What is the latest news story about Donald Trump that you have heard? What was it about? Exchange stories with two fellow pupils. What is your opinion of President Trump?

Since the election of Donald Trump last November, the world (and many Americans) have looked on with astonishment. Once elected, it was thought that President Trump might change his aggressive style, calm down and limit his tweets. Nothing of the kind has happened. Instead, the White House has gone through a seemingly endless series of conflicts and scandals, often driven by Trump himself. There are new revelations almost every day. Charges of “fake news” are thrown back and forth.
How is this possible? How did the world’s superpower and one of its oldest and most stable democracies end up with an administration that seems to resemble a reality TV show? This article will:

- look at the specific conditions that led to the election of Donald Trump as President.
- review the situation after the first eight months of the Trump presidency.

**How did Trump get elected?**

We will offer two possible answers. The first will deal with the ideas (ideology) of the Republican Party on which Trump based his campaign. The second will deal with why these ideas gained such support among many Americans.

For many years, the leadership of the conservative Republican Party has strongly believed that the Federal government in America had grown too large and powerful and could no longer be trusted. They blamed this development on political and intellectual “elites” in Washington, represented by the Democratic Party and people like Hillary Clinton. In 2016, they were looking for a Republican Presidential candidate who could muster support for these views. Like it or not, Trump embodied many of their ideas:

- They distrusted politicians – Trump had never held office before and was “clean.”
- They distrusted government – Trump was a businessman without government ties.
- They distrusted political “elites” – Trump was a rough-talking political outsider.
- They disliked all things connected to Washington – Trump was a New Yorker.
In addition, Trump was a “straight shooter,” successfully using mass communication and social media to speak directly to the people over the heads of the “establishment.”

The leadership of the Republican Party did not want Donald Trump as their President. Nevertheless, he unexpectedly gained the most votes in the state primaries and then went on to win the general election, beating the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. How?

**American anger**

Many Americans voted for Trump because they were angry and disappointed with the Federal government. One reason for this anger was the political deadlock between Democratic President Barack Obama and the Republican-controlled Congress during the previous six years. Congress refused to pass most of Obama’s programs. He vetoed many of theirs. Very little got done and the reputation of government in Washington fell to historic lows. Many Democrats were disappointed with Obama’s performance. Many Republicans were confirmed in their poor opinion of government. “Throw the bums out” became the call of the day.

Another cause for American anger was increasing inequality in the country. As you can see in *Graph One* below, 3/5ths of Americans (roughly 192 million people) have had little or no increase in income since the 1970s, while the income of the upper 1/5 (about 64 million people) has increased dramatically. Because of this, the middle class has been shrinking and lower income groups have been facing increasingly hard and uncertain times.
Frightened and frustrated, many of these voters turned to Donald Trump in 2016. Trump’s promise to “Make America Great Again” had a strong appeal, particularly to white men without higher education – men who had lost their jobs to global competition. They turned out to be his strongest support group.
Promises, promises ...

During his campaign, Trump promised a great many things to “Make America Great Again.” Here is a list of some of his more provocative promises.

- Build a wall against illegal immigration from Mexico and make Mexico pay for it.
- Ban travelers from Muslim nations.
- Withdraw from the Paris agreement against global warming.
- End Obamacare – government sponsored health insurance.

So, how many of these promises has Trump kept after eight months in office?

- Build a wall against illegal immigration from Mexico and make Mexico pay for it.
  - *Neither Congress nor Mexico have been willing to pay for it, so it is still in the planning stage.*
- Ban travelers from Muslim nations (at the moment, 6 selected nations).
  - *Initially struck down by lower courts, the Supreme Court will rule on this in the fall.*
- Withdraw from the Paris agreement against global warming.
  - *Never approved by the Senate (a requirement), Trump was free to withdraw this summer.*
- End Obamacare – government-sponsored health insurance.
  - *Despite many attempts, the Republican-controlled Congress cannot agree how to do this – to Trump’s great frustration.*
In sum, out of the four promises listed here, he could keep only one. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the steep drop in his popularity among Americans since his election. If you look at *Graph Two* below, you can see that only about one in three Americans approved of the job Trump is doing as of August 8, 2017. That is historically low for a President at this stage of his four-year term.

