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Decades of Change: 1960-1980



United States History

Workbook Series

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Workbook #13

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DECADES OF CHANGE: 1960-1980: United States History Workbook #13

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1 The Civil Rights Movement, 1960-1980

By 1960, the United States was on the verge of a major social change. American society had always been more open and fluid than that of the nations in most of the rest of the world. Still, it had been dominated primarily by old-stock, white males. During the 1960s, groups that previously had been submerged or subordinate began more forcefully and successfully to assert themselves: African Americans, Native Americans, women, the white ethnic offspring of the "new immigration," and Latinos. Much of the support they received came from a young population larger than ever, making its way through a college and university system that was expanding at an unprecedented pace. Frequently embracing "countercultural" life styles and radical politics, many of the offspring of the World War II generation emerged as advocates of a new America characterized by a cultural and ethnic pluralism that their parents often viewed with unease.

The struggle of African Americans for equality reached its peak in the mid-1960s. After progressive victories in the 1950s, African Americans became even more committed to nonviolent direct action. Groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), made up of African-American clergy,

and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), composed of younger activists, sought reform through peaceful confrontation.

In 1960 African-American college students sat down at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in North Carolina and refused to leave. Their sit-in captured media attention and led to similar demonstrations throughout the South. The next year, civil rights workers organized "freedom rides," in which African Americans and whites boarded buses heading south toward segregated terminals, where confrontations might capture media attention and lead to change.

They also organized rallies, the largest of which was the "March on Washington" in 1963. More than 200,000 people gathered in the nation's capital to demonstrate their commitment to equality for all. The high point of a day of songs and speeches came with the address of Martin Luther King Jr., who had emerged as the preeminent spokesman for civil rights. "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood," King proclaimed. Each time he used the refrain "I have a dream," the crowd roared.

The level of progress initially achieved did not match the rhetoric of the civil rights movement. President Kennedy was initially

reluctant to press white Southerners for support on civil rights because he needed their votes on other issues. Events, driven by African Americans themselves, forced his hand. When James Meredith was denied admission to the University of Mississippi in 1962 because of his race, Kennedy sent federal troops to uphold the law. After protests aimed at the desegregation of Birmingham, Alabama, prompted a violent response by the police, he sent Congress a new civil rights bill mandating the integration of public places. Not even the March on Washington, however, could extricate the measure from a congressional committee, where it was still bottled up when Kennedy was assassinated in 1963.

President Lyndon B. Johnson was more successful. Displaying negotiating skills he had so frequently employed during his years as Senate majority leader, Johnson persuaded the Senate to limit delaying tactics preventing a final vote on the sweeping Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination in all public accommodations. The next year's Voting Rights Act of 1965 authorized the federal government to register voters where local officials had prevented African Americans from doing so. By 1968 a million African Americans were registered in the deep South. Nationwide, the number of African-American elected officials increased substantially. In

1968, the Congress passed legislation banning discrimination in housing.

Once unleashed, however, the civil rights revolution produced leaders impatient with both the pace of change and the goal of channeling African Americans into mainstream white society. Malcolm X, an eloquent activist, was the most prominent figure arguing for African-American separation from the white race. Stokely Carmichael, a student leader, became similarly disillusioned by the notions of nonviolence and interracial cooperation. He popularized the slogan "black power," to be achieved by "whatever means necessary," in the words of Malcolm X.

Violence accompanied militant calls for reform. Riots broke out in several big cities in 1966 and 1967. In the spring of 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. fell before an assassin's bullet. Several months later, Senator Robert Kennedy, a spokesman for the disadvantaged, an opponent of the Vietnam War, and the brother of the slain president, met the same fate. To many these two assassinations marked the end of an era of innocence and idealism. The growing militancy on the left, coupled with an inevitable conservative backlash, opened a rift in the nation's psyche that took years to heal.

By then, however, a civil rights movement supported by court decisions, congressional enactments, and federal

administrative regulations was irreversibly woven into the fabric of American life. The major issues were about implementation of equality and access, not about the legality of segregation or disenfranchisement. The arguments of the 1970s and thereafter were over matters such as busing children out of their neighborhoods to achieve racial balance in metropolitan schools or about the use of "affirmative action." These policies and programs were viewed by some as active measures to ensure equal opportunity, as in education and employment, and by others as reverse discrimination.

The courts worked their way through these problems with decisions that were often inconsistent. In the meantime, the steady march of African Americans into the ranks of the middle class and once largely white suburbs quietly reflected a profound demographic change.

