

## A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE

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This lesson will introduce students to the political climate of the United States in the years leading up to the 1980 Olympic Winter Games and ask them to practice their critical thinking skills by evaluating primary and secondary sources.

### CONTEXT

The years leading up to the 1980 Olympic Winter Games were filled with political tension in the United States. In July 1979, President Jimmy Carter postponed his address to the nation and later delivered a speech which would become known as the “Crisis of Confidence”. While not known then, this speech from President Carter would clearly highlight why the “Miracle on Ice” hockey game at the 1980 Olympic Winter Games meant so much to the nation.

### AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

1. Cite specific textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources.
2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source.
3. Identify the central ideas that a historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.

### MATERIALS

#### Primary Sources:

- Presidential Speeches
- Newspaper Articles

#### Secondary Sources:

- “Recapturing Leadership” by Robert Strong.
- The “Miracle on Ice, 35 Years Later”. ABC News.
- Remembering the USA’s Miracle on Ice. Olympics.com.

## PART 1: THE SPEECH

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- Have students read the overview essay, **Recapturing Leadership by Robert Strong**. Ask students to answer the questions in the reading guide. Use the questions as a way to engage the class in discussion and check student understanding of the topic.
- Introduce President Carter’s **“Crisis of Confidence Speech”** and explain that presidential speeches are excellent primary sources that give us a direct look into past events and how presidents deliver information in a specific way so they can get the American public to understand them.

- Play the **video** of President Carter’s speech and have students follow along with the transcript. To keep students engaged, we have highlighted some of the important sections with corresponding timestamps below:
  - 0:01 - 5:48
  - 8:11 - 19:48
  - 30:55 - 33:04
- Have students follow along with the **transcript** and answer the questions in the accompanying worksheet.
- Use the question guide to talk with students about what they identified as the most important information and to check student understanding.

## **PART 2: CONNECTING IT TO THE OLYMPICS**

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- To get students familiarized with the “Miracle on Ice”, play the “Remembering the USA’s Miracle on Ice” from Olympics.com. Check for student understanding by asking them why the game was considered a miracle.
- Afterwards, have students watch the ABC News piece on the “**Miracle on Ice, 35 Years Later**” and read the **local newspaper articles**. Explain to students that the political culture that they learned about in Part 1 carried over into many facets of everyday life including sports.
- Ask students to complete the accompanying worksheet and use the questions to talk with students about their answers and to check student understanding.
- To wrap up the lesson, we highly suggest having students view the 2004 Disney movie “Miracle.” The movie is rated PG and has a run time of 2 hours and 15 minutes.

## RESOURCES

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- Recapturing Leadership: The Carter Administration and the Crisis of Confidence (1986) by Robert Strong.
- Energy and National Goals: Address to the Nation (1979) delivered by Jimmy Carter.
- Jimmy Carter's Full "Crisis of Confidence" Speech (1979) delivered by Jimmy Carter.
- The "Miracle on Ice, 35 Years Later" (2015) ABC News.
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyRVZX3J2uQ>
- "Olympians Restore American Pride" (1980) by Will Grimsley.
- "America's Young Team Pulls Stunning Upset" (1980) by Stephen J. Roberts.
- "U.S. Icers Go for the Gold-and Succeed" (1980) by Stephen J. Roberts.

## RECAPTURING LEADERSHIP READING GUIDE

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While reading through the essay “Recapturing Leadership: The Carter Administration and the Crisis of Confidence” by Robert Strong, answer the reading questions below.

**1. According to the author, what national and global problems were the United States experiencing throughout the 1970s?**

Possible answers include: inflation, recession, oil embargo, tense politics in Iran and Afghanistan, etc.

**2. According to the essay, what were the three “paths” that led to the Camp David domestic summit?**

Answers include: the energy crisis, the crisis of confidence, and organization and personnel.

**3. Who was Patrick Caddell and why was he important to President Carter’s 1979 address to the nation?**

Answers include: a pollster who worked with Carter’s administration. He noticed the concerning political mood of the country and convinced President Carter to address the “crisis of confidence” in his address to the nation.

**4. According to the essay, what were some of the main reasons that Americans were experiencing a “crisis of confidence”?**

Possible answers include: majority of Americans were pessimistic about several items including the long-term future of the nation, their personal prospects, and less opportunities for their children, and Americans were becoming cynical about the ability of the government.

**5. Do you think Strong believes Jimmy Carter was an effective or ineffective president? Why do you think so?**

Answers will vary.

## CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE QUESTION GUIDE

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While listening to President Jimmy Carter's 1979 address to the nation, follow along on the provided transcript and answer the questions below.

### 1. What was President Carter's tone during the speech?

*Possible answers include: pessimistic, sad, discouraged, motivated, etc.*

### 2. After hearing the citizen's remarks to the president at Camp David, what statements stood out to you and why?

*Possible answers include: "some of us have suffered from recession all our lives" or "some people have wasted energy, but others haven't had anything to waste."*

### 3. Between the 8:11 - 19:48, President Carter goes into detail about what America's "crisis of confidence." What three statements stood out to you and why?

*Possible answers include: "for the first time in the history of our country a majority of people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years" or "we remember when the phrase "sound as a dollar" was an expression of absolute dependability, until ten years of inflation began to shrink our dollar and our savings."*

### 4. What emotions or attitudes do you think President Carter was trying to evoke from the American public with his speech?

*Possible answers include: reality check, sadness, encouragement, motivation, etc.*

### 5. In your own words, describe what President Carter meant by "crisis of confidence."

*Possible answers include: Americans have lost faith in being the world's leader in "progress", the values that have historically made up the country have become lost, or the loss of a unity of purpose for the nation.*

### 6. According to President Carter, what are the American values that he believes has been lost over the past generations?

*Possible answers include: hard work, close knit communities, strong families, etc.*

### 7. After listening to President Carter's speech, how do you see his remarks about America reflected in today's society?

*Answers will vary.*

## CONNECTING THE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE TO SPORT

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After watching the video clips from Olympics.com and ABC News and reading through the three newspaper articles, complete the questions below.

**1. Before watching the news clip and reading the newspaper stories, how do you see politics and sports being intertwined with one another?**

*Answers will vary.*

**2. What were the important facts you wrote down from the ABC News video and why did you select these them?**

*Answers will vary.*

**3. What were the sentences you highlighted in the news stories and why?**

*Answers will vary.*

**4. Based on the ABC news clip and the newspaper articles, what was the atmosphere like in Lake Placid following the “Miracle on Ice” hockey game?**

*Possible answers include: excitement, jubilation, joyful, celebratory, shocked, etc.*

**5. Why do you think that politics affected the world’s view of the 1980 Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid?**

*Possible answers include: Cold War tensions lead to global conflict with issues like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Issues directly affecting the United States like the Iranian Hostage Crisis, oil shortages, and pessimistic view of the nation added more and more pressure to athletes during the 1980 Winter Games.*

**6. How do you see President Carter’s 1979 “Crisis of Confidence” speech reflected in the 1980 Olympic Winter Games, specifically the “Miracle on Ice” hockey game?**

*Possible answers include: It is mentioned in the video clips that this game reawakened America’s spirit and people’s pride in their country, which was a main talking point in President Carter’s speech.*