

# Presidents in the Hot Seat: Black Tuesday

*Note: This Presidents in the Hot Seat simulation will focus more on the President's role as Chief of the Economy, allowing students to see that the office of the president requires its occupant to be able to manage multiple types of hot seat situations, outside of the typical circumstances people often associate the president having to deal with. This plan is designed to be used in a U.S. History or U.S. Government course, however, it can easily be adapted to be used in an Economics course as well.*

## **Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to use primary evidence to formulate a response to a complex policy problem.
2. Students will be able to use primary evidence to critique the actions of historical decision-makers.
3. Students will be able to analyze and apply primary evidence to develop historical empathy for past decision-makers.

**Length of Lesson:** Six 45 minute class periods

## **Materials:**

1. Presidents in the Hot Seat: Primary Document Analysis Sheet
2. Day 2 Vocab Terms Black Tuesday
3. Day 2 Black Tuesday B.C. Forbes Interview
4. President Primary Documents
5. Secretary of State Primary Documents
6. Secretary of Labor Primary Documents
7. Secretary of Commerce Documents
8. Secretary of the Treasury Documents
9. Links to various online resources needed for the lesson are included throughout this lesson plan.

## *Start of Lesson*

*Day 1: How Should the President Respond in a Time of Crisis?*

**Anticipatory Set (Entire first 45-minute class period):** Organize students into groups of five. At the start of class, have students write for five minutes individually in response to the question: “How should the President respond during a crisis?” After this, provide ten minutes for every student to share their responses as a group. Each group must develop a group response to the question. Afterwards, rearrange the classroom seating into a circle, and ask each group to share their responses to the question. Use these responses to begin a socratic seminar about how the president should respond to a crisis.

Possible follow up questions:

- What should the president immediately inquire about a potential crisis/situation (What questions should the president ask)? What should the President try to learn about the situation?
- What resources does the President have at their disposal to begin dealing with an issue?
- Should the President establish contact with local and state leaders to handle the situation? Should the president ask what they have at their disposal to immediately address the situation?
- Should the president disclose all information to the public or distribute information selectively in order to prevent panic?

**Debrief:** Have students take out a piece of paper and respond to the following question: If you were the President or one of the President’s advisors during a major crisis, how do you think you personally would respond? Why?

*Day 2: October 29, 1929 Black Tuesday*

**Class Starter (1-2 minutes):** Yesterday, we discussed how a President might respond to a crisis. For the next couple of days, you will be stepping into the role of President and his advisors in one of the most impactful crises of the 20th century; the stock market crash and subsequent collapse of the United States economy. Today we will be quickly reviewing key terms and definitions specific to this economic crisis, as well as analyzing

**Activity 1 (20 minutes):** Have students define key economic terms using a vocabulary strategy that works for them.

**Suggested vocabulary to frontload simulation with:** You may want to use the “Vocab Terms Black Tuesday” document which has the key terms which will come up throughout the rest of the simulation.

**Activity 2 (20 minutes):** Begin playing the clip below and analyze B.C. Forbes response to the “Wall Street Panic.”

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2ep3OyX0gM>

**Suggested materials to use when watching video:** You may want to use the “Day 2 Black Tuesday D.C. Forbes ” when showing the video to the students. A template for Cornell notes is also available for interested educators. Allow students to complete the questionnaire/take in order to obtain some background knowledge that will help students to participate in the *Day 3* activities.

**Transition:** Explain to students that now that they have seen the public reaction a major Wall Street influencer/leader had to the stock market crash. Ask students if they believe everyone working in Wall Street had the same optimistic response. Afterwards, direct students to complete the debrief.

**Activity (5 minutes):**

**Debrief:** Direct students to respond to the following questions either on Google Classroom or on a piece of paper:

1. What would you do with your money if you were alive during this time? Would you reinvest in the stock market or would you hold onto your money?

Today we will be rapidly reviewing the information President Herbert Hoover, his staff, and high clearance individuals would have had to work with from major news organizations from October and November 1929.

*Day 3: Primary source analysis in preparation for the simulation.*

**Class Starter (3-5 minutes):** Today, students will begin evaluating the primary sources for each of the roles the students are to fill. Begin by explaining to students that they will be taking on the role of President Hoover and his senior advisors to make a decision about the Wall Street Panic. Assign each student one of the roles that needs to be filled (President, Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of Labor, and Secretary of State)<sup>1</sup>. Once students have their roles, provide them with the documents assigned for each role.

