## Why Hillary Clinton lost the election

### Level 3 • Advanced

**1  Warmer**

**Explain what happened on 8 and 9 November, 2016 in approximately 20 words.**

**2  Key words**

**Match the key words with the definitions below. Then, find them in the article to read them in context.**

| articulate | baffles | bungled | defiance | divisive | epitomizes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| flouting | incumbent | recriminations | rigged | tweaks | undermined |

1.  likely to cause arguments between people _____

2.  If a problem, someone's behaviour etc _____ you, you cannot understand it.

3.  someone who currently holds an official position _____

4.  refusal to obey rules _____

5.  is the best possible example of a particular type of person or thing _____

6.  influenced in a dishonest way in order to produce a particular result _____

7.  express thoughts, arguments and ideas clearly and effectively _____

8.  made something less effective _____

9.  deliberately refusing to obey a rule _____

10. did something very badly and without success _____

11. small changes made to something to improve it _____

12. statements accusing or criticizing someone who has accused or criticized you _____

## Why Hillary Clinton lost the election

### Level 3 ● Advanced

### Why Hillary Clinton lost the election: the economy, trust and a weak message

*As Democrats try to understand their loss to such an unpopular and divisive rival, problems with Clinton's campaign offer some explanation*

**Dan Roberts**

**9 November, 2016**

1  How Hillary Clinton managed to lose an election to a candidate as divisive and unpopular as Donald Trump will baffle observers and agonize Democrats for years to come. Once the shockwave passes, some glimpses of rational explanation may become visible.

2  Incumbent parties rarely hold on to power after eight years in office. George HW Bush, following Reagan, was an exception but politics has become steadily more polarized since then.

3  Trump's defiance of expectations has itself also become somewhat of a golden rule in American politics in 2016. Written off repeatedly during the Republican primary and only rarely taken seriously during the general election, he nonetheless epitomizes the same anti-establishment mood that led Britain to vote to leave the European Union and Democrats in 22 US states to nominate Bernie Sanders. Fairly or not, it is an establishment with which Clinton could not have been more closely aligned in the minds of many voters if she tried.

**The economy**

4  "It's the economy, stupid" was a phrase coined by her husband's adviser, James Carville, in the 1992 election and, in many ways, it ought to have helped Democrats again in 2016. Barack Obama helped rescue the US from the financial crash and presided over a record series of consecutive quarters of job growth.

5  Unfortunately for Clinton, many Americans simply did not feel as positive. Stagnant wage levels and soaring inequality were symptoms of the worry felt by many voters. Trump successfully convinced them to believe this was caused by bad trade deals and a rigged economy.

6  Despite being pushed in this direction by Sanders in the Democratic primary, Clinton never really found a satisfactory response. Her sudden change of opinion on trade sounded – and was later

proved by leaked emails – unconvincing at best, deeply cynical at worst. But the bottom line was that Clinton simply failed to articulate a convincing defence of modern American capitalism.

**Trust**

7  One big problem that undermined many otherwise plausible policy positions was a lack of trust. Paid speeches to Goldman Sachs and a murky web of business connections to the family charity left many Americans doubting Clinton's sincerity on matters of money and much else.

8  That the FBI was investigating the Democratic candidate until just two days before voting with a view to bringing possible criminal charges for her flouting of data security laws was just the most extreme manifestation of the issue.

9  It was damaging not just that the FBI bungled its timing of what ultimately proved to be a dead-end investigation but because it played into the idea that the Clintons behaved as if the law did not apply to them.

**Message vacuum**

10  It also did not help that what Clinton was selling was mainly herself. The campaign's strongest message was that she was uniquely qualified to become president. This was largely true, especially when compared to the incredibly inexperienced Donald Trump, but big ideas took a backstage role.

11  There were a thousand policy ideas, from tweaks to the healthcare system to a watered-down version of the Sanders college debt proposals. Few were memorable, even among supporters.

12  Campaign slogans are notoriously empty. Obama's "hope and change" turned out to be more of the former than the latter. Yet Clinton's "stronger together" only really began to take shape in response to Trump's divisiveness.

**Broken polls**

13  Amid the recriminations, special attention is likely to be reserved for the pollsters, who showed Clinton clinging to a comfortable three- or four-point lead in national opinion polls going into the election. Admittedly, some did flag up the risk of an upset in key swing states.

14  The failure partly reflects a broken industry. Reaching a vast audience no longer using

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landlines, or even mobile voice calls much, with a twentieth-century modelling of statistical sampling has produced dangerously misleading results in recent elections around the world.

15 But the US fortune tellers were particularly confused by the demographics of the 2016 election and analysts continued to assume that if registered Democrats were voting early, or telling pollsters they were going to vote, it meant a vote for Clinton.

