



Harry S Truman National Historic Site  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

# To the Best of My Ability

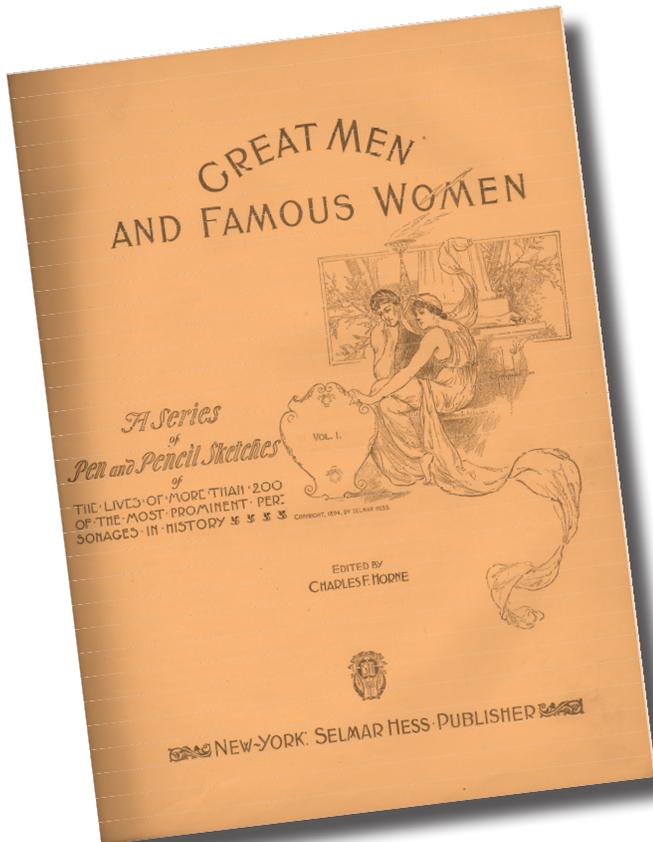
## The Virtues of Harry S Truman



**Junior Ranger**  
**Ages 9-12**



Loyalty. Self-discipline. Humility. Industry. Optimism. Decisiveness. These are examples of “virtues.” Being virtuous means doing the right thing & being a good person. Virtues are qualities of character that everyone should try to live up to.



Harry’s parents gave him a special present for his 10th Birthday. They gave him a set of history books. The books were called *Great Men and Famous Women*.

These books changed his life.

Young Harry learned a lot from these books. He learned about the virtues that made people great:

- Be Loyal.
- Practice Self-Discipline.
- Remain Humble.
- Work Hard.
- Be Optimistic.
- Be Decisive.

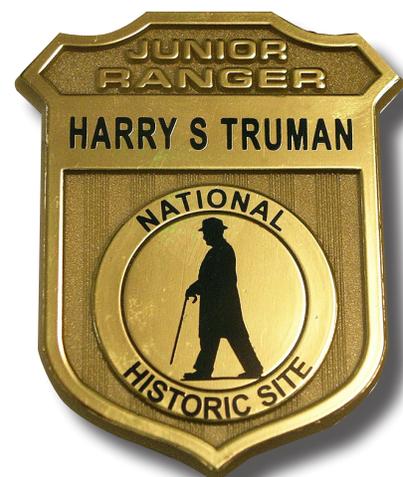
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## How to Become a Junior Ranger:

This book contains six fun activities about the virtues Harry learned from his history books.

**Complete at least 4 of the 6 activities.**

When you are finished **return your book to the ranger at the visitor center** to receive your official Junior Ranger badge.





## The Virtue of Loyalty



Harry at age 2

Loyalty is faithfulness and devotion. The Trumans lived in a close-knit community surrounded by family members and friends. From his home he could walk to school, work, church, his voting place, even to his barber. Truman said, “You must always keep in mind who you are and where you come from.”

*“I’ve been around a great many places, but I’ve never wanted to live any place but in Jackson County, Missouri, the finest county in the world.”* Harry Truman

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Find the drinking fountain in the Visitor Center. There you will find a map of downtown Independence, Missouri. Explore the map and answer the questions about these special places in Harry’s life.

