Name_____

Harry S. Truman, U.S. President

When people think of a United States president, they typically think of someone who is highly educated and from a family of successful people. Harry Truman, the 33rd president, lived a humble life until thrust into the United States Senate at age 50 without a formal college education. He became vice president in 1945 and then president that same year after President Franklin Roosevelt died in office. He was the last president not to have a college degree.

Truman was born into a farming family in Missouri. As a child, he loved the piano, becoming proficient and playing regularly the rest of his life. After graduating high school, he started working and had a succession of jobs that included being a railroad timekeeper and a mailroom clerk for a newspaper. After his military service, he started a business, which ultimately failed.

In 1917, Truman joined the army to serve in World War I. He was captain of an artillery unit and showed exceptional leadership and courage. One time during battle, the Germans attacked, and his men began to turn and flee. He was able to rally them to turn and fight. After that, he had undivided loyalty from his men.

He showed that same determination as president. Taking over during World War II, he immediately faced immense difficulties. Through courage and homespun wisdom, he was able to help guide the war to a successful end. His decision to use atomic weapons against Japan was perhaps the single most difficult decision a president has ever had to make. He led the world in the post-war era providing food, clothing, and hope to much of Europe.

Harry Truman serves as a reminder that difficulties in life can be overcome and that one can achieve great things in spite of setbacks and trials.

Text Questions

1. What is one fact from Truman's life that sets him apart from other presidents in recent history?
   a. He had a job before becoming president.
   b. He served in the U.S. Senate.
   c. He did not have a college degree.
   d. He served in the military.
2. What is one example of Truman's leadership abilities?
   a. He inspired his men to turn and fight while under German attack.
   b. He played the piano well.
   c. He was not accepted into West Point.
   d. He had a successful business after the war.
3. Which statement from the text best explains Truman's success as president?
   a. He became vice president in 1945.
   b. He became president that same year after President Franklin Roosevelt died in office.
   c. Taking over during World War II, he immediately faced immense difficulties.
   d. Through courage and homespun wisdom, he was able to help guide the war to a successful end.
4. Which is a synonym for the word *exceptional* as it is used in the third paragraph?
   a. uncommon
   b. unbelievable
   c. rare
   d. outstanding
5. What do you think made Truman's decision to use atomic weapons so difficult?

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