16 That all changed in 2016, which became a ground zero for a political bombshell that will mean the US electoral map never looks the same again.

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### 3 Comprehension check

**a.    In your own words, list the main reasons why Hillary Clinton lost the election.**

| economy | trust | message |
|---------|-------|---------|
|         |       |         |

**b.    Briefly talk about each point and give suggestions as to what should or could have been done.**

Examples:

*The problem was …*

*She should have …*

*If she'd …, then …*

### 4 Expressions

**a.    Discuss what you think the following two expressions from the article may mean.**

1.    coin a phrase (para 4)

2.    take a backstage role (para 10)

**b.    Use the correct form of the expressions to complete the sentences about the article.**

1.    Big ideas _____ in Clinton's campaign.

2.    James Carville _____ 'it's the economy, stupid' in the 1992 election.

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### 5  Picture this – metaphorical language

**a.  Find the metaphors in the article. What do they mean? What do they describe in the text?**

1.  the bottom line

2.  a murky web

3.  a dead end

4.  a political bombshell

**b.  What mental picture do you form when you read the metaphors?**

**c.  Use them in sentences of your own.**

### 6  Video

**Watch the 2:38 minute video about Clinton's campaign.**

www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/09/hillary-clinton-election-president-loss

**What happened on the following days of the campaign? Make notes.**

day 194 _____

day 296 _____

day 451 _____

day 474 _____

day 517 _____

day 518–9 _____

day 566 _____

day 575 _____

### 7  Discussion

•  **How do you think the points from task 6 affected Hillary Clinton's chances of becoming president?**

•  **What do you think Hillary Clinton should have done differently? Use your answers in task 3 to help you.**

•  **What one question would you most like to ask Donald Trump?**

### 8  Writing

**Write a message for an online forum or for the comments section often found at the end of online newspaper articles. Address your message to the USA and the rest of the world and outline your hopes and wishes for the future.**

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# KEY

### 1 Warmer

**Teacher's note:** The idea here is for students to practise writing short, informative sentences. Get students to pass the texts around and read what other students have written. This will also give you an idea of how your students feel about the US election result and allow you to pitch your lesson accordingly.

### 2 Key words

1.  divisive
2.  baffles
3.  incumbent
4.  defiance
5.  epitomizes
6.  rigged
7.  articulate
8.  undermined
9.  flouting
10. bungled
11. tweaks
12. recriminations

### 3 Comprehension check

**(suggested answers)**

| economy | trust | message |
|---|---|---|
| • She didn't find a good way to respond to Trump's criticism of bad trade deals and his talk of a rigged economy.<br>• She changed her position on trade.<br>• She did not convincingly defend modern American capitalism. | • She earnt a lot of money giving speeches to Goldman Sachs and the 'murky' business connections to the Clinton family charity left people not sure whether to trust her in money matters.<br>•The FBI's investigations into whether she flouted security laws by using her private email account for government matters made her seem untrustworthy. | • Her message was all about herself and that she was the most qualified person for the job.<br>• Although she had lots of policy ideas, none were very memorable – not even to her supporters.<br>• Her slogan only made sense when Trump's campaign showed itself to be so divisive. |

### 4 Expressions

**a.**
1.  use a word or phrase that no one has used before
2.  be less important

**b.**
1.  took a backstage role
2.  coined the phrase

### 5 Picture this – metaphorical language

1.  the most basic fact or issue in a situation – used here to talk about Clinton's failure to defend modern American capitalism
2.  a complicated set of related and dishonest dealings, often considered to be dangerous or difficult to deal with – used to talk about Clinton's business connections to the family charity
3.  a situation in which no further progress is possible – used to talk about the FBI's investigation into Clinton's emails
4.  a political event or piece of news that is unexpected and shocking – used to describe Clinton losing the US election

### 6 Video

**Teacher's note:** Put the students in pairs and divide the task up between them so that they first make notes about alternate days and then share their notes with their partner. Be prepared to play the video a few times and to pause when necessary.

day 194 – There was an investigation into the deaths of four US citizens in Benghazi.
day 296 – The media predicted that Bernie Sanders would win the New Hampshire primary.
day 451 – The FBI reported that they found evidence of carelessness surrounding emails.
day 474 – Hillary Clinton became the Democratic Party's official nominee for president.
day 517– Hillary Clinton gave her 'basket of deplorables' speech.
day 518–9 – Hillary Clinton contracted pneumonia.
day 566 – The FBI opened a review into a new email scandal.
day 575 – The FBI cleared Hillary Clinton of any wrongdoing in the email review.