Lesson Plan: Investigating the Relationship between Harry Truman and Douglas MacArthur

Grades: High School
Subjects: U.S. History, World History
Time Required: two class periods (55 minutes)
Authors: Brandi Love, (Kirby High School, Shelby County Schools)

OVERVIEW
In this lesson, learners will consider what they know about President Harry Truman and his involvement with the Korean War and the relationship that existed between him and General Douglas MacArthur. Truman attempted to contain communism in the Cold War and guided America into the murky waters of the Korean War. MacArthur was put in command of United Nations forces against the North Koreans when the Korean War started. MacArthur had a different view than Truman on the war in Korea and strategies for winning the war. This view caused a major rift between the General and the President.

GOAL
Students will understand the decisions that President Truman made during the first years of the Cold War. They will analyze primary and secondary sources to interpret the relationship that existed between President Truman and General MacArthur.

OBJECTIVES
Students will be able to:
- Collaborate in small groups to summarize information and present that information to other students.
- Analyze primary sources in different formats, including written text, visuals, and statistical date.
- Collaborate with other students to explain relevant information in an understandable fashion.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION
How did the relationship between Truman and MacArthur change in the midst of the Korean War?

STANDARDS
- W.63 Describe the competition in Asia between the Soviet Union and U.S., including the wars in Korea and Vietnam as examples of proxy wars.
- US.62 Describe the causes, course, and consequences of the Korean War, including: Domino theory, 38th parallel, Battle of Inchon, Entry of the communist Chinese, Final disposition of the Koreas
**Materials**

- Scissors
- 8 large brown envelopes
- Cardstock
- Giant Post-it notes or chart paper
- [Library of Congress Primary Sources Analysis Tool](#)
- [Political Cartoon Analysis Guide](#)
- [Photograph Analysis Guide](#)
- Size 4 x 6 colored index cards
- 4 different colors of regular sized Post-it notes
- Class timer

**Resources**

**Images**

- [President Truman Wearing General MacArthur’s Hat](#)
- [I’ll Make the Down Payment for you](#)
- [I Don’t Think You Quite Got the Idea, Senator!](#)
- [Full Scale War with China](#)
- [We’ve Been Using More of a Roundish One](#) (scroll down to upper middle portion of the page)
- [I Can’t Stand to See You Suffer Like This](#)
- [Douglas MacArthur at the front lines above Suwon, Korea, accompanied by Courtney Whtney, Matthew B. Ridgway, William B. Kean, and others](#)
- [Korean Conflict. Men of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division, covering up behind rocks to shield themselves from exploding mortar shells, near the Hantan River in central Korea](#) [1951 April 11]

**Letters**

- From Truman: [Correspondence between Harry S. Truman and Douglas MacArthur, ca. January 1950](#)
- From MacArthur: [Correspondence between Harry S. Truman and Douglas MacArthur, ca. January 1950](#)
**PROCEDURE**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Step 1 Prep</th>
<th>Print the images and letters. You will need a copy of each image, 2 copies of each letter, and 12 primary source analysis worksheets. For best results, print the images in color on cardstock. Be sure to cut the images strategically so that they appear as puzzle pieces. The shapes of your three pieces should be cut in a manner that as students turn over each individual piece they receive small bits of information to analyze at a time. On the back of each piece be certain to number them 1, 2, or 3. Number them in the order that you want the students to reveal the pieces. Your first piece should be the most obscure with the second piece revealing a little more information. The third piece should be the piece with the most vital information. Using a colored index card, create a brief explanation that details what is happening in the image. The index card should have the number 4 on the back as this will be the last piece revealed by the students. (Note: The index card should include the title, date, and the exhibit label for the political cartoon and notes from the photographs.) Place each piece in an envelope with all image sides face down. It should hold the images face down so that when you inform your students to remove the images from the envelopes they should only see the number and no images.</th>
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<td>Step 2 Day One</td>
<td>Divide the class into four groups. Each group should select a group leader. The group leader will serve as the spokesperson to speak on behalf of the entire group and be responsible for keeping the group on task.</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Provide each group with a copy of one of the letters and three primary source analysis worksheets. Have each group analyze their letter. Then share their findings with the class. What can we learn about the relationship between President Truman and General MacArthur from this letter exchange?</td>
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<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Distribute the image envelopes so that each group receives two primary sources to analyze. Each group will also receive a different color of Post-it notes to record their initial findings. Please inform students not to open the envelopes prior to your instructions.</td>
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<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Have the group leader to slide all four pieces out of one envelope without revealing the images. At this point, students should only see the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. Set your timer to 2 minutes. Have students turn over piece 1 and start your timer. Students should be analyzing the images in group discussions and recording their findings. Their initial recordings should be written on their Post-it notes.</td>
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<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Repeat step 5 with piece 2, restarting the timer at 2 minutes.</td>
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<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Ask each group to write down their predictions of what the entire image may actually reveal.</td>
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<td>Step 8</td>
<td>Repeat step 5 with piece 3, restarting the timer at 2 minutes.</td>
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<td>Step 9</td>
<td>Give students 5 minutes to discuss their findings within the group. Have each group fully analyze the image using the primary source analysis worksheet and the political cartoon or photograph analysis guide.</td>
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## Procedure