**Activity (40 minutes):** For this activity, it is necessary to allow students time to read through the primary sources assigned to them, and evaluate the merit of the information provided in each document. Have students use the Presidents in the Hot Seat: Primary Document Analysis sheet to help them classify the importance of and make sense of the information they find in their documents. They will use this information tomorrow in a simulation in which they will have to make several difficult decisions based off of what they know.<sup>2</sup>

**Materials to use when working within groups:** Students will need to use the primary sources provided to them depending on their role.

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<sup>1</sup> In an odd group of six, assign the sixth student the role of Vice President and give them the task of assisting the student playing the role of President in reading primary documents and leading the team meetings.

<sup>2</sup> This lesson has been intentionally kept short to just one day to induce some stress as students work to both analyze the primary evidence and use that evidence to make a decision “in the hot seat.”

*Day 4: Simulation.*

**Class Starter (3-5 minutes):** Today, students will work within their groups of 5 to determine what course of action the President should take in order to effectively respond to the developing situation. Explain to students that their decisions will undoubtedly impact the lives of millions of Americans and that groups should spend time deliberating each decision before committing to a final resolution.

**Activity (40 minutes):** For this activity, the students should be seated within their groups so that they can discuss the best course of action they need to take to address the situation. Inform the students that they will need to work **collaboratively**, and present to the group the information they deemed important in the primary sources they read yesterday. By the end of class, each group should have answered and turned in all of the *Address to the American People Questionnaire*. Ultimately, students must use this information to make a decision about how the President will respond to the Wall Street Panic by the end of the class period.

*Day 5: Address to the American People.*

**Class Starter (3-5 minutes):** Today, students will work within their groups to develop a brief 3-5 minute address which will be delivered to the American people. These addresses will explain the decisions they made yesterday about how the President will respond to panic. Explain to the students that they need to address how they are planning to prevent a further decline in the U.S. economy, if any of the damage that has been inflicted is irreparable, what is responsible for the decline, and finally how to restore Wall Street and the U.S. economy to its former self. The address should offer some words of encouragement to the American people, whom many have lost everything.

**Activity (30 minutes):** Provide students ample time to script out their address the president will deliver to the American people. Inform students that they should use the *Address to the American People* Questionnaire to help them to formulate their response. Students should work **collaboratively** as a group to write the address, however, ultimately the student playing the role of the president will be required to give the address. Each student in the group should be made responsible for writing part of the address that answers one of the questions mentioned in the class starter, in order to promote a fair distribution of the workload.

**Activity (10 minutes):** The President from each group will deliver their speech to the rest of the class, outlining the course of action they will take to secure the country and respond to the Wall Street Panic. The address should be brief, however, it must adequately cover all of the points mentioned in the *Address to the American People* Questionnaire.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For the sake of time and allowing all groups the opportunity to deliver their press conference, it is recommended that the press conferences be limited to 3 minutes, but teachers may choose to lengthen or shorten this time.

*Day 6: Lesson Debrief*

**Class Starter (5-10 minutes):** Up until now, you [the students] have served in the roles of the President and his advisors in the aftermath of the 1929 Stock Market Crash. Today, we will analyze the actual response of President Herbert Hoover to the crash and compare your responses to his. To ensure our understanding of the events of the crisis, we will look recap how the attacks unfolded that morning. To provide a timeline of the events, play the following video:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18dFdWe2n4s>.

**Transition:** As these events unfolded, President Herbert Hoover was quickly notified of the worsening economy. Now let's take a closer look at what happened before, during, and after the crash and how it impacted the American people.

**Activity 1:** Play the following YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F5SSkqPqTI>, and have students take Cornell notes over the video. When finished, complete the final debrief below.

**Final Debrief:** Ask students to respond to the following questions (on paper or online, such as on Google Classroom):

1. How was your group's response to the crash similar to President Hoover's response? How was it different? Explain.
2. How has your knowledge of the responsibilities and pressures of the American presidency changed as a result of this simulation? Explain.<sup>4</sup>

*End of Lesson*

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<sup>4</sup> Student responses may vary based on teacher wishes. It is recommended that the students' responses be at least a 5-sentence paragraph to encourage deeper reflective thoughts.