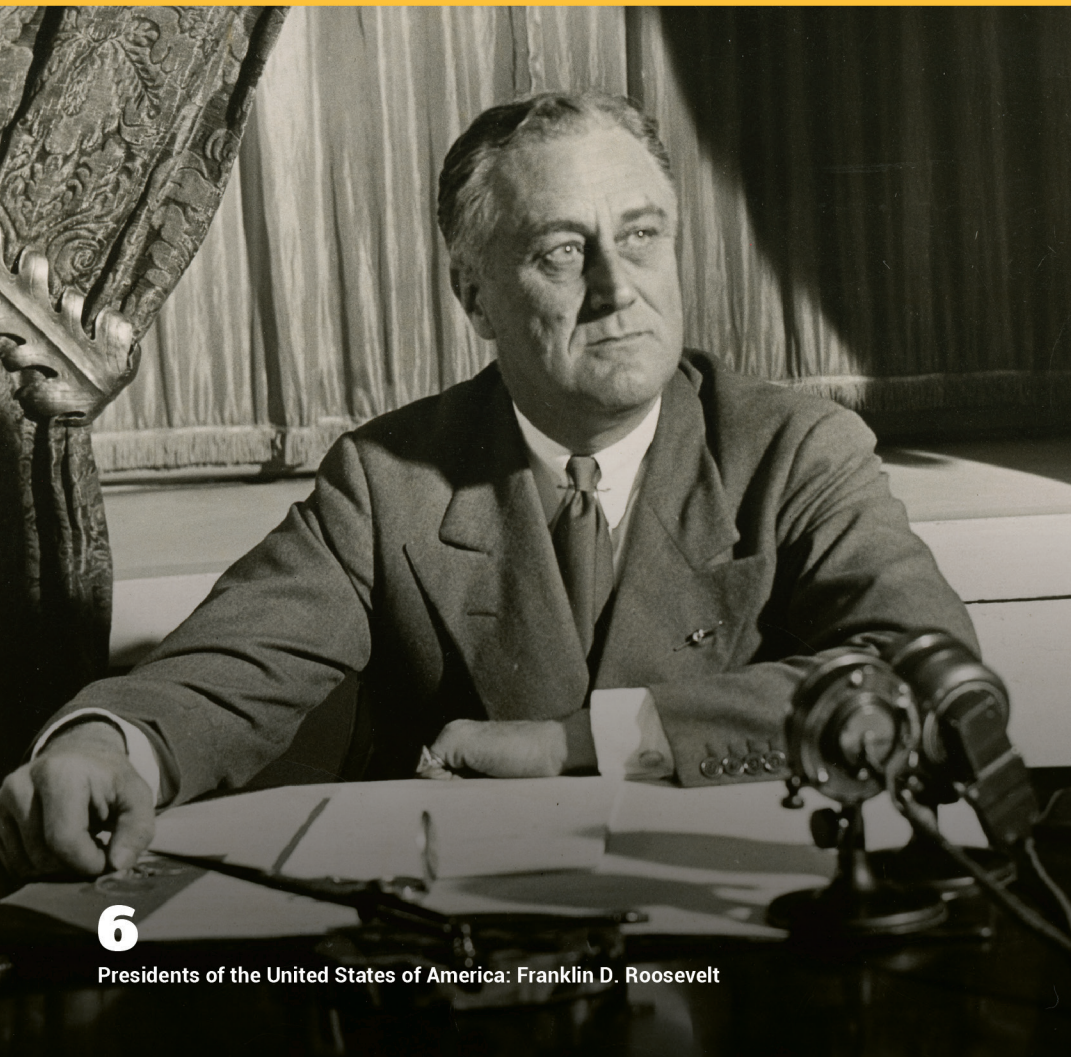
presence in every home and comforted the people during difficult times. The voters re-elected Roosevelt by a landslide in the 1936 election.

Unfortunately, FDR’s policies were very expensive, and the country had to raise taxes to pay for them. This meant that the government took more of people’s hard-earned money.

Even with all of these programs, the New Deal didn’t end the Depression. In some ways, it got worse. The government told business owners how much they could pay their employees and at what prices they could sell their goods—even if the owners couldn’t afford it. This made it harder for businesses to hire new workers. Unemployment remained over ten percent throughout the 1930s.

Quote

*“Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”
- March 1933*



A Modern First Lady

Most first ladies stayed in the background during their husbands' presidencies and focused more on hosting dinners at the White House. Eleanor Roosevelt, however, was different. She traveled around the country and spoke out on many issues. She often brought attention to those who suffered quietly, such as black Americans and the poor. These actions made her a controversial figure—not everyone believed that the First Lady should be so outspoken, especially since it wasn't an elected position.

It is ironic that she was so outspoken. Eleanor grew up in a troubled household and, in her youth, she was deeply insecure. She lacked confidence and considered herself unattractive. However, she did care deeply for the less fortunate and worked hard on their behalf. During her husband's presidency, she was often described as his "conscience." Due to her many activities, historians often consider her the first modern First Lady.

When she died in 1962, she was widely respected around the world.



Eleanor Roosevelt at the United Nations

Eleanor Roosevelt addressing the Cumberland Homesteaders near Crossville, Tennessee in 1935



Wartime President

In 1939, World War II broke out when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Until then, no American president had served more than two terms—a precedent set by George Washington. With the world at war, however, Americans wanted a leader with experience. Since Roosevelt had been serving as president, many felt that the country needed him to run for a third term. FDR did exactly that, winning an unprecedented third term in 1940.

He then went to work to build up America's defenses so it could be prepared if it entered the war. He also sent weapons to the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union to fight the Nazis. Roosevelt hoped that the British and the Soviets could hold off the Nazis so America wouldn't have to fight them.

All of that changed on December 7, 1941, when Germany's ally, Japan, attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor. The next day, Roosevelt appeared before Congress, called the date of the attack "a date which will live in infamy," and asked Congress for a declaration of war.