Questions

1. Describe the offspring of the World War II generation.

2. What do the acronyms SCLC and SNCC stand for?

3. What were the "freedom rides"?

4. Where and when did Martin Luther King, Jr., give his famous "I Have a Dream" speech?

5. How did President Kennedy act on civil rights issues?

6. How did President Johnson act on civil rights issues?

7. When did Congress ban discrimination in housing?

8. Who popularized the slogan "black power"?

9. What two major American leaders were assassinated in 1968?

2 The Women's Movement

During the 1950s and 1960s, increasing numbers of married women entered the labor force, but in 1963 the average working woman earned only 63 percent of what a man made. That year Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, an explosive critique of middle-class living patterns that articulated a pervasive sense of discontent that Friedan contended was felt by many women. Arguing that women often had no outlets for expression other than "finding a husband and bearing children," Friedan encouraged her readers to seek new roles and responsibilities and to find their own personal and professional identities, rather than have them defined by a male-dominated society.

The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s drew inspiration from the civil rights movement. It was made up mainly of members of the middle class, and thus partook of the spirit of rebellion that affected large segments of middle-class youth in the 1960s.

Reform legislation also prompted change. During debate on the 1964 Civil Rights bill, opponents hoped to defeat the entire measure by proposing an amendment to outlaw discrimination on the basis of gender as well as race. First the amendment, then the bill itself, passed, giving women a valuable legal tool.

In 1966, 28 professional women, including Friedan, established the National Organization for Women (NOW) "to take action to bring American women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now." While NOW and similar feminist organizations boast of substantial memberships today, arguably they attained their greatest influence in the early 1970s, a time that also saw the journalist Gloria Steinem and several other women found *Ms.* magazine. They also spurred the formation of counter-feminist groups, often led by women, including most prominently the political activist Phyllis Schlafly. These groups typically argued for more "traditional" gender roles and opposed the proposed "Equal Rights" constitutional amendment.

Passed by Congress in 1972, that amendment declared in part, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." Over the next several years, 35 of the necessary 38 states ratified it. The courts also moved to expand women's rights. In 1973 the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* sanctioned women's right to obtain an abortion during the early months of pregnancy - seen as a significant victory for the women's movement - but *Roe* also spurred the growth of an anti-abortion movement.

In the mid- to late-1970s, however, the women's movement seemed to stagnate. It failed to broaden its appeal beyond the middle class. Divisions arose between moderate and radical feminists. Conservative opponents mounted a campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment, and it died in 1982 without gaining the approval of the 38 states needed for ratification.

Questions

1. In 1963, the average woman earned what percent of what a man earned?

2. Who wrote *The Feminine Mystique*?

3. What 1964 legislation outlawed discrimination on the basis of gender?

4. What major feminist organization was formed in 1966?

5. What journalist, a native of Toledo, Ohio, helped found Ms. Magazine in the early 1970s?

6. What 1973 Supreme Court decision legalized abortion?

7. Was the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) ever passed into law?

3 The Latino Movement

In post-World War II America, Americans of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent had faced discrimination. New immigrants, coming from Cuba, Mexico, and Central America - often unskilled and unable to speak English - suffered from discrimination as well. Some Hispanics worked as farm laborers and at times were cruelly exploited while harvesting crops; others gravitated to the cities, where, like earlier

immigrant groups, they encountered difficulties in their quest for a better life.

Chicanos, or Mexican-Americans, mobilized in organizations like the radical Asociación Nacional Mexico-Americana, yet did not become confrontational until the 1960s. Hoping that Lyndon Johnson's poverty program would expand opportunities for them, they found that bureaucrats failed to respond to less vocal groups. The example of black activism in particular taught Hispanics the importance of pressure politics in a pluralistic society.

The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 had excluded agricultural workers from its guarantee of the right to organize and bargain collectively. But César Chávez, founder of the overwhelmingly Hispanic United Farm Workers, demonstrated that direct action could achieve employer recognition for his union. California grape growers agreed to bargain with the union after Chávez led a nationwide consumer boycott. Similar boycotts of lettuce and other products were also successful. Though farm interests continued to try to obstruct Chávez's organization, the legal foundation had been laid for representation to secure higher wages and improved working conditions.

Hispanics became politically active as well. In 1961 Henry B. González won election to Congress from Texas. Three years later

Eligio ("Kika") de la Garza, another Texan, followed him, and Joseph Montoya of New Mexico went to the Senate. Both González and de la Garza later rose to positions of power as committee chairmen in the House. In the 1970s and 1980s, the pace of Hispanic political involvement increased. Several prominent Hispanics have served in the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush cabinets.

Questions

1. How were many Latino farm laborers treated?

2. Who was César Chavez?

3. What Hispanic (Latino) was elected to Congress from Texas in 1961?

4 The Native-American Movement

In the 1950s, Native Americans struggled with the government's policy of moving them off reservations and into cities where they might assimilate into mainstream America. Many of the uprooted often had difficulties adjusting to urban life. In 1961, when the policy was discontinued, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights noted that, for Native Americans, "poverty and deprivation are common."

In the 1960s and 1970s, watching both the development of Third World nationalism and the progress of the civil rights movement, Native Americans became more aggressive in pressing for their own rights. A new generation of leaders went to court to protect what was left of tribal lands or to recover those which had been taken, often illegally, in previous times. In state after state, they challenged treaty violations, and in 1967 won the first of many victories guaranteeing long-abused land and water rights. The American Indian Movement (AIM), founded in 1968, helped channel government funds to Native-American-controlled organizations and assisted neglected Native Americans in the cities.