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<th>Step</th>
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<td>Step 10</td>
<td>Have students attempt to identify the locations referenced within each source.</td>
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<td>Step 11</td>
<td>Have students turn over the colored index card, item 4 and review this new information. Then allow them 2 minutes to make additional comments on the primary source analysis worksheet and Post-it notes.</td>
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<td>Step 12</td>
<td>Repeat steps 5 thru 11 with the second envelope.</td>
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<td>Step 13</td>
<td>Provide each group with 2 large pieces of chart paper (one for each image). Select a recorder (the person with the best handwriting in the group) and “post” your groups comments and primary source analysis worksheets on the paper. The group recorder should create a brief synopsis of their groups’ findings. The group leader will present their findings in class on the next day.</td>
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<td>Day 2 Step 14</td>
<td>As students enter the classroom, they should immediately move into their respective groups. Each group should have 2 completed chart papers that include all the group’s comments, primary source analysis worksheets, and two brief synopsizes of their group’s findings based on the two images from the envelopes.</td>
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<td>Step 15</td>
<td>The instructor should now have each group leader from the four groups come forward and select a number 1 thru 4 to determine their presentation order.</td>
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<td>Step 16</td>
<td>Begin the group presentations allowing each speaker about 3 to 3 1/2 minutes to speak to their findings.</td>
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<td>Step 17</td>
<td>After the presentations, display the groups’ work with the puzzle piece images and allow time for the class to participate in a Gallery Walk.</td>
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<td>Step 18</td>
<td>During the Gallery Walk, students should be able to make additional comments on the regular sized colored coded Post-its (meaning group 1 may have purple Post-its so as they make their additional comments the purple Post-its should begin to appear near the other three groups’ findings).</td>
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<td>Step 19</td>
<td>At this time, the class should engage in a whole group discussion noting the key points taken away from each presentation and recognizing the varying interpretations within the class.</td>
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<td>Step 20</td>
<td>After the Gallery Walk and each group setting has been visited, students should return to their seats and create a three point, five paragraph essay about their own personal interpretations of the nature of the relationship between former President Harry Truman and General Douglas MacArthur based on their completed findings and the group presentations. Each essay should include references from their group, each of the other presentations, and references from their class notes and textbook.</td>
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**EVALUATION**

The evaluation piece is reflective only of the individual essays and not the group activity. Each student should automatically receive 50 points for participating in the group setting. The remaining 50 points will be comprised based on their individual essays.

- **50 to 40 points**: includes 5 paragraphs that utilizes information from the group activity, information from the class presentations, incorporates multiple perspectives based on information presented during class, utilizes correct grammar, utilizes proper punctuation and student defends and demonstrates a clear interpretation of the nature of the relationship between President Harry Truman and General Douglas MacArthur

- **39 to 30 points**: includes 5 paragraphs that utilizes some of the information from the group activity, some of the information from the class presentations essay contains a few grammatical errors, utilizes mostly proper punctuation and student defends and demonstrates a clear interpretation of the nature of the relationship between President Harry Truman and General Douglas MacArthur

- **29-20 points**: includes at least 4 paragraphs that utilizes some of the information from the group activity, essay contains several grammatical errors, and student defends and demonstrates a somewhat clear interpretation of the nature of the relationship between President Harry Truman and General Douglas MacArthur

- **19-15 points**: includes at least 4 paragraphs that utilizes some of the information from the group activity, some of the information from the class presentations, essay contains several grammatical errors, and the student attempts to defend a somewhat clear interpretation of the nature of the relationship between President Harry Truman and General Douglas MacArthur

- **15-0 points**: student should repeat the essay task

**EXTENSION**

*Old Soldier Never Die*

Print copies of the speech “*Old Soldiers Never Die*” and distribute one copy to each student. Students should read and review the speech after the close of this lesson with the understanding that the speech was given after MacArthur had been relieved of duty from the United States military. After reading the speech, students should complete the Document Analysis Tool and discuss their interpretation of MacArthur’s perspective after having served his country. In addition to MacArthur, what was the general perception about the President and his treatment of MacArthur and vice versa? As a guide to assist students have students think of the following questions while completing this assignment:

- Did MacArthur’s view of America change?
- Does MacArthur seem bitter or joyful during the speech?
- The speech was given at West Point. What do you think the impression was amongst the cadets?
- Truman served in the military. Do you believe his views on the military changed after he became President of the United States?
- Does Truman appear to be happy with his decisions regarding MacArthur?
- Do you think you could have made some of the same decisions that Truman had to make?
EXTENSION (cont.)

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Ask students to interview family members that may have lived during this era about their reflections of the Truman/MacArthur dynamic. Students should ask questions such as:

- How did the newspapers across the country report the events?
- What was the general understanding of the Truman/MacArthur dynamic in their particular area of the country at that time?
- How did it affect peoples’ views on the government and the military?

Ask your students to ask permission of the interviewees if the interviews can be recorded on their cell phones so that the personal interviews can be shared with the class. Have students to review the Veteran’s History Project for first-hand accounts of military perceptions of the nature of the relationship between Truman and MacArthur. How does these different accounts of the time period vary? What commonalities to you see?

Acknowledgements: Picture Puzzles Adapted from: Graham Pike and David Selby, Prince Edward Island University