America had officially entered World War II. Roosevelt worked closely with the Allied

powers (Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom and Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union) to defeat the Axis powers (Adolf Hitler of Germany, Emperor Hirohito of Japan, and Benito Mussolini of Italy). He also selected brilliant generals, such as George Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, George Patton, and Douglas MacArthur, to win the war.

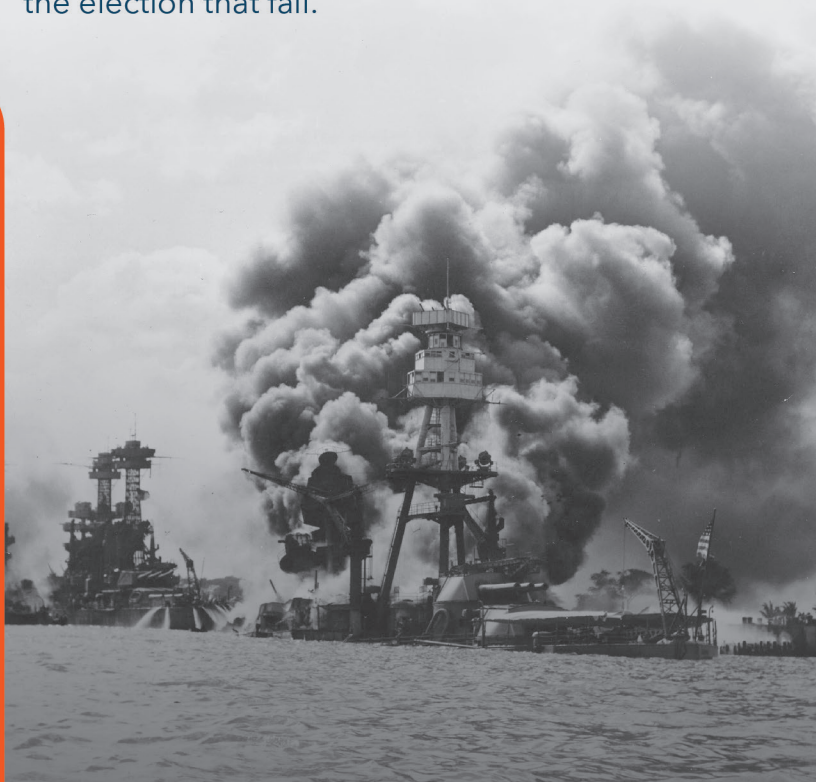
This time, instead of telling businesses what to do, he allowed companies the freedom to build the weapons the Allies needed to win the war. During the conflict, the United States became the most powerful country in the world.

Together, the Americans and their allies landed in France on **D-Day** to take the Nazis head-on. The Nazi government began to crumble, and the Allies began to win the war. Roosevelt even authorized the development of the **atomic bomb**, a powerful new weapon, just in case it was needed to finish off the enemy.

In 1944, Roosevelt ran for an unprecedented fourth term as president, even though he was in poor health. His running-mate that year was Missouri Senator Harry S. Truman. They won the election that fall.

Quote

*"Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan."
- December 1941*



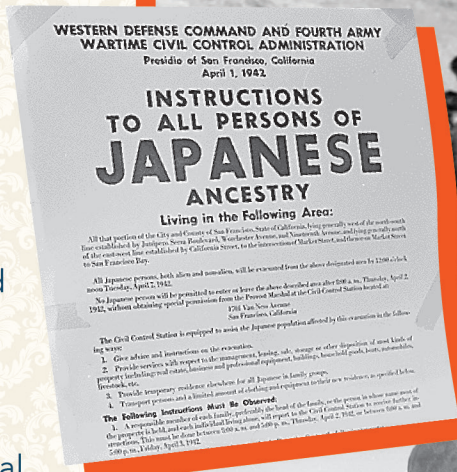
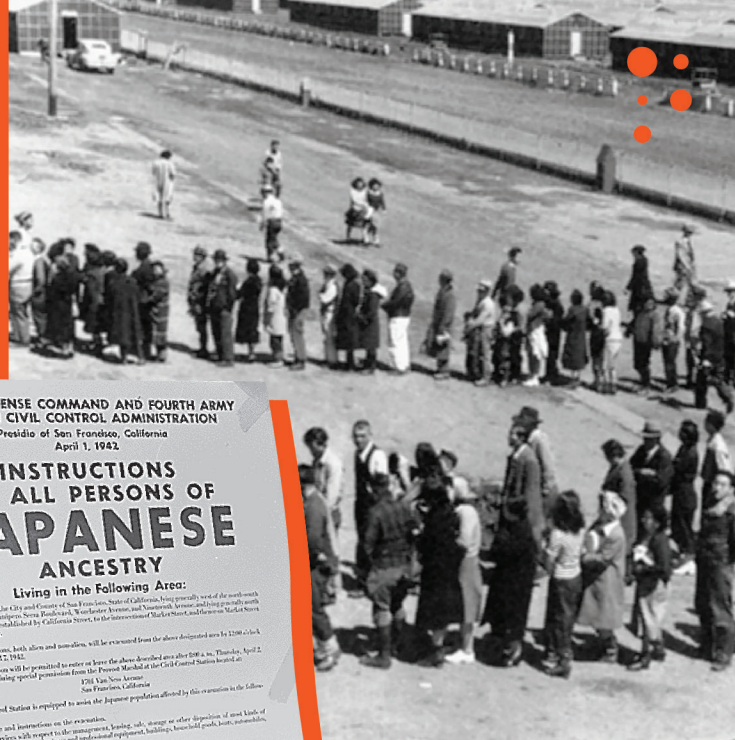
A Powerful President

President Roosevelt expanded the powers of the presidency more than anyone before him—far beyond what the Founders intended the president to have. His New Deal programs, such as those created by the National Industrial Recovery Act, gave him more control over people’s everyday decisions. They gave him the power to tell lumberyard owners how many logs they could sell or butchers how many chickens they could sell.

Roosevelt didn’t trust the people to make these decisions on their own and felt he and his advisors could do a better job planning the overall economy. Unfortunately, these rules took away from people’s freedoms.

