

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Assassination of the President

Shots rang out as President Kennedy and his wife rode in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas, on Friday, November 22, 1963. The presidential limousine raced to the hospital, but the president was dead.

Most people who were alive in 1963 remember where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news that President Kennedy had died.

Lee Harvey Oswald, the man accused of shooting Kennedy, was never brought to trial. While police were moving him to a different jail, he was shot and killed by Jack Ruby.

Oswald's murder left many unanswered questions about the assassination. People wanted to know why he shot Kennedy and whether he acted on his own or was part of a conspiracy. Were Southern racists, Cubans, or the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to blame? Some rumors even accused Lyndon B. Johnson of planning the murder so he could become president.

Ninety minutes after the president died, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as the 36th president. His oath of office was given aboard the presidential plane at an airport in Dallas.

President Johnson appointed the Warren Commission to investigate the assassination. The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald had acted alone and was not part of a conspiracy, but many felt their report had raised more questions than it had answered.



1. Ask two people you know who were born before 1963 if they remember where they were and what they were doing when they heard that John F. Kennedy had been shot. Write their responses below.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do you think many people still remember that event so clearly? \_\_\_\_\_

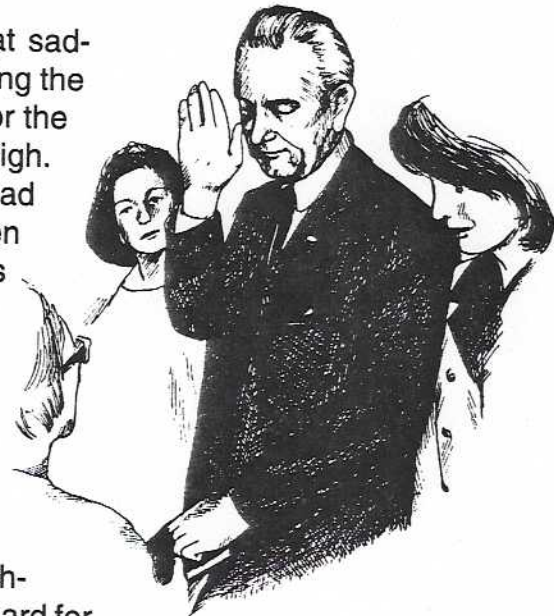
3. Why do you think Johnson was sworn into office so quickly? \_\_\_\_\_



## LYNDON B. JOHNSON

(1908–1973, P. 1963–1969)

The death of President Kennedy brought great sadness to the nation, and again a vice president was taking the oath of office. Johnson was unusually well prepared for the assignment, and for a time his popularity was very high. He knew how to get things done, and some bills that had gone nowhere in the Kennedy years became laws. Then came a changing mood in the nation, and Johnson was hated and booed out of office.



Lyndon grew up in a very political family, living in the sandhills of southwest Texas. His family was not as poor as some, but they knew that only hard work would produce the money they needed. As a boy, he did various odd jobs, from picking cotton and shining shoes to waiting tables and washing dishes. He graduated from Southwest Texas State Teachers College in 1930 and taught for a while. He worked hard for the "Kleberg for Congress" campaign; when Kleberg won, he took Johnson to Washington as his secretary. In 1934, Johnson married Claudia (nicknamed Lady Bird) Taylor, whose father was a wealthy oil man. The next year he went back to Texas to lead the National Youth Administration (NYA), where he found jobs for many of the state's college students.

In 1937, Johnson was elected to the U.S. House, where he was a good "New Dealer" and became popular with Roosevelt. He was soon known as a man who got things done for his district and his state. In 1941, Johnson was defeated in a close special election to fill a vacant Senate seat. That same year, he was given special leave by the House to go into active service in the Navy Reserve and was commissioned as lieutenant commander. In 1942, he received the Silver Star for gallantry under fire. After FDR ordered all members of Congress serving in the armed forces to return home, his active career in the navy ended, but he continued in the Naval Reserves.

In 1948, Johnson was elected senator from Texas and was named to the Armed Services Committee. He was often critical of Truman's conduct during the Korean War. Unlike some Democrats, he cooperated with Eisenhower's Republican administration. He said: "Any jackass can kick down a barn. It takes a good carpenter to build a barn. We aim to build."

In 1953, he was elected Senate minority leader, and after the 1954 election, he became majority leader. True to his word, he played a constructive part in helping Eisenhower get bills through Congress. In 1957, he was active in getting the civil rights bill passed that Eisenhower had asked for. He favored a larger Air Force after the Russians launched *Sputnik I*. Then he chaired the Senate committee that created NASA.

When it appeared that Kennedy might win the party nomination in 1960, Johnson received support from some southern and western delegations that wanted to block Kennedy. The effort failed, but in a surprising move, Kennedy chose Johnson for vice president.