1. In what building did Harry Truman vote?
2. Harry voted for himself for president. What do you think of that?
3. How would Harry travel when he ran for president?
4. Where did Harry marry Bess?
5. Who else was married there? How was this person related to the Trumans?
6. Where did Harry have an office?
7. How many blocks was his home from his office?
8. Name two other Missouri towns he lived in.



## The Virtue of Self-Discipline

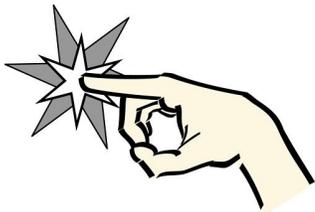


Harry S. Truman Library

Self-discipline means controlling ourselves. It means doing the things we know we should do and not doing the things we know we shouldn't. It means understanding the rewards and consequences of our actions. Harry showed self-discipline in several ways when he was young. He would practice the piano for two hours every day before he went to school! He even tried to read every book in the school library!

*"If I want to be great, I have to win the victory over myself."*

Harry Truman



What if you sat in Harry's favorite chair or put on one of his hats? No big deal, right? What if the thousands of visitors to the Truman home sat on his chair or put on his hat? Do you think the chair and hat would last very long?

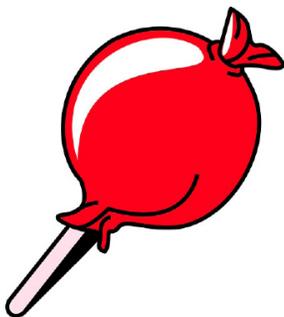


Everything inside the Truman home is special because it belonged to the Trumans. If something breaks, tears,

scratches or wears, the house will no longer be the same as it was when the Trumans lived here. As you tour the home there are no ropes or barriers to keep you from touching things that you shouldn't. You'll have to use self discipline to decide how to act. By following the rules, you are helping to protect the house for the many visitors that will come after you.



**Circle the things you can do on your tour and cross out the things that you cannot.**



**Follow the ranger!**





## The Virtue of Humility



Humility is when a person is humble or modest. They can still be proud of their accomplishments, but they don't like to "show off." Harry Truman was a humble man. Even though he became president he didn't brag or put other people down. This virtue made Truman popular. Margaret Truman, Harry's daughter, wrote, "To him humility meant never blowing your own horn, never claiming credit in the public for what you did or said."

Circle the correct item in each column. Remember that Harry was humble.



Circle the car that belonged to the Trumans.



Circle the living room that belonged to the Trumans.



What did Harry enjoy doing in his spare time?





## The Virtue of Industry



Harry S. Truman Library

Having the virtue of industry means to work hard in all your pursuits. It means to stay busy, waste no time, and give 100% effort in everything that you do. Harry Truman was an industrious person, especially after he moved to the family farm. Although the work was hard and the days were long, he found great satisfaction in seeing his hard work of raising crops feed his family.

*"It takes work, work and more work to get satisfactory results."*

Harry Truman

In the boxes below are different tasks that Harry Truman had to complete on the farm and as president. Circle the tasks that a president would do. Next place all 16 tasks in the proper spots in Harry's datebook on the next page. One has already been done to help you get started.

**Radio Report to the American People**  
10:00 PM—10:30 PM

**Help my sister Mary Jane prepare supper** at 4:30 PM. Including eating and cleaning up, this will take 2 hours.

**Write a letter to Bess Wallace.** This will take 1 hour. I want to finish by 10:30 so I can go to bed.

**Meet with cabinet members** at 8:00 AM. These meetings usually last 2 hours.

**Lunch** with Eleanor Roosevelt after eye appointment

**Eye doctor appointment** at the White House at 12:30 PM—1:30 PM.

**Write a letter to cousins Ethel and Nellie.** Ask if they want to stay at the White House with us this summer. 3:00—3:30.

**Fix the water pump and then eat lunch.** I need to be done by 1:30 PM so I can help my brother Vivian load hay.

Go to **Mason meeting** at the Grandview Lodge from 7:30 PM—9:30 PM

**Help brother Vivian load hay bales.** This will take 3 hours to do.

**Work on speech** with Press Secretary Charlie Ross from 2:00 PM—3:00 PM.

After cabinet meeting, **meet with Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson.** Need to be done in time for eye appointment.

**Plow the corn fields.** I am going to start at 7:00 AM. I hope to be done by 11:30 so I can get to that broken water pump next.