The Supreme Court even struck down several of his programs in 1935, saying they went against the Constitution and its promise for freedom for all Americans. In response, Roosevelt threatened to attack the Court. He proposed a law allowing him to replace the judges of the Court with people who were friendly to him—which was called his “**Court Packing**” scheme. It was similar to a sports team being able to choose referees that would unfairly rule in its favor. The idea was very unpopular and seemed like the actions of a dictator. Even Roosevelt’s fellow Democrats criticized him for the proposal. FDR backed down from his threat to pack the Court.

During World War II, many Americans became suspicious that their fellow citizens who were of Japanese descent were disloyal to the country. Even though there was very little proof of this, in 1942, President Roosevelt signed an order throwing over a hundred thousand Americans of Japanese descent into **internment** camps. Once again, Roosevelt used power beyond what the Constitution said to control people’s lives. While the threat to national security from Japan was serious and called for drastic measures, the internment of Americans of Japanese descent is now often considered one of the worst presidential mistakes in American history.



Creating a New World

Roosevelt began planning for what the world would look like after the war. Like President Woodrow Wilson, he wanted to create a new international organization to prevent future world wars from ever happening. He called this organization the United Nations.

Even though America and the Soviet Union were allies, both countries had strong disagreements about the postwar world. The Soviet Union was a communist dictatorship, and its leader, Joseph Stalin, wanted to spread **communism** around the world. He began forcing nearby countries in Eastern Europe to become communist. Many people felt that communism was just as evil as Nazism and that America would have to fight the communists eventually.

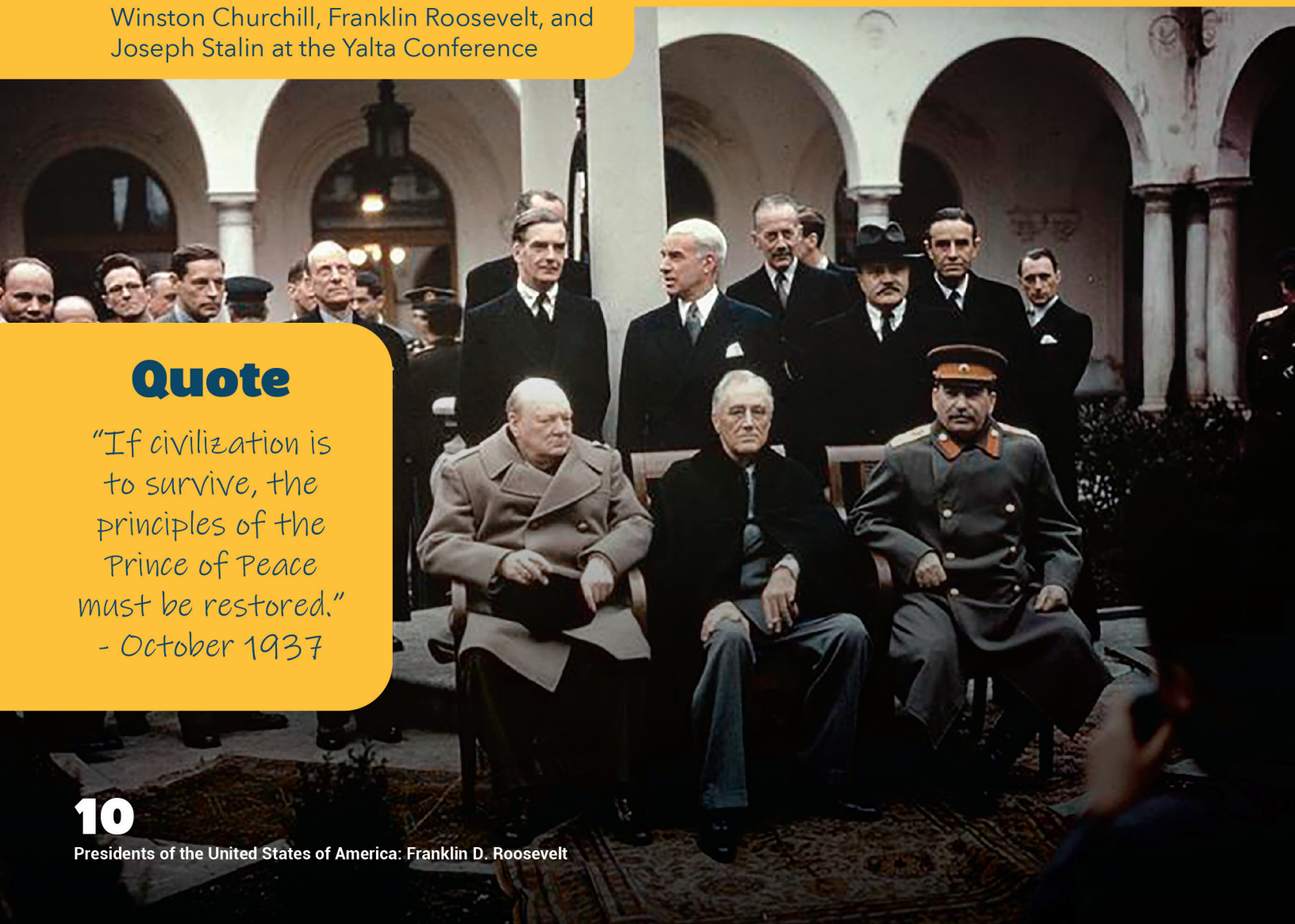
Roosevelt met with Churchill and Stalin at the **Yalta Conference** in early 1945 to plan the end of the war. While at Yalta, Stalin forced FDR and Churchill to accept communist rule in Eastern Europe. Churchill and Roosevelt protested against Stalin's actions because it would mean millions of Eastern Europeans would live under a terrible dictatorship. FDR, however, didn't want to anger the Soviet dictator because he wanted Stalin to help him establish the United Nations, so he accepted Soviet control of Eastern Europe.

Roosevelt returned home after the conference, exhausted from his 12 years as president. On April 12, 1945, he died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage while relaxing at Warm Springs, Georgia. He was 63 years old.

Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin at the Yalta Conference

Quote

*"If civilization is to survive, the principles of the Prince of Peace must be restored."
- October 1937*





A Dangerous Secret

In 1944, FDR ran for a fourth term as president. That year, however, a doctor named Frank Lahey informed Roosevelt's doctor that the President was in very bad health and probably wouldn't survive a fourth term. He also warned that this meant Roosevelt's vice president might become president. This was very important because the nation was fighting World War II and needed a president fully prepared to be commander in chief.

Despite this warning, Roosevelt still ran for the presidency in 1944. Even after winning, Roosevelt failed to prepare his vice president, Harry Truman, for the job. He didn't include Truman in any planning or strategy for the war. He didn't even tell Truman about the secret weapon, the atomic bomb.

Just as Lahey predicted, Roosevelt died in his fourth term—in fact, he died just months into the term. Truman became the new president, with very little preparation for the job. Truman later said FDR was "the coldest man I ever met" and that he didn't care "for me or you or anyone else in the world."

Quote

*"I have seen war. I have seen war on land and sea... I hate war."
- August 1936*

Writing Activity

How can you learn from President Roosevelt? Choose one decision he made, decide if you think it helped or hurt the American people, and figure out what you might have done differently if you were in his shoes.

Handwriting practice area with seven horizontal blue lines on a white background.



Legacy

Franklin D. Roosevelt is undoubtedly one of the most important presidents of all time. He served during two major crises, the Depression and World War II. He made decisions that forever changed America and the world. His New Deal policies created a powerful federal government. He often gets credit for leading the country during World War II, helping defeat the Axis powers and liberate the world from evil.

Even though FDR was very popular, many of his decisions created problems we struggle with today. His New Deal programs continue to cost taxpayers a lot of money. Overall, his policies have led to higher taxes and more rules for all Americans to follow. Instead of creating prosperity, they actually take away our freedoms.

Even though Roosevelt made some good decisions during the war and chose many excellent generals, he also made many mistakes. He used his presidential powers to detain and confine many loyal Japanese-American citizens. He failed to stand up to Joseph Stalin, which left millions of people in Eastern Europe suffering under communism. He failed to prepare his successor, Harry Truman, for the job of president.

Finally, like Wilson, he believed that he could personally prevent another world war from happening by creating a massive world government, the United Nations. Today, the UN is seen by many as a corrupt organization that helps tyrannical governments and does little to promote world peace.

Roosevelt's legacy continues to affect the world. Unfortunately, that legacy meant less freedom for all Americans.

Sources

Brands, H.W. *Traitor to His Class: The Privileged Life and Radical Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt*. Doubleday, 2008.

Cohen, Adam. *Nothing to Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America*. Penguin Press, 2009.

"Eighty Years after the U.S. Incarcerated 120,000 Japanese Americans, Trauma and Scars Still Remain." *Smithsonian.Com*, 11 Feb. 2022, www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/eighty-years-after-us-incarcerated-japanese-americans-trauma-scars-remain-180979519/. Accessed 10 May 2023.

"FDR Biography." *Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum*, <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/fdr-biography/>. Accessed 22 December 2022.

Freidel, Frank. "Franklin D. Roosevelt." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Franklin-D-Roosevelt/>. Accessed 22 December 2022.

Hamilton, Nigel. *War And Peace: FDR's Final Odyssey: D-Day to Yalta, 1943-1945*. Mariner Books, 2019.

Hoopes, Townsend and Douglas Brinkley. *FDR and the Creation of the U.N.* Yale University Press, 1997.

Lelyveld, Joseph. *His Final Battle: The Last Months of Franklin Roosevelt*. Knopf, 2016.

Leuchtenburg, William E. "Franklin D. Roosevelt." *Miller Center, University of Virginia*, <https://millercenter.org/president/fdroosevelt/>. Accessed 22 December 2022.

Images: Getty Images, WikiCommons, FreePix

Answers

NAME OF ROOSEVELT'S SCOTTISH TERRIER:
FALA



Glossary

Great Depression: The time in American history, starting in 1929 and continuing throughout the 1930s, when the economy had collapsed, and millions of people didn't have jobs.

World War II: A war that involved many of the world's countries from 1939 to 1945. During the war, the Allied powers, led by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, defeated the Axis powers, led by Nazi Germany and Japan. It is considered the most devastating war in history.

Progressive: A person who believes in achieving social, political, and economic reform by replacing the Founding Fathers' principles with new ideas and a more powerful government.

Navy: A branch of the United States Armed Forces that is trained to operate at sea. They usually have warships and other supporting vessels.

Poliomyelitis: A disease that can cause temporary or permanent paralysis.

New Deal: A series of government laws, regulations, and programs implemented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the 1930s. Although the stated goal of the New Deal was to provide economic relief during the Great Depression, it also implemented many policies progressives had supported for several decades. The New Deal greatly expanded government control of the economy and American people's lives.

Brain Trust: A group of lawyers, writers, and academics who advised and assisted President Franklin D. Roosevelt in creating the New Deal during the 1930s. The phrase today often refers to any group of advisors for a candidate or public official.

Social Security Act: A law signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935, which provided government insurance for elderly and unemployed Americans. The law has become a

major part of the federal budget and has been expanded to provide other forms of insurance, such as healthcare coverage.

D-Day: The codeword for the Allied invasion of Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944. It was the largest seaborne invasion in history and was commanded by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. The success of the invasion led to the liberation of France and, ultimately, the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Atomic Bomb: A weapon that uses a nuclear reaction to create a massive explosion, which can destroy a large area, such as a city. When it was developed in the 1940s, it was the most powerful weapon ever created.

Court Packing: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's plan in 1937 to change the Supreme Court so that it would rule favorably towards his policies. Roosevelt proposed the plan after the Court ruled against many of his New Deal programs. The plan was fiercely criticized as an attempt to undermine the independence of the Judicial Branch.

Internment: The detaining and confinement of a group of people deemed to pose a threat to national security or public safety. Internment is usually carried out by military authorities and can involve forced relocation to designated areas or camps.