Confrontations became more common. In 1969 a landing party of 78 Native Americans seized Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay and held it until federal officials

removed them in 1971. In 1973 AIM took over the South Dakota village of Wounded Knee, where soldiers in the late 19th century had massacred a Sioux encampment. Militants hoped to dramatize the poverty and alcoholism in the reservation surrounding the town. The episode ended after one Native American was killed and another wounded, with a government agreement to re-examine treaty rights.

Still, Native-American activism brought results. Other Americans became more aware of Native-American needs. Government officials responded with measures including the Education Assistance Act of 1975 and the 1996 Native-American Housing and Self-Determination Act. The Senate's first Native-American member, Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado, was elected in 1992.

Questions

1. How did the federal government attempt to assimilate Native Americans in the 1950s?

2. What leading Native-American organization was founded in 1968?

3. What happened on San Francisco's Alcatraz Island between 1969 and 1971?

4. What happened at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973?

5. Who was the first Native American to be elected to the U.S. Senate?

5 The Counterculture

The agitation for equal opportunity sparked other forms of upheaval. Young people in particular rejected the stable patterns of middle-class life their parents had created in the decades after World War II. Some plunged into radical political activity; many more embraced new standards of dress and sexual behavior.

The visible signs of the counterculture spread through parts of American society in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Hair grew longer and beards became common. Blue jeans and tee shirts took the place of slacks, jackets, and ties. The use of illegal drugs increased. Rock and roll grew, proliferated, and transformed into many musical variations. The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and other British groups took the country by storm. "Hard rock" grew popular, and songs with a political or social commentary, such as those by singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, became common. The youth counterculture reached its apogee in August 1969 at Woodstock, a three-day music festival in rural New York State attended by almost half-a-million persons. The festival, mythologized in films and record albums, gave its name to the era, the Woodstock Generation.

A parallel manifestation of the new sensibility of the young was the rise of the New

Left, a group of young, college-age radicals. The New Leftists, who had close counterparts in Western Europe, were in many instances the children of the older generation of radicals. Nonetheless, they rejected old-style Marxist rhetoric. Instead, they depicted university students as themselves an oppressed class that possessed special insights into the struggle of other oppressed groups in American society.

New Leftists participated in the civil rights movement and the struggle against poverty. Their greatest success – and the one instance in which they developed a mass following – was in opposing the Vietnam War, an issue of emotional interest to their draft-age contemporaries. By the late 1970s, the student New Left had disappeared, but many of its activists made their way into mainstream politics.

Questions

1. Describe the visible signs of the counterculture that spread through parts of American society in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

2. What happened at Woodstock, New York, in August of 1969?

3. Describe the New Leftists.

6 Environmentalism

The energy and sensibility that fueled the civil rights movement, the counterculture, and the New Left also stimulated an environmental movement in the mid-1960s. Many were aroused by the publication in 1962 of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*, which alleged that chemical pesticides, particularly DDT, caused cancer, among other ills. Public concern about the environment continued to increase throughout the 1960s as many became aware of other pollutants surrounding them - automobile emissions, industrial wastes, oil

spills - that threatened their health and the beauty of their surroundings. On April 22, 1970, schools and communities across the United States celebrated Earth Day for the first time. "Teach-ins" educated Americans about the dangers of environmental pollution.

Few denied that pollution was a problem, but the proposed solutions involved expense and inconvenience. Many believed these would reduce the economic growth upon which many Americans' standard of living depended. Nevertheless, in 1970, Congress amended the Clean Air Act of 1967 to develop uniform national air-quality standards. It also passed the Water Quality Improvement Act, which assigned to the polluter the responsibility of cleaning up off-shore oil spills. Also, in 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created as an independent federal agency to spearhead the effort to bring abuses under control. During the next three decades, the EPA, bolstered by legislation that increased its authority, became one of the most active agencies in the government, issuing strong regulations covering air and water quality.

Questions

1. Describe the 1962 book *Silent Spring*.

2. What happened on April 22, 1970?

3. What environmental legislation was passed in 1967?

4. What is the job of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)?

7 Kennedy and the Resurgence of Big Government Liberalism

By 1960 government had become an increasingly powerful force in people's lives.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, new executive agencies were created to deal with many aspects of American life. During World War II, the number of civilians employed by the federal government rose from one million to 3.8 million, then stabilized at 2.5 million in the 1950s. Federal expenditures, which had stood at \$3,100-million in 1929, increased to \$75,000-million in 1953 and passed \$150,000-million in the 1960s.

Most Americans accepted government's expanded role, even as they disagreed about how far that expansion should continue. Democrats generally wanted the government to ensure growth and stability. They wanted to extend federal benefits for education, health, and welfare. Many Republicans accepted a level of government responsibility, but hoped to cap spending and restore a larger measure of individual initiative. The presidential election of 1960 revealed a nation almost evenly divided between these visions.