![Graph Two](http://www.gallup.com/poll/201617/gallup-daily-trump-job-approval.aspx)

However, there are other – probably more important – reasons for his unpopularity at this point.

**Sensational statements, scandals and investigations**

It would be difficult to give a summary of all the sensational statements, accusations and rumors that swirl around the White House these days. Every morning seems to bring a new one. For example, as this article is being written, Trump has threatened to bring down “fire and fury” on North Korea for threatening the US. This was an apparently an “unscripted” remark by the President; that is, nobody in the White House knew it was coming or what it actually meant. It has resulted in an escalating war of words that could potentially end up in an actual bloody war. It is statements and tweets like this that have
made the American public (and the world) skeptical and anxious about the Trump Presidency.

![President Donald Trump winces while delivering remarks on the protests in Charlottesville, Virginia, from his golf estate in New Jersey, August 12, 2017 (REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst)](image)

A more serious matter has been the scandal caused by the claim that the Trump campaign worked together with the Russians to undermine the campaign of his Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton and win the election. American intelligence agencies believe that Russia did interfere in the election, though Trump himself disagrees with them. But did the Trump campaign take actively take part in such interference? That is the question both Congress and the FBI are now investigating.

Trump and those who support him claim that all this is “fake news” used by his enemies to bring him down. The scandal has undoubtedly lowered his popularity. And if it turns out there is any truth in the claims of cooperation with the Russians, it could even cost him his Presidency. As they say in the world of TV – stay tuned!
The future

The roller coaster ride of the Trump Presidency will no doubt continue. There are many in the world who wish that it could be cut short, that he could be removed from office. That seems unlikely. The only way to legally remove a sitting President is through “Impeachment;” that is, finding him guilty of “Treason, Bribery, or other High Crimes and Misdemeanors.” It is the House of Representatives that decides if an impeachment trial shall take place. It is the Senate that tries the case; i.e. acts a jury. The Republicans presently control both houses of Congress, so it would take a “smoking gun” (overwhelming evidence) to force them to remove a Republican President. They may not like him, but he is their man in the White House. So, it looks as if America and world will probably have to hold on for at least another three years.

It promises to be a bumpy ride.

TASKS

1 UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Correctly combine the sentence bits in the left-hand column with the bits in the right-hand column:

Since the election of Donald Trump the world against the will of the party leadership. were angry and disappointed.
The only way to remove a President is through “Impeachment.”
American intelligence agencies has dropped steeply.
You can tell a politician is lying has looked on with astonishment.
Trump’s popularity believe Russian interfered in the election.
Trump became the Republican candidate when he opens his mouth.
Americans voting for Trump
2 DISCUSSION

a Politics in the United States can be very rough, compared to Norway. Some, however, believe Norwegian politics are becoming more “American” – that is, more personal and aggressive. Do you agree? Can you think of examples of this?

b The term “fake news” has become a political weapon used by all sides to dismiss stories damaging to them. But is there such a thing as real “fake news”? If so, what is it? Can you give examples?

3 WORKING WITH STATISTICS

a Look at the two graphs on the next page from August 8, 2017, and answer the following questions:

Graph One
- At what time was Trump’s approval rating at its highest?
- At what time was it at its lowest?
- How many percentage points separate the highest from the lowest?
- What can you conclude about Trump’s approval rating from this graph?

Graph Two
- Which party shows the largest approval of Trump?
- Which party shows the smallest approval of Trump?
- What is the difference in percentage points between the approval rate of Republicans and Independents?
- Between Democrats and Independents?
- Between Democrats and Republicans?
- What can you conclude about Trump’s approval rating from this graph?
Look at the latest figures for President Trump’s popularity at the following website:
Has his popularity gone up or down since this article was written? Is there anything in recent news stories about Trump that might suggest a reason for this change?
4 QUICK RESEARCH

Choose one of the following issues and find out how successful President Trump has now been in keeping his promise. Report back to class.

- End Obamacare
- Make Europeans pay more for NATO
- Build a wall to keep out illegal immigration from Mexico
- Put Hillary Clinton in jail

5 WRITING

a Write a short essay on the following topic: The impact the election of Donald Trump on America’s reputation in the world.

b You have your own blog dealing with Trump on a daily basis. Find out what he did yesterday (or another specific day) and write a short entry commenting on his actions.