Communism: A political and economic system where all property and resources are owned and controlled by the government. The result of this system is often dictatorship and government control of every aspect of people's lives.

Yalta Conference: A meeting in Yalta on the Crimean Peninsula in February 1945 between the major leaders of the Allied powers during World War II: American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, United Kingdom Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. During the conference, the three leaders discussed finalizing the war against the Axis powers and planning for the world after the war.



Harry S. Truman

"I was the 33rd President of the United States, and I led America in the fight against communism."



Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle



In this magazine, you'll learn all sorts of facts about Harry S. Truman's amazing life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

The Secret Service, which protects the president, gave Truman a codename, but we need to find out what it was. You can help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this magazine carefully to find them, and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

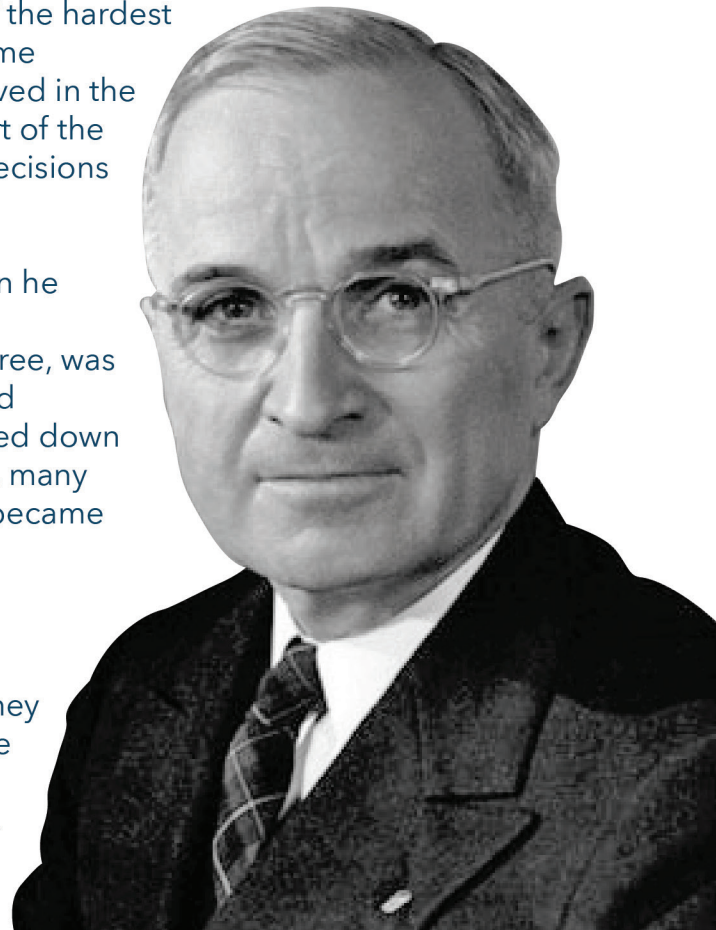
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

Meet Harry S. Truman

Did you know that Harry S. Truman had to make some of the hardest decisions any president has ever had to make? He became president during a very important time in history. He served in the White House during the end of World War II and the start of the **Cold War**. During these events, Truman made difficult decisions that affected millions of people's lives.

Those who knew Truman personally were surprised when he became president. He was very different from previous presidents—he wasn't wealthy, didn't have a college degree, was very blunt and straightforward, and sometimes had a bad temper. Some people, even his own mother-in-law, looked down on him for seeming so ordinary. When he was president, many disagreed strongly with the decisions he made, and he became unpopular.

It wasn't until years after he left the White House that the American people began to respect him for those same qualities. If they didn't always agree with his decisions, they appreciated that he wasn't afraid to face reality and make hard choices. They also admired how he overcame his humble beginnings to become the leader of his country. For millions of Americans, Truman became a hero and proof that, in America, anyone can become president.



Young Harry

Harry S. Truman was born on May 8, 1884 in Lamar, Missouri. He was the oldest child of John and Martha Truman. Young Harry had a younger brother, John, and younger sister, Mary Jane. He spent much of his childhood working hard on his family's farm. Like many of his friends, he wanted to play sports, but he couldn't because he had very poor eyesight. Instead, he focused on doing his chores on the farm and playing the piano. He did find a new hobby: reading. He realized that he loved reading and read as many books as he could, whether it was the Bible or plays written by William Shakespeare. Soon, his bookshelves were filled up with biographies of ancient generals and American presidents.

Harry graduated high school in 1901 and wanted to go to college, but his family couldn't afford it. He focused instead on working.

Harry worked hard at whatever job he could find. For a while, he was a timekeeper at a railway and, during that time, sometimes slept in camps for homeless people. He also worked in the mailroom of a newspaper and as a bank clerk.



