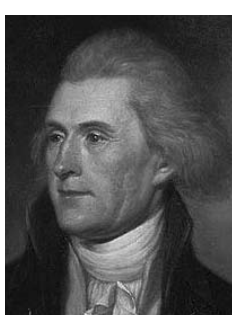


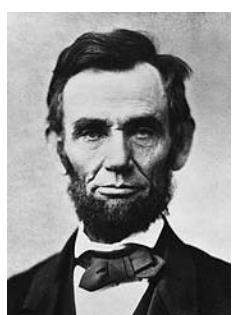
TOP TEN BIGGEST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BLOWOUTS

Like death and taxes, every four years presidential elections are also unavoidable, so you might as well sit back and try to enjoy them. Of course, they're more interesting when they're close, but then again they're much less stressful when the outcome has been predetermined months before the polls open. In fact, such exercises in futility are frequently as entertaining as close elections in a train wreck sort of way, making them often interesting to watch (and satisfying if the loser is the person you voted against). Below is my list of the ten biggest presidential election victories ever. Notice I am not including the earliest elections in which the winner was largely unopposed or faced only token opposition. These are elections that were genuinely contested, though not very successfully.



10. THOMAS JEFFERSON over CHARLES PINCKNEY, 1804:

No surprise, really, as the popular Jefferson was expected to easily beat his opponent. What was a surprise, however, was the size of the defeat for poor Mister Pinckney: out of just over 140,000 votes cast, Jefferson took 104,000 of them, or just under 73%—a percentage no candidate has gotten close to matching since. When one considers that managing to take 60% of the popular vote is almost impossible nowadays, Jefferson's plurality could only be considered the mother of all blow outs and one that is unlikely to ever be bettered.



9. ABRAHAM LINCOLN over GEORGE McCLELLAN, 1864:

What a difference a year makes. During the summer of 1863 even old Abe was dusting off his résumé in anticipation of losing the next year's election and he probably would have, too, had not things started to turn the North's way. As such, by the time elections rolled around in November of 1864, Lincoln was a shoo-in, which he proved by handily defeating one of his former Generals, George McClellan, by ten percentage points and taking all but three states in the north. Too bad he had a penchant for the theater.



8. WOODROW WILSON over TEDDY ROOSEVELT and WILLIAM H. TAFT, 1912:

This was a case in which the Republicans really shot themselves in the foot. By denying TR the nomination and sticking with their mediocre nominee, incumbent president William H. Taft—and despite the fact that TR had handily won the primary and would have been a shoo-in—the Republican vote split and the long-shot candidate Woodrow Wilson took forty of



the forty-eight states and 435 electoral votes, and all that despite taking just 42% of the total popular vote. See, I told you third parties don't work!



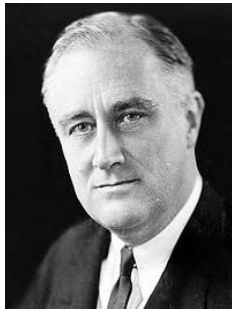
7. HERBERT HOOVER over AL SMITH, 1928:

The name Herbert Hoover has traditionally been associated with failure, so most people are surprised when they learn the man actually won the presidency in a landslide, beating his Democratic challenger by taking forty states and 444 electoral votes. With a whopping 58% of the popular vote, there's no doubt that Herbert was a popular man when he took the oath in March of 1929. Too bad he didn't see that Depression thing coming at him like a freight train six short months later.



6. FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT over HERBERT HOOVER, 1932:

Like I said, too bad Hoover didn't see the stock market crash coming and, worse, not know what to do about it. Good intentions just weren't enough to hold off his overbearing opponent and the country handed FDR all but six states and 59 electoral votes. What's interesting is that FDR's popular vote total nearly matched that of Hoover's four years earlier: 57.4% versus 58.2%. As with Lincoln, what a difference four years can make.



5. FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT over ALF LANDON, 1936:

Buoyed by the success of his first term and riding a wave of popularity, FDR decided to better his results from 1932 by beating the hapless Republican Alf Landon by an even greater margin than he did Hoover. Taking forty-six states and 523 electoral votes, he even upped his popular vote total to a stellar 60%. Things went downhill from there, however, though they never got bad enough that he wasn't able to handily win two more terms.



4. LYNDON JOHNSON over BARRY GOLDWATER, 1964:

As the country was still riding the crest of Kennedymania in the wake of the late president's untimely death, it's unlikely anybody could have overcome Kennedy's heir apparent and former Senate leader Lyndon Johnson—especially not a senator from the great state of Arizona—as Barry Goldwater was to learn the hard way when he carried just six states and took a paltry 38% of the vote. The curmudgeony Texan could probably have beaten Jesus if he had been foolish enough to have run as a Republican that year.



3. RONALD REAGAN over JIMMY CARTER, 1980:

No one's going to vote for a Hollywood actor who was best remembered for his role opposite a chimpanzee, right? Especially not against a sitting president, am I right? Well, there you go again! In fact, the dashing—if somewhat aged—ex actor and former Governor of California easily unseated the unpopular Carter, taking forty-four states and 489 electoral votes, making it the worst drubbing for a sitting president since Herbert Hoover felt the sting of the populace's ire in 1932.



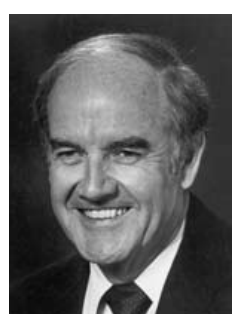
2. RONALD REAGAN over WALTER MONDALE, 1984:

Who would be a better candidate to run against a popular sitting president than the vice-president of the man he had thoroughly trounced just four years earlier? Or, for that matter, who could attract Americans more than a man who promised that, if elected, he would raise everyone's taxes? Welcome to the surreal world of the Democratic Party, circa 1984, when Walter Mondale was handed a defeat of biblical proportions, taking just his home state, Minnesota, and the District of Columbia. What were they thinking?



1. RICHARD NIXON over GEORGE McGOVERN, 1972:

Okay, so how does an unpopular president embroiled in an unpopular war beat a man so handily that it hurts? Nobody knows, but South Dakota Senator George McGovern, running as an over-aged peacenik, learned the hard way when he took just the state of Massachusetts and DC in his ill-fated run at the White House. It's debatable whether his defeat was worse than that suffered by Mondale at the hands of Ronald Reagan twelve years later, but I can guarantee you it wasn't any better.



BONUS TRIVIA FACT: *Though 43 men have held the office of President of the United States, there have been 47 different vice-presidents. Of these, 14 ascended to the presidency: 8 upon the death of a president, 1 upon a president's resignation, and 5 by seeking and winning the office on their own. This means that a vice-president's chance of becoming president is roughly one-in-three. Curiously, it should also be noted that vacancies occurred under thirteen presidencies and that three presidents never had a vice-president at all.*