After supper, **read the latest addition of Wallace's Farmer** to decide when to harvest the wheat crops this year. I should have time to do this before my Mason meeting.

**Read the latest report** on development of the hydrogen bomb. I should have about 2 hours to do this if I start at 3:30 PM.

**White House Dinner with Queen Elizabeth.** Dinner starts at 6:30 PM but I will need 1 hour before that to get dressed. The dinner should be over by 10:00 PM.

Farm Schedule		Presidential Schedule	
7:00 AM		7:00 AM	
7:30 AM		7:30 AM	
8:00 AM		8:00 AM	<i>Meet with cabinet members</i>
8:30 AM		8:30 AM	
9:00 AM		9:00 AM	
9:30 AM		9:30 AM	
10:00 AM		10:00 AM	
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## The Virtue of Optimism



An optimist believes that people are naturally good and most situations will work out for the best. Harry Truman suffered failure after failure—he wasn't able to go to college, he drilled for oil but didn't find any, he owned a store that went out of business. Nevertheless, he wrote, "I'm naturally a hopeful, happy person," and he kept trying. Lots of people would have given up, but Harry Truman did not give up. He eventually became the 33rd President of the United States!

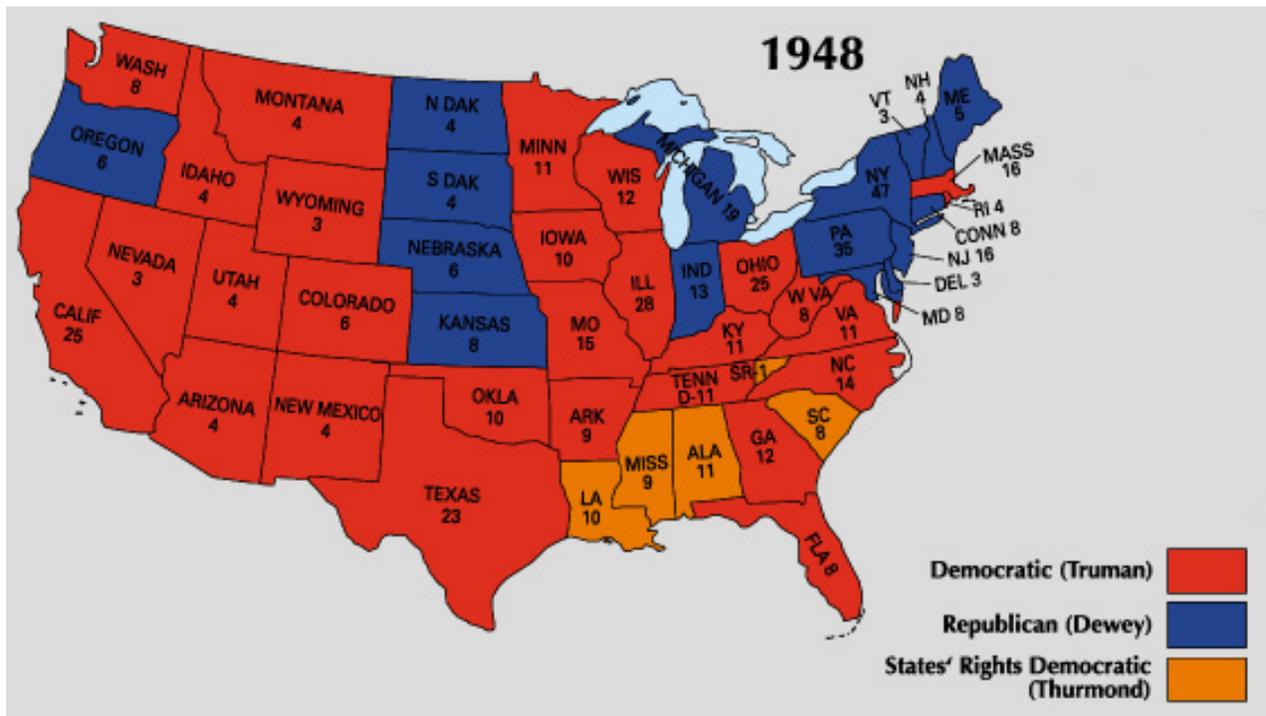
*"A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties."*  
Harry Truman

In 1948 Harry used his optimism to be re-elected as president. Everyone thought he was going to lose the election. The newspapers, opinion polls, and political experts thought that his opponent, Thomas Dewey, would defeat him and become the next president.