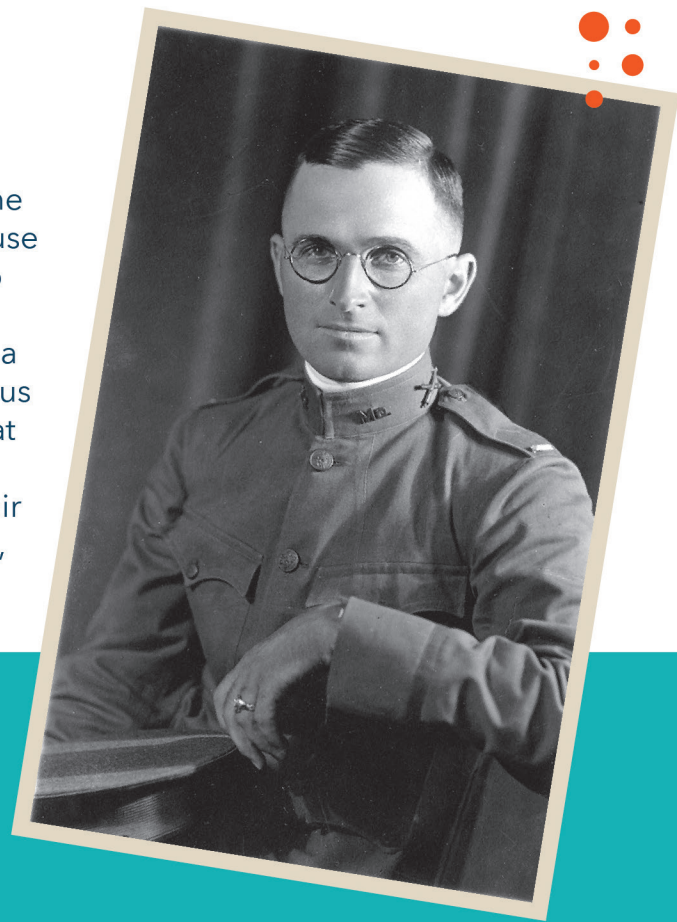
Harry S. Truman's Birthplace

Interesting Facts

- His middle initial, "S," doesn't stand for anything. His parents couldn't decide whether to give him the middle name "Shipp" or "Solomon" (his grandfathers' names), so they just gave him the initial.
- He was a member of the Democratic Party.
- There was a famous phrase during Truman's lifetime called "passing the buck," which referred to giving someone else the responsibility of making a decision. As president, Truman had a famous sign on his desk that read "The Buck Stops Here," which was his way of saying that the president should always be willing to make hard decisions.
- Truman's inauguration in 1949 was the first to appear on television.
- In 1950, two Puerto Rican nationalists tried to assassinate Truman near the White House. The attackers failed to kill Truman but did kill a White House police officer.
- As of 2024, his wife, Bess Truman, lived the longest life of any First Lady—97 years.
- Truman's daughter, Margaret, became a famous singer and author. She wrote several bestselling murder mystery novels.

World War I

In 1917, the United States entered World War I against the Germans. Truman could have avoided the fighting because some people with farming backgrounds were allowed to stay home, but he was a true **patriot**. He joined the war effort and went to Europe in 1918 to fight. He was made a captain and courageously led his men on many dangerous missions. When they weren't performing well, he yelled at them to motivate them to fight. Truman earned the admiration of his fellow soldiers for being a tough and fair leader. He realized he had strong leadership capabilities, and he became more confident in himself.



Quote

*"America has become one of the most powerful forces for good on earth. We must keep it so."
- April 1945*



Rise to Power

During the war, Truman wrote letters to a woman he had known since he was a child: Bess Wallace. He had proposed marriage to her in 1911, but she turned him down. He was persistent and proposed again when he returned from the war. This time, she accepted, and they were married in 1919. They eventually had a daughter named Margaret.

Truman decided to earn a living as a small business owner. He opened up a **haberdashery**. Unfortunately, it failed, and he was left bankrupt. Despite this, a local **party boss** named Tom Pendergast thought he might make a good candidate for political office because he had a reputation for honesty. He got Truman elected Eastern Jackson County judge in 1922 and U.S. senator in 1934.

At the time, Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt was President of the United States and was battling the Great Depression. Senator Truman, a Democrat, loyally supported Roosevelt's policies.

In 1941, the United States entered World War II. It became **allies** with the United Kingdom and the **Soviet Union** and fought against Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan. Truman worked hard as a senator to make sure that the government ran the war effort smoothly and obeyed the law.

The Democrats were so impressed by Truman's work that they chose him to be the vice presidential candidate in the 1944 presidential election. That year, Roosevelt won his fourth term as president, and Truman was elected vice president (now, presidents are only allowed to serve two terms, but at the time they were allowed to run as many times as they wanted). In January 1945, Truman took the oath of office as vice president, but in April, Roosevelt died of a stroke.



Quote

"It is not enough to yearn for peace. We must work, and if necessary, fight for it."

- April 1945



President

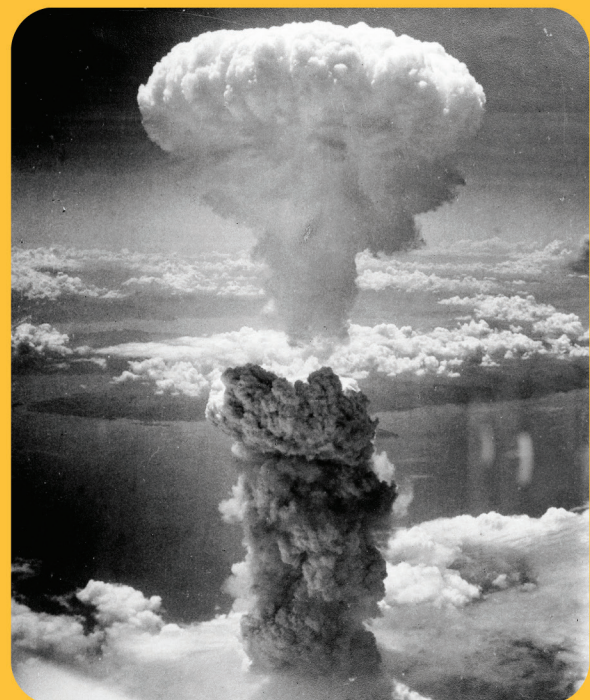
Harry Truman was now the 33rd President of the United States. He immediately had to make many difficult decisions. At first, he felt overwhelmed by his new job and wondered if he could succeed. He said, "I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me."


In May 1945, the United States and its allies finally defeated Nazi Germany, and Italy had surrendered more than a year earlier, but the war continued against Japan. Truman learned that America had a new weapon that it could use to defeat Japan: the atomic bomb. It was the most powerful weapon ever invented and could destroy an entire city.

Some people believed that using the atomic bomb to do so much damage was wrong, but Harry Truman and many of his advisors felt that it was the best option to end the war. Victory over Japan required their **surrender**, and his other options involved using American troops to invade. Truman remembered what it was like to fight in World War I, and he worried that

more people would suffer if the Allies invaded Japan. With Truman's permission, the U.S. military dropped atomic bombs on two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in August 1945. Both cities were instantly destroyed. Finally, the Japanese government realized they had to **surrender**, which they did on September 2. The world celebrated that one of the most difficult and painful wars in history was over.