John F. Kennedy, the Democratic victor by a narrow margin, was at 43 the youngest man ever to win the presidency. On television, in a series of debates with opponent Richard Nixon, he appeared able, articulate, and energetic. In the campaign, he spoke of moving aggressively into the new decade, for "the New Frontier is here whether we seek it or not." In his first inaugural address, he concluded with an eloquent plea: "Ask not what your country

can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." Throughout his brief presidency, Kennedy's special combination of grace, wit, and style – far more than his specific legislative agenda – sustained his popularity and influenced generations of politicians to come.

Kennedy wanted to exert strong leadership to extend economic benefits to all citizens, but a razor-thin margin of victory limited his mandate. Even though the Democratic Party controlled both houses of Congress, conservative Southern Democrats often sided with the Republicans on issues involving the scope of governmental intervention in the economy. They resisted plans to increase federal aid to education, provide health insurance for the elderly, and create a new Department of Urban Affairs. And so, despite his lofty rhetoric, Kennedy's policies were often limited and restrained.

One priority was to end the recession, in progress when Kennedy took office, and restore economic growth. But Kennedy lost the confidence of business leaders in 1962, when he succeeded in rolling back what the administration regarded as an excessive price increase in the steel industry. Though the president achieved his immediate goal, he alienated an important source of support. Persuaded by his economic advisers that a large tax cut would stimulate the economy, Kennedy backed a bill providing for one.

Conservative opposition in Congress, however, appeared to destroy any hopes of passing a bill most congressmen thought would widen the budget deficit.

The overall legislative record of the Kennedy administration was meager. The president made some gestures toward civil rights leaders but did not embrace the goals of the civil rights movement until demonstrations led by Martin Luther King Jr. forced his hand in 1963. Like Truman before him, he could not secure congressional passage of federal aid to public education or for a medical care program limited to the elderly. He gained only a modest increase in the minimum wage. Still, he did secure funding for a space program, and established the Peace Corps to send men and women overseas to assist developing countries in meeting their own needs.

Questions

1. How many people were employed by the federal government in the 1950s?

2. What were the Democratic and Republican views toward the expanding federal government?

3. Describe John F. Kennedy.

4. What factors thwarted Kennedy's hopes for social reforms?

8 Kennedy and the Cold War

President Kennedy came into office pledged to carry on the Cold War vigorously, but he also hoped for accommodation and was reluctant to commit American power. During his first year-and-a-half in office, he rejected American intervention after the CIA-guided Cuban exile invasion at the Bay of Pigs failed, effectively ceded the landlocked Southeast Asian nation of Laos to Communist control, and acquiesced in the building of the Berlin Wall. Kennedy's decisions reinforced impressions of weakness that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had formed in their only personal meeting, a summit meeting at Vienna in June 1961.

It was against this backdrop that Kennedy faced the most serious event of the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis.

In the fall of 1962, the administration learned that the Soviet Union was secretly installing offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba. After considering different options, Kennedy decided on a quarantine to prevent Soviet ships from bringing additional supplies to Cuba. He demanded publicly that the Soviets remove the weapons and warned that an attack from that island would bring retaliation against the USSR. After several days of tension, during which the world was closer than ever before to nuclear war, the Soviets agreed to remove the

missiles. Critics charged that Kennedy had risked nuclear disaster when quiet diplomacy might have been effective. But most Americans and much of the non-Communist world applauded his decisiveness. The missile crisis made him for the first time the acknowledged leader of the democratic West.

In retrospect, the Cuban missile crisis marked a turning point in U.S.-Soviet relations. Both sides saw the need to defuse tensions that could lead to direct military conflict. The following year, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain signed a landmark Limited Test Ban Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere.

Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia), a French possession before World War II, was still another Cold War battlefield. The French effort to reassert colonial control there was opposed by Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese Communist, whose Viet Minh movement engaged in a guerrilla war with the French army.

Both Truman and Eisenhower, eager to maintain French support for the policy of containment in Europe, provided France with economic aid that freed resources for the struggle in Vietnam. But the French suffered a decisive defeat in Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. At an international conference in Geneva, Laos and Cambodia were given their independence. Vietnam was divided, with Ho in power in the

North and Ngo Dinh Diem, a Roman Catholic anti-Communist in a largely Buddhist population, heading the government in the South. Elections were to be held two years later to unify the country. Persuaded that the fall of Vietnam could lead to the fall of Burma, Thailand, and Indonesia, Eisenhower backed Diem's refusal to hold elections in 1956 and effectively established South Vietnam as an American client state.

Kennedy increased assistance, and sent small numbers of military advisors, but a new guerrilla struggle between North and South continued. Diem's unpopularity grew and the military situation worsened. In late 1963, Kennedy secretly assented to a coup d'etat. To the president's surprise, Diem and his powerful brother-in-law, Ngo Dien Nu, were killed. It was at this uncertain juncture that Kennedy's presidency ended three weeks later.

