

**PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS
DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2008**

I. Bush's Legacy – How will history judge him?

As the year draws to a close, and also a presidency comes to a close, it is a good time to reflect upon the leadership that the nation has had over the last eight years.

“George W. Bush is not generally prone to introspection,” said Dan Eggen in *The Washington Post*. “But with only weeks left in his presidency, the self-analysis has begun.” In a series of interviews and talking points distributed to aides and supportive pundits, our departing commander in chief is busily burnishing his place in history “while admitting, with some hesitation, that things did not always go as planned.” With a 29 percent approval rating, Bush has his work cut out for him, said Silla Brush and Ian Swanson in *The Hill*. So his political guru Karl Rove and former communications chief Karen Hughes are assembling a so-called legacy project to celebrate him as the president who liberated the 50 million people of Iraq and Afghanistan. Last week, however, when ABC’s Charles Gibson asked what, if anything, he would do over, Bush said, “The intelligence failure in Iraq. That’s not a do-over, but I wish the intelligence had been different.”



Thanks for the memories.

Obviously, our “deluder in chief” is still in denial, said *The New York Times* in an editorial. By blaming the intelligence agencies for his decision to invade Iraq, Bush is already rewriting history. Administration insiders long ago established that Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and this administration’s neoconservative policymakers were “chafing to attack Iraq” from the moment they entered office. They knew they couldn’t sell a war on the theory that a democratic Iraq would transform the entire Mideast, so they distorted, cherry-picked, and hyped evidence that Iraq was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction, to frighten the American public. That kind of shoddy duplicity is Bush’s chief legacy.

Iraq isn’t the only “do-over” that should have come to Bush’s mind, said Eugene Robinson in *The Washington Post*. He might

have regretted ignoring the intelligence memo in August 2001 that warned that Osama bin Laden was planning an attack on the U.S. Or fatally botching the response to Hurricane Katrina and letting New Orleans drown. Or his “Mission Accomplished” moment aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*. But, hey—everyone makes little mistakes, don’t they? “Fellow sufferers from Bush Derangement Syndrome, mind your blood pressure. Just seven more weeks.”

You Bush-haters have selective memories, said Peggy Noonan in *The Wall Street Journal*. After 9/11, Bush committed this nation to a war on terror, sent a severely weakened al Qaida into hiding, and kept this country safe for the past seven years. That was “the one big thing he had to do after 9/11. And he did.” Among the other achievements the Left won’t mention, said Donald Lambro in *The Washington Times*, are No Child Left Behind, the Medicare prescription drug benefit, or Bush’s \$15 billion initiative to combat AIDS and malaria in Africa. Fortunately, like Harry Truman, “who left office as the most unpopular president in modern history, Bush will undergo a long-term re-evaluation.”

When he does, said Mitchell Bard in *HuffingtonPost.com*, historians will be staggered by this administration’s record of “colossal failures.” Bush is the president who tarnished America’s good name with “illegal wiretapping, the demise of habeas corpus, and the adoption of torture.” He leaves behind no coherent policy on energy, immigration, or global warming. He has given us bitter partisanship, a wrecked economy, and enmity around the world. Yet—would you believe?—he has told Barack Obama, “If I can help you, let me know.” After the past eight years, “I’m not sure we can stand any more of Bush’s help.”

II. Questions

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of loose-leaf paper, using the article above and your knowledge of the political system and governance.

1. What is George Bush’s current approval rating? Would you consider it good or bad?
2. What victories will Bush’s team promote in his last weeks?
3. What is the problem with these claims according to an editorial in *The New York Times*?
4. Define duplicity. What does it mean in the context of this article?
5. What criticisms does Eugene Robinson make in his article in *The Washington Post*?
6. How does Peggy Noonan reply to Bush critics in an article in *The Wall Street Journal*?
7. How does Mitchell Bard reply to Noonan’s claims in his article in *HuffingtonPost.com*?
8. If you were to get in on this action of debating the legacy of President George H.W. Bush, what points would you make?