President Truman hoped he could lead the country into a new era of peace, but already, a new enemy was emerging. Even though the Soviet Union was America's ally during World War II, it was similar to Nazi Germany because it was a **dictatorship** that controlled the lives of its citizens. The Soviet Union, led by dictator Joseph Stalin, wanted to spread **communism** around the world and destroy the American system of **freedom**. As president, Truman worked hard to stop communism wherever it spread so that people could be free. This new conflict between America and the Soviet Union was called the Cold War.





Truman knew that he needed help from other countries to stop the spread of communism, so he developed strong **alliances** all over the world. When Israel became a country in 1948, Truman established a relationship with them so that America could have another partner against the Soviet Union. When the communists tried to take over all of Korea in 1950, Truman sent troops under General Douglas MacArthur to stop them. He was able to save the southern half of Korea, which is why millions of people in South Korea are free from the communists today. Even though General MacArthur had success in Korea and was very popular, he began to disagree with Truman's policies in public. This led Truman to fire MacArthur. The war in Korea quickly became a **stalemate**, and the American people were mad at Truman for firing MacArthur and for the loss of Americans as a result of the fighting.

Back in 1948, Truman ran for his own term as president. No one thought he would win, and one newspaper even announced he had lost, but Truman surprised everyone when he emerged victorious. By 1952, however, voters were tired of the Korean War, and Truman knew he couldn't win again. He decided to retire from the presidency. That November, the American people elected World War II General Dwight D. Eisenhower to replace him.



Quote

*"When you get to be President, there are all those things, the honors, the twenty-one gun salutes, all those things. You have to remember it isn't for you. It's for the Presidency."
- Plain Speaking, 1973*

Marshall Plan

One of Truman's top advisors was his Secretary of State, George Marshall. Marshall came up with a plan to invest money in European countries which had been destroyed during World War II. This would help them rebuild their economies and stand up to the Soviet Union. It was a great success and helped strengthen America's alliances in Europe. It also demonstrated to the world that the American way was superior to communism.

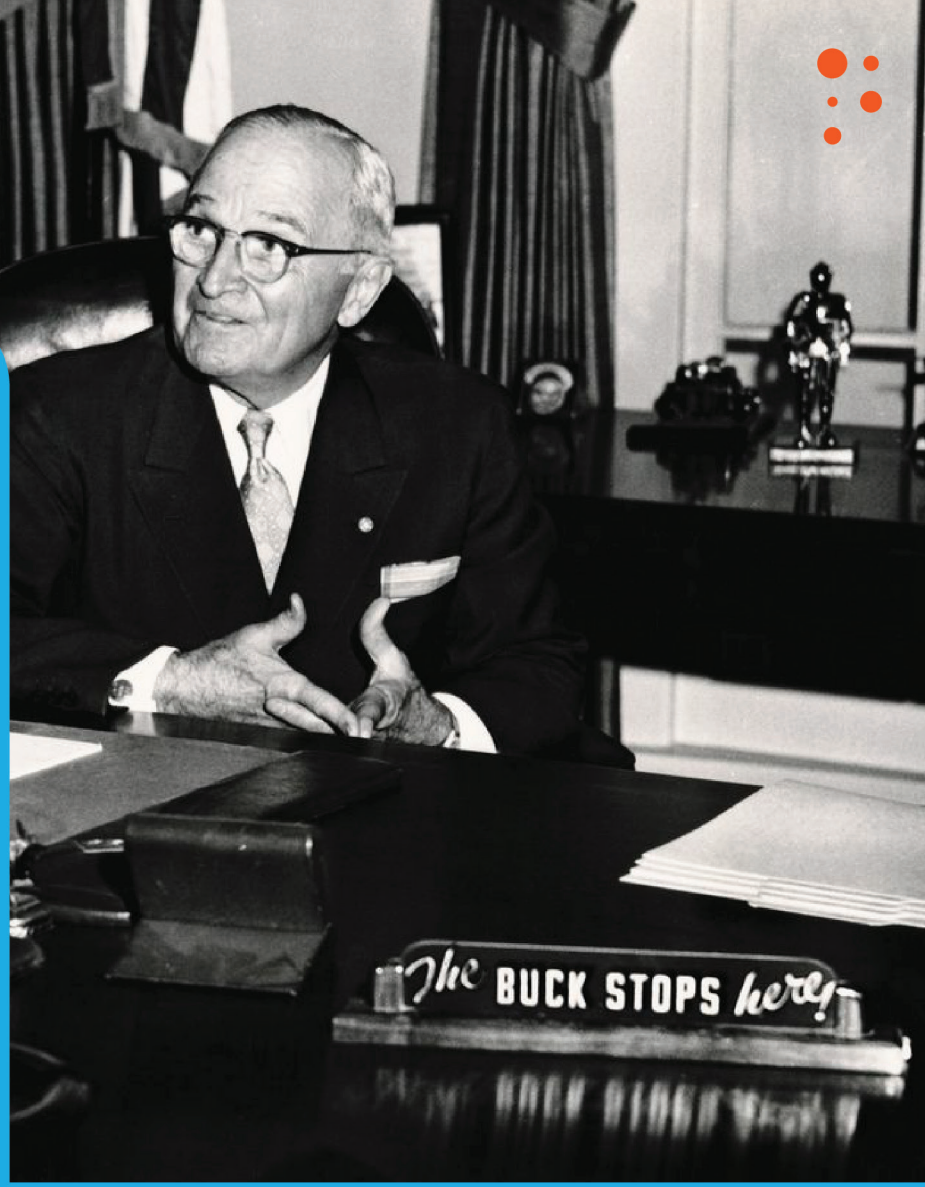


Retirement

Harry and Bess Truman moved back to Missouri in 1953 as private citizens. Even though he left office as an unpopular president, the American people began to see him in a new light. At first, they were upset about the Korean War, but they began to realize that fighting the communists there helped give freedom to millions of people. They appreciated that he was willing to stand up to the Soviet Union and stop them from spreading communism around the world. While some today still debate whether dropping the atomic bombs on Japan was the right decision, many believe that it was the best way to end the war.