Questions

1. During his first year-and-a-half in office, how was Kennedy reluctant to commit American power to fighting the Cold War?

2. Describe the events of the Cuban missile crisis.

3. How was the Cuban missile crisis a turning point in U.S.-Soviet relations?

4. French Indochina (or Indochine) was comprised of what three modern countries?

5. What Vietnamese communist led the Viet Minh movement?

6. Explain the events that effectively established South Vietnam as an American client state.

7. Who was killed in 1963 as the result of a U.S.-backed coup d'état in Vietnam?

9 The Space Program

During Eisenhower's second term, outer space had become an arena for U.S.-Soviet competition. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik - an artificial satellite - thereby demonstrating it could build more powerful rockets than the United States. The United States launched its first satellite, Explorer I, in 1958. But three months after Kennedy became president, the USSR put the first man in orbit. Kennedy responded by committing the United States to land a man on the moon and bring him back "before this

decade is out." With Project Mercury in 1962, John Glenn became the first U.S. astronaut to orbit the Earth.

After Kennedy's death, President Lyndon Johnson enthusiastically supported the space program. In the mid-1960s, U.S. scientists developed the two-person Gemini spacecraft. Gemini achieved several firsts, including an eight-day mission in August 1965 - the longest space flight at that time - and in November 1966, the first automatically controlled reentry into the Earth's atmosphere. Gemini also accomplished the first manned linkup of two spacecraft in flight as well as the first U.S. walks in space.

The three-person Apollo spacecraft achieved Kennedy's goal and demonstrated to the world that the United States had surpassed Soviet capabilities in space. On July 20, 1969, with hundreds of millions of television viewers watching around the world, Neil Armstrong became the first human to walk on the surface of the moon.

Other Apollo flights followed, but many Americans began to question the value of manned space flight. In the early 1970s, as other priorities became more pressing, the United States scaled down the space program. Some Apollo missions were scrapped; only one of two proposed Skylab space stations was built.

Questions

1. What became an area for U.S.-Soviet competition during Eisenhower's second term?

2. When did the Soviet Union launch Sputnik?

3. Who was the first U.S. astronaut to orbit the earth, in 1962?

4. Describe the achievements of Gemini spacecraft.

5. Describe the July 20, 1969, achievements of the U.S. space program.

6. What happened to the space program in the 1970s?

10 Death of a President

John Kennedy had gained world prestige by his management of the Cuban missile crisis and had won great popularity at home. Many believed he would win re-election easily in 1964. But on November 22, 1963, he was assassinated while riding in an open car during a visit to Dallas, Texas. His death,

amplified by television coverage, was a traumatic event, just as Roosevelt's had been 18 years earlier.

In retrospect, it is clear that Kennedy's reputation stems more from his style and eloquently stated ideals than from the implementation of his policies. He had laid out an impressive agenda but at his death much remained blocked in Congress. It was largely because of the political skill and legislative victories of his successor that Kennedy would be seen as a force for progressive change.

Questions

1. When was John F. Kennedy assassinated?

2. Where was John F. Kennedy assassinated?

3. According to the text, what is the reason why Kennedy is seen as a force for progressive change?

11 Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society

Lyndon Johnson, a Texan who was majority leader in the Senate before becoming Kennedy's vice president, was a masterful politician. He had been schooled in Congress, where he developed an extraordinary ability to get things done. He excelled at pleading, cajoling, or threatening as necessary to achieve his ends. His liberal idealism was probably deeper than Kennedy's. As president, he wanted to use his power aggressively to eliminate poverty and spread the benefits of prosperity to all.

Johnson took office determined to secure the passage of Kennedy's legislative agenda. His immediate priorities were his predecessor's bills to reduce taxes and guarantee civil rights. Using his skills of persuasion and calling on the legislators' respect for the slain president, Johnson succeeded in gaining passage of both during his first year in office. The tax cuts stimulated the economy. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the most far-reaching such legislation since Reconstruction.

Johnson addressed other issues as well. By the spring of 1964, he had begun to use the name "Great Society" to describe his socio-economic program. That summer he secured passage of a federal jobs program for

impoverished young people. It was the first step in what he called the "War on Poverty." In the presidential election that November, he won a landslide victory over conservative Republican Barry Goldwater. Significantly, the 1964 election gave liberal Democrats firm control of Congress for the first time since 1938. This would enable them to pass legislation over the combined opposition of Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats.

The War on Poverty became the centerpiece of the administration's Great Society program. The Office of Economic Opportunity, established in 1964, provided training for the poor and established various community-action agencies, guided by an ethic of "participatory democracy" that aimed to give the poor themselves a voice in housing, health, and education programs.

Medical care came next. Under Johnson's leadership, Congress enacted Medicare, a health insurance program for the elderly, and Medicaid, a program providing health-care assistance for the poor.