Members of Harry's own staff and family thought he was going to lose. Yet, despite these long odds, Harry always believed he would win. Harry began a long and tiring campaign by train. He traveled over 20,000 miles, made 238 stops, and spoke to thousands of people.

In order to win the presidential election, a candidate needs to win a certain number of electoral votes. Every state has a number of electoral votes that can be cast depending on how many people live in that state. The most popular candidate for that state will win all of that state's electoral votes. In 1948 Harry needed 266 electoral votes to be elected.

**Study the election map on the following page. Then answer the questions to find out if Harry's optimism paid off.**

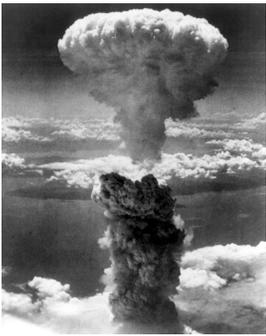


**Presidential Election Results in 1948**

1. At the beginning of the election some people predicted that Harry Truman would not win any states. Look at the election map above. How many states did he actually win?
2. Find Missouri. Did Harry win his home state? How many electoral votes came from his home state?
3. Find your home state. Who won it? How many votes came from your state?
4. Was there another person running for president besides Truman and Dewey? What was his name?
5. Did Harry's optimism pay off?



## The Virtue of Decisiveness



Decisiveness means making wise choices based on all the information available to you. “You get all the facts and you make up your mind,” said Harry Truman. Some decisions are easy and some are hard. As president, Harry Truman had to make some very tough world-changing decisions.

*“Making decisions is one of a president’s main responsibilities.”*

Harry Truman

### THE DECISION

You are the President. You have a very difficult decision to make whether or not to drop a new and powerful bomb—an atomic bomb.

### THE BACKGROUND

Your country, the United States of America, has been at war with a determined enemy, the country of Japan. War has been raging for almost four years. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and

civilians have been killed. The U.S. is winning, but Japan seems determined to continue fighting. To end the war the island of Japan will have to be invaded and many more U.S. and Japanese soldiers and Japanese civilians will be killed. But a new atomic bomb can be used to force Japan to surrender. You need to make a decision, and like Harry Truman you want the facts to help you make the decision.

## REASONS TO USE THE ATOMIC BOMB IN WORLD WAR II

- The atomic bomb may cause Japan to surrender and possibly save as many as 100,000 American soldiers (some estimates are as high as 1,000,000 American lives will be saved).
- Japan, though losing the war, is determined to fight to the bitter end. For months intense bombing raids have not caused Japan to surrender.
- The atomic bomb will kill many Japanese soldiers and civilians, but many more will die if the United States invades Japan (the death toll could be in the millions).
- Many Americans will be killed if the United States invades Japan. What will Americans say when they learn there was a weapon available that could have ended the war quickly, but that weapon was not used?
- Japan started the war with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Since then some people believe that Japan has treated prisoners-of-war inhumanely.



## REASONS NOT TO USE THE ATOMIC BOMB IN WORLD WAR II

- The atomic bomb could kill 100,000 innocent Japanese civilians. It is inhumane to kill innocent people.
- Japan may surrender eventually even if the atomic bomb is not used.
- The atomic bomb will cause long-term effects like radiation poisoning, which could cause intense suffering for thousands of people (in 1945, no one really knew what the long-term effects of the atomic bomb might be).
- If the United States uses the atomic bomb, other countries will learn about it and make their own. They might even use it against the United States.
- The atomic bomb is such a terrible weapon, other nations may see the United States as being cruel to use it. Many nations may be angry with the United States.

## DECISION TIME

Now is the time for you to make a decision. What are you going to do? Are you going to drop the atomic bomb?

Explain your decision:



Captain Harry Truman During World War I

**Thanks for tackling the Junior Ranger project at my favorite national park! I hope it wasn't too hard, but you know what I've always said, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen."**

**When you are done, remember to go to the visitor center and show your book to the ranger at the front desk. Then take the Junior Ranger oath and get your Junior Ranger badge.**



A handwritten signature of Harry S. Truman in black ink.