America's World War II ally and British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, later told Truman that when he became president, he held him "in very low regard" but admitted, "I misjudged you badly... You... have saved Western civilization." This time, the American people agreed.

Truman lived for almost twenty years after he left office. He died on December 26, 1972, at the age of 88.



Legacy

Throughout Truman's life, many people underestimated him because he seemed like such an ordinary person. When he took over as president, they wondered if he was strong enough to continue the fight during World War II. When he ran for his own term as president in 1948, they felt he would lose. Even after he left the presidency, they felt he had failed in his job. Each time, however, he proved his critics wrong, and he is now much more respected.

The humble haberdasher from Missouri left an important legacy, helping to end World War II and stand up against communism. His story teaches us to never underestimate those who seem like the most ordinary of men.

Writing Activity

Have you ever had to do a job you weren't prepared for? What did you do? Write about what you can learn from President Truman's example. What can you do differently the next time you are asked to do something you feel unprepared for?



Dewey Defeats Truman

One of the most iconic images of Truman's presidency comes from the 1948 presidential election. Almost everyone thought Truman would lose to his opponent, Thomas Dewey. The *Chicago Tribune* famously ran a headline announcing Dewey's victory. Truman proudly displayed it after election night so everyone knew that the *Tribune* was wrong.

Glossary

Cold War: The conflict between America, which was free, and the Soviet Union, which was a communist dictatorship, that lasted from the 1940s to the 1980s.

Patriot: A person who loves and appreciates their country.

Haberdashery: A store where men buy clothes and other items like hats, buttons, and zippers.

Party Boss: A person who has gained political power through corrupt activities, such as stealing government money or bribing politicians to vote a certain way.

Allies: Countries that become partners and pursue the same goals.

Soviet Union: A country that existed from 1922 to 1991 which oppressed its people and tried to spread its communist system around the world.

Surrender: When a person or country gives up fighting in a war and accepts defeat.

Dictatorship: A system of government where one person or a small group has most or all political power. In dictatorships, the government has strong control over the people's lives.

Communism: A political and economic system where all property and resources are owned and controlled by the government. The result of this system is often dictatorship and government control of every aspect of people's lives.

Freedom: The ability to believe, say, and do what you want without the government controlling you.

Alliances: Agreements between countries to be partners and pursue the same goals.

Stalemate: A war that continues for a long time with neither side winning.

Sources

American Experience: Truman. Written and Produced by David Grubin. PBS, 1997.

"Captain Harry Truman." *Harry S Truman National Historic Site*, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/-/captain-harry-truman.htm/>. Accessed 18 February 2022.

Hosmer, Ellen, Christine Montgomery, and Carlynn Trout. "Harry S. Truman." *Historic Missourians*, <https://historicmissourians.shsmo.org/harry-truman/>. Accessed 18 February 2022.

"Presidents: Harry S. Truman." *The White House*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/harry-s-truman/>. Accessed 18 February 2022.

"THE PRESIDENCY: The World of Harry Truman." *Time*, 8 January 1973, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,910501-1,00.html/>. Accessed 18 February 2022.

"Timeline of Our History." *U.S. Secret Service*, <https://www.secretservice.gov/about/history/-/timeline/>. Accessed 18 February 2022.

"Use of the Period After the 'S' in Harry S. Truman's Name." *Harry S. Truman Library & Museum*, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/trivia/use-of-period-after-s-truman-name/>. Accessed 18 February 2022.

Wolly, Brian. "Inaugural Firsts." *Smithsonian Magazine*, 17 December 2008, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/inaugural-firsts-132224366/>. Accessed 18 February 2022.

Images: WikiCommons

Answers

TRUMAN'S CODENAME: GENERAL

Notes



A series of horizontal blue lines spanning the width of the page, intended for writing notes.

PragerU Kids



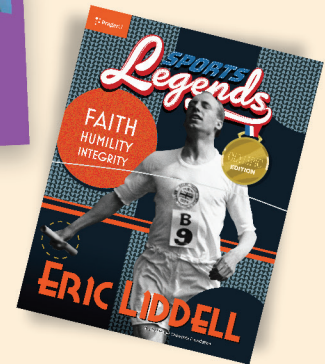
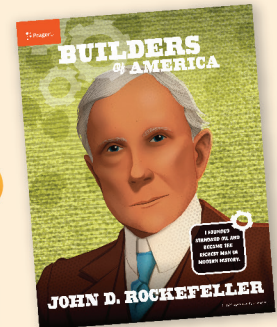
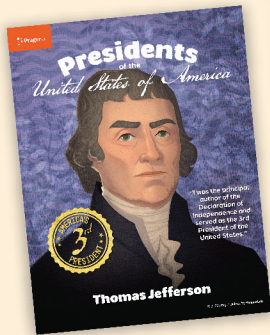
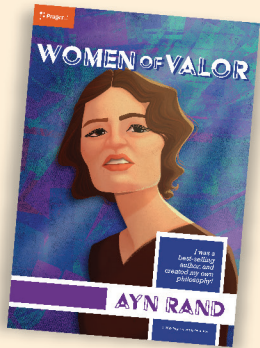
We're reaching America's youth with PragerU Kids!

With kids shows, books, and educational resources that teach classic American values, PragerU Kids offers content that parents and teachers trust and children love. As a nonprofit, PragerU relies on the generosity of donors committed to helping us spread messages of liberty, economic freedom, and Judeo-Christian values to the next generation. PragerU Kids is the leading network with educational, entertaining, pro-American content for every grade. Watch for free and learn more at:

PragerUkids.com

READY FOR *MORE?*

Enjoy *ALL* of our educational books
& test your knowledge with our trivia
game show *GUESS OR MESS!*



Explore our *WOMEN OF VALOR*,
PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
BUILDERS OF AMERICA, and *SPORTS LEGENDS*
book series.

Learn more at
PragerUkids.com