Johnson succeeded in the effort to provide more federal aid for elementary and secondary schooling, traditionally a state and local function. The measure that was enacted gave money to the states based on the number of their children from low-income families.

Funds could be used to assist public- and private-school children alike.

Convinced the United States confronted an "urban crisis" characterized by declining inner cities, the Great Society architects devised a new housing act that provided rent supplements for the poor and established a Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Other legislation had an impact on many aspects of American life. Federal assistance went to artists and scholars to encourage their work. In September 1966, Johnson signed into law two transportation bills. The first provided funds to state and local governments for developing safety programs, while the other set up federal safety standards for cars and tires. The latter program reflected the efforts of a crusading young radical, Ralph Nader. In his 1965 book, *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile*, Nader argued that automobile manufacturers were sacrificing safety features for style, and charged that faulty engineering contributed to highway fatalities.

In 1965, Congress abolished the discriminatory 1924 national-origin immigration quotas. This triggered a new wave of immigration, much of it from South and East Asia and Latin America.

The Great Society was the largest burst of legislative activity since the New Deal. But

support weakened as early as 1966. Some of Johnson's programs did not live up to expectations; many went underfunded. The urban crisis seemed, if anything, to worsen. Still, whether because of the Great Society spending or because of a strong economic upsurge, poverty did decline at least marginally during the Johnson administration.

Questions

1. Who became president following the assassination of John F. Kennedy?

2. What important civil rights legislation did Johnson succeed in passing during his first year in office?

3. What did Johnson call his socio-economic program?

4. Describe the Office of Economic Opportunity's ethic of "participatory democracy."

5. What two major medical care programs were enacted during Johnson's presidency?

6. How did Johnson aid education?

7. Who wrote the 1965 book, *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-in Dangers of the American Automobile*?

8. How did Congress change immigration during the Johnson administration?

12 The War in Vietnam

Dissatisfaction with the Great Society came to be more than matched by unhappiness with the situation in Vietnam. A series of South Vietnamese strong men proved little more successful than Diem in mobilizing their country. The Viet Cong, insurgents supplied and coordinated from North Vietnam, gained ground in the countryside.

Determined to halt Communist advances in South Vietnam, Johnson made the Vietnam War his own. After a North Vietnamese naval attack on two American destroyers, Johnson won from Congress on August 7, 1964, passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which allowed the president to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." After his re-election in November 1964, he embarked on a policy of escalation. From 25,000 troops at the

start of 1965, the number of soldiers – both volunteers and draftees – rose to 500,000 by 1968. A bombing campaign wrought havoc in both North and South Vietnam.

Grisly television coverage with a critical edge dampened support for the war. Some Americans thought it immoral; others watched in dismay as the massive military campaign seemed to be ineffective. Large protests, especially among the young, and a mounting general public dissatisfaction pressured Johnson to begin negotiating for peace.

Questions

1. What group of insurgents gained ground in the Vietnamese countryside?

2. Describe the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

3. Who won the presidential election of 1964?

4. Why were many Americans opposed to the war in Vietnam?

13 The Election of 1968

By 1968 the country was in turmoil over both the Vietnam War and civil disorder, expressed in urban riots that reflected African-American anger. On March 31, 1968, the president renounced any intention of seeking another term. Just a week later, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee. John Kennedy's younger brother, Robert, made an emotional anti-war campaign for the Democratic nomination, only to be assassinated in June.

At the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, protesters fought street

battles with police. A divided Democratic Party nominated Vice President Hubert Humphrey, once the hero of the liberals but now seen as a Johnson loyalist. White opposition to the civil rights measures of the 1960s galvanized the third-party candidacy of Alabama Governor George Wallace, a Democrat who captured his home state, Mississippi, and Arkansas, Louisiana, and Georgia, states typically carried in that era by the Democratic nominee. Republican Richard Nixon, who ran on a plan to extricate the United States from the war and to increase "law and order" at home, scored a narrow victory.

Questions

1. What announcement was made by President Lyndon B. Johnson on March 31, 1968?

2. What happened at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois?

3. Who were the three leading presidential candidates in the 1968 election?

14 Nixon, Vietnam, and the Cold War

Determined to achieve "peace with honor," Nixon slowly withdrew American troops while redoubling efforts to equip the South Vietnamese army to carry on the fight. He also ordered strong American offensive actions. The most important of these was an invasion of Cambodia in 1970 to cut off North Vietnamese supply lines to South Vietnam. This led to another round of protests and demonstrations. Students in many universities took to the streets. At Kent State in Ohio, the national guard troops who had been called in to restore order panicked and killed four students.

By the fall of 1972, however, troop strength in Vietnam was below 50,000 and the military draft, which had caused so much campus discontent, was all but dead. A cease-fire, negotiated for the United States by Nixon's national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, was signed in 1973. Although American troops

departed, the war lingered on into the spring of 1975, when Congress cut off assistance to South Vietnam and North Vietnam consolidated its control over the entire country.

