

President Clinton's Impeachment

Directions: Using the following sources surrounding the impeachment of President Bill Clinton, answer the questions that follow in complete sentences.

SOURCE A

Foes of the president further complained that he was so absorbed in protecting his hide that he was endangering national security. On August 7, Al Qaeda terrorists blew up the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. On August 20, three days after his televised address, Clinton authorized retaliatory missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan, leading critics to charge that he was cynically using military firepower in order to divert attention from his personal excesses. Whether this was so was impossible to prove – Clinton said he acted to thwart terrorism – but there was no doubting his personal problems were consuming much of his time and that partisan battling over sex was hijacking the attention of Washington and the country.

- Patterson, James T. 2005. *Restless Giant: The United States from Watergate to Bush v. Gore*. Oxford University Press

SOURCE B

I really think the way to think about the political legacy of Bill Clinton is to view it from the lenses of on the one hand and on the other. And let me give you a series of such tensions. I would submit, Bill Clinton is the most gifted American politician since FDR, in every respect, intelligence, policy, knowledge, political skill, capacity to relate to the American people. Yet, he was also the one who was impeached and almost driven from office. As Bob said, Bill Clinton presided over and contributed to a period of extraordinary prosperity, yet leaves office with a widespread sense of squandered opportunities; Belle identified two, the area of health reform, and social insurance reform. On the latter one might argue that the success of fiscal policy has indirectly improved the health of our social insurance system, yet alas he certainly intended to do more and would have, had other matters not overwhelmed him.

- Mann, Tom. "Assessing Bill Clinton's Legacy: How will History Remember Him?" *The Brookings Institution*. January 9, 2001.

SOURCE C

In the process of pursuing an impeachment of the President, the Republicans had seriously overplayed their hand. An indication of what lay ahead came when the party actually lost five seats in the House while gaining no Senate seats in the November 1998 elections conducted just prior to the impeachment vote. Traditionally, the opposition party registers significant gains in the off-year elections of a President's second term, and so the Republicans loss was virtually unprecedented.

As the impeachment process unfolded, Clinton's ratings in public opinion polls were at an all-time high, hovering at close to 70 percent. Most Americans gave Clinton low marks for character and honesty. But, they gave him high marks for performance and wanted him censured and condemned for his conduct, but not impeached and removed. Many viewed key Republicans attackers as mean-spirited extremists willing to use a personal scandal for partisan goals. In the end, voters were happy with Clinton's handling of the White House, the economy, and most matters of public life. Hillary Clinton's public opinion poll ratings actually exceeded the President's in large measure because of her dignified demeanor

during those trying personal times, thus lifting her popularity to among the highest ever for a First Lady.

-“Domestic Affairs: William Jefferson Clinton.” American President: An Online Reference Resource. The Miller Center of Public Affairs. <http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/clinton/essays/biography/4>

SOURCE D



-Cartoon by Bill McArthur, featuring Benjamin Netanyahu (Israeli Prime Minister), Yasser Arafat (Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization), Bill Clinton. First published in *The Glasgow Herald*. December 14, 1998.

QUESTIONS

1. What evidence is there in Source B that issues surrounding impeachment affected the actions of President Clinton?
2. What is the message of Source D?
3. Compare and contrast the views expressed in sources A and C on the effects of the impeachment scandal.
4. With reference to their origin and purpose, assess the values and limitations of sources B and C for historians researching the Clinton presidency.
5. Using the sources and your own knowledge, evaluate the affect of the Whitewater and Lewinsky scandals on the ability of Bill Clinton to carry out his policy goals.