The war left Vietnam devastated, with millions maimed or killed. It also left the United States traumatized. The nation had spent over \$150,000-million in a losing effort that cost more than 58,000 American lives. Americans were no longer united by a widely held Cold War consensus, and became wary of further foreign entanglements.

Yet as Vietnam wound down, the Nixon administration took historic steps toward closer ties with the major Communist powers. The most dramatic move was a new relationship with the People's Republic of China. In the two decades since Mao Zedong's victory, the United States had argued that the Nationalist government on Taiwan represented all of China. In 1971 and 1972, Nixon softened the American stance, eased trading restrictions, and became the first U.S. president ever to visit Beijing. The "Shanghai Communique" signed during that visit established a new U.S. policy: that there was one China, that Taiwan was a part of China, and that a peaceful settlement of the dispute of the question by the Chinese themselves was a U.S. interest.

With the Soviet Union, Nixon was equally successful in pursuing the policy he and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger called

détente. He held several cordial meetings with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in which they agreed to limit stockpiles of missiles, cooperate in space, and ease trading restrictions. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) culminated in 1972 in an arms control agreement limiting the growth of nuclear arsenals and restricting anti-ballistic missile systems.

Questions

1. Why did President Richard Nixon authorize an American invasion of Cambodia in 1970?

2. What happened during an anti-war demonstration at Ohio's Kent State University?

3. Who served as national security adviser to Richard Nixon?

4. How many Americans died in the Vietnam War?

5. Describe the “Shanghai Communique.”

6. Describe the result of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT).

15 Nixon's Accomplishments and Defeats

Vice president under Eisenhower before his unsuccessful run for the presidency in 1960, Nixon was seen as among the shrewdest of American politicians. Although Nixon subscribed to the Republican value of fiscal responsibility, he accepted a need for

government's expanded role and did not oppose the basic contours of the welfare state. He simply wanted to manage its programs better. Not opposed to African-American civil rights on principle, he was wary of large federal civil rights bureaucracies. Nonetheless, his administration vigorously enforced court orders on school desegregation even as it courted Southern white voters.

Perhaps his biggest domestic problem was the economy. He inherited both a slowdown from its Vietnam peak under Johnson, and a continuing inflationary surge that had been a by-product of the war. He dealt with the first by becoming the first Republican president to endorse deficit spending as a way to stimulate the economy; the second by imposing wage and price controls, a policy in which the Right had no long-term faith, in 1971. In the short run, these decisions stabilized the economy and established favorable conditions for Nixon's re-election in 1972. He won an overwhelming victory over peace-minded Democratic Senator George McGovern.

Things began to sour very quickly into the president's second term. Very early on, he faced charges that his re-election committee had managed a break-in at the Watergate building headquarters of the Democratic National Committee and that he had participated in a cover-up. Special prosecutors

and congressional committees dogged his presidency thereafter.

Factors beyond Nixon's control undermined his economic policies. In 1973 the war between Israel and Egypt and Syria prompted Saudi Arabia to embargo oil shipments to Israel's ally, the United States. Other member nations of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quadrupled their prices. Americans faced both shortages, exacerbated in the view of many by over-regulation of distribution, and rapidly rising prices. Even when the embargo ended the next year, prices remained high and affected all areas of American economic life: In 1974, inflation reached 12 percent, causing disruptions that led to even higher unemployment rates. The unprecedented economic boom America had enjoyed since 1948 was grinding to a halt.

Nixon's rhetoric about the need for "law and order" in the face of rising crime rates, increased drug use, and more permissive views about sex resonated with more Americans than not. But this concern was insufficient to quell concerns about the Watergate break-in and the economy. Seeking to energize and enlarge his own political constituency, Nixon lashed out at demonstrators, attacked the press for distorted coverage, and sought to silence his opponents. Instead, he left an unfavorable impression with many who saw him on television and perceived

him as unstable. Adding to Nixon's troubles, Vice President Spiro Agnew, his outspoken point man against the media and liberals, was forced to resign in 1973, pleading "no contest" to a criminal charge of tax evasion.

Nixon probably had not known in advance of the Watergate burglary, but he had tried to cover it up, and had lied to the American people about it. Evidence of his involvement mounted. On July 27, 1974, the House Judiciary Committee voted to recommend his impeachment. Facing certain ouster from office, he resigned on August 9, 1974.

Questions

1. Why did Richard Nixon endorse deficit spending?

2. Who ran against Richard Nixon in the 1972 presidential election?

3. Describe the Watergate scandal.

4. What does the acronym OPEC represent?

5. How did American reliance on foreign oil impact the U.S. economy in the 1970s?

6. Why was Vice President Spiro Agnew forced to resign in 1973?

7. When did President Richard Nixon resign?

16 The Ford Interlude

Nixon's vice president, Gerald Ford (appointed to replace Agnew), was an unpretentious man who had spent most of his public life in Congress. His first priority was to restore trust in the government. However, feeling it necessary to head off the spectacle of a possible prosecution of Nixon, he issued a blanket pardon to his predecessor. Although it was perhaps necessary, the move was nonetheless unpopular.

In public policy, Ford followed the course Nixon had set. Economic problems remained serious, as inflation and unemployment continued to rise. Ford first tried to reassure the public, much as Herbert Hoover had done in 1929. When that failed, he imposed measures to curb inflation, which sent unemployment above 8 percent. A tax cut, coupled with higher unemployment benefits, helped a bit but the economy remained weak.

In foreign policy, Ford adopted Nixon's strategy of detente. Perhaps its major manifestation was the Helsinki Accords of 1975, in which the United States and Western

European nations effectively recognized Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe in return for Soviet affirmation of human rights. The agreement had little immediate significance, but over the long run may have made maintenance of the Soviet empire more difficult. Western nations effectively used periodic "Helsinki review meetings" to call attention to various abuses of human rights by Communist regimes of the Eastern bloc.

Questions

1. Who became president of the United States following the resignation of Richard Nixon?
 - a. George McGovern
 - b. Gerald Ford
 - c. Jimmy Carter
 - d. Spiro Agnew

2. Describe the Helsinki accords of 1975.

3. Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon was highly unpopular. Conjecture what might have happened had Nixon not been pardoned. Explain your answer.

17 The Carter Years

Jimmy Carter, former Democratic governor of Georgia, won the presidency in

1976. Portraying himself during the campaign as an outsider to Washington politics, he promised a fresh approach to governing, but his lack of experience at the national level complicated his tenure from the start. A naval officer and engineer by training, he often appeared to be a technocrat, when Americans wanted someone more visionary to lead them through troubled times.

In economic affairs, Carter at first permitted a policy of deficit spending. Inflation rose to 10 percent a year when the Federal Reserve Board, responsible for setting monetary policy, increased the money supply to cover deficits. Carter responded by cutting the budget, but cuts affected social programs at the heart of Democratic domestic policy. In mid-1979, anger in the financial community practically forced him to appoint Paul Volcker as chairman of the Federal Reserve. Volcker was an "inflation hawk" who increased interest rates in an attempt to halt price increases, at the cost of negative consequences for the economy.

Carter also faced criticism for his failure to secure passage of an effective energy policy. He presented a comprehensive program, aimed at reducing dependence on foreign oil, that he called the "moral equivalent of war." Opponents thwarted it in Congress.

Though Carter called himself a populist, his political priorities were never

wholly clear. He endorsed government's protective role, but then began the process of deregulation, the removal of governmental controls in economic life. Arguing that some restrictions over the course of the past century limited competition and increased consumer costs, he favored decontrol in the oil, airline, railroad, and trucking industries.

Carter's political efforts failed to gain either public or congressional support. By the end of his term, his disapproval rating reached 77 percent, and Americans began to look toward the Republican Party again.

Carter's greatest foreign policy accomplishment was the negotiation of a peace settlement between Egypt, under President Anwar al-Sadat, and Israel, under Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Acting as both mediator and participant, he persuaded the two leaders to end a 30-year state of war. The subsequent peace treaty was signed at the White House in March 1979.

After protracted and often emotional debate, Carter also secured Senate ratification of treaties ceding the Panama Canal to Panama by the year 2000. Going a step farther than Nixon, he extended formal diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China.

But Carter enjoyed less success with the Soviet Union. Though he assumed office with detente at high tide and declared that the United States had escaped its "inordinate fear

of Communism," his insistence that "our commitment to human rights must be absolute" antagonized the Soviet government. A SALT II agreement further limiting nuclear stockpiles was signed, but not ratified by the U.S. Senate, many of whose members felt the treaty was unbalanced. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan killed the treaty and triggered a Carter defense build-up that paved the way for the huge expenditures of the 1980s.

Carter's most serious foreign policy challenge came in Iran. After an Islamic fundamentalist revolution led by Shiite Muslim leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini replaced a corrupt but friendly regime, Carter admitted the deposed shah to the United States for medical treatment. Angry Iranian militants, supported by the Islamic regime, seized the American embassy in Tehran and held 53 American hostages for more than a year. The long-running hostage crisis dominated the final year of his presidency and greatly damaged his chances for re-election.

Questions

1. Who won the 1976 presidential election?

2. What agency is responsible for setting monetary policy?

3. By the end of Jimmy Carter's term, his disapproval rating reached ____ percent.

- a. 47
- b. 57
- c. 67
- d. 77

4. What two leaders did Jimmy Carter persuade to end a 30-year state of war?

5. President Jimmy Carter extended formal diplomatic recognition to what country?

6. What country was invaded by the Soviet Union in 1979?

7. Who led an Islamic fundamentalist revolution in Iran?

8. What dominated the final year of Jimmy Carter’s presidency and greatly damaged his chances for reelection?

9. Jimmy Carter was very unpopular at the time he left office in 1981, more than thirty years ago. Looking back on his presidency, was his unpopularity justified? Explain your answer.