Vice President Johnson was much busier than most men in his office had been in the past. He made good-will trips, sat in on cabinet meetings, and discussed legislation with Con-



gressmen. Few vice presidents had ever been as well informed as Johnson was when tragedy elevated them to the presidential office.

**JOHNSON AS PRESIDENT (first term).** Johnson was determined to be a president who got things accomplished. Johnson knew he had less than a year to convince the voters he was worthy of their votes, so he pressured his former colleagues in the House and Senate to pass bills quickly. Important legislation, long-buried in committee, was suddenly brought to a vote.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 overcame strong opposition in the Senate with the help of Republican Senator Everett Dirksen. The act made it illegal to bar anyone from a hotel, restaurant, barbershop, or place of amusement on the basis of their race. It cut off federal programs to any community that allowed discrimination.

Taxes were reduced by over \$11 billion. Congress voted money to combat poverty. Job training programs were increased, and more money was put into federal education programs.

**The election of 1964.** While some disagreement is common, in 1964, the presidential candidates represented opposite views on almost every major topic. In the Republican primaries, the more liberal members were split between several candidates, while the conservatives were united behind Barry Goldwater, a senator from Arizona. He had voted against the civil rights law, wanted to make Social Security voluntary, and was critical of the TVA and many other government programs. It was easy for his opponents to take his statements out of context and use them against him.

When votes were counted in November, Johnson won by 27 million popular votes and by 486–52 in electoral votes. Democrats also gained more seats in Congress, with 295 to 140 in the House and 68 to 32 in the Senate. The Republicans had carried only six states, five of those in the South. While it was not recognized at the time, this election was the beginning of a strong Republican presence in the South.

**JOHNSON AS PRESIDENT (second term).** Johnson's second term began with the passage of Medicare, a program to help the elderly pay for medical expenses. There were new, large grants for education, from elementary schools to aid for colleges. A program to help Appalachia was approved. The amount being used to fight poverty was doubled. The Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 to protect the African-American's right to register and vote. The Twenty-fourth Amendment was ratified, making the poll tax unconstitutional.

In 1966, the record of successes began to develop a backlash. The public was beginning to wonder if bigger programs and more government involvement had gone too far. In the election of 1966, the Democrats lost 47 seats in the House and three in the Senate.

Two major problems divided Americans for many years to come.

**Race.** Johnson's efforts to solve the unfairness in the way African-Americans were treated had centered on the south. However, many blacks lived in northern cities where different problems existed. Young blacks in the north were more militant, and they began forming groups that spoke in terms of revolution and violence. One young leader said that "violence is as American as cherry pie." Riots broke out in northern cities. The worst riot was in the Watts section of Los Angeles, which left 34 dead, hundreds injured, and many buildings burned.

The Kerner Commission studied the racial tension, and said in its 1968 report: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate but unequal."

**Vietnam.** The war in Vietnam had been going on since 1947. At first, the rebels wanted to drive the French out, and they succeeded in 1954. Vietnam was divided that year between



the Communists in North Vietnam led by Ho Chi Minh and the anti-Communist government in South Vietnam, with its capital in Saigon. Supplies were being sent through neighboring Cambodia and Laos to help the rebels in the south, the Viet Cong. Kennedy had previously sent a few thousand troops to help train the South Vietnamese army, but their efforts had failed.

Johnson waited until after the 1964 election to send larger numbers of troops to Vietnam, with the purpose of showing so much force that North Vietnam would make peace. In November 1965, there were 165,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam; and more were being sent. By 1968, the number had reached 543,000. Despite predictions that victory was around the corner, victory seemed no nearer than before.

Protests by college students soon to be drafted became a common occurrence. The famous boxer Muhammad Ali refused to be inducted into the Army saying: "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong." That inspired others to burn their draft cards or flee to Canada to avoid the draft. Johnson's popularity was dropping, both in Congress and on the streets. In 1968, he announced he would not run for another term.

In April, Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis, and after winning the California presidential primary that summer, Robert Kennedy was assassinated. Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey, was defeated in 1968, and the former vice president, Richard Nixon, was elected.





## The Vietnam War

### The War in the 1950s

No war in American history stirred up so much controversy as did the war in Vietnam. It began as a civil war between the Vietminh guerrillas and the colonial government of French Indo-China. Ho Chi Minh, leader of the rebels, was very successful despite the large amount of U.S. military aid going to help the French. By 1954, the French had lost the northern part and agreed to divide Vietnam at the 17th parallel. Worried about the “domino effect” (if one nation falls, those around it will fall), the United States and friends met and formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which promised to consult with any nation threatened by aggression or subversion. Eisenhower sent military aid, but no American troops.

### Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

President Kennedy became concerned about the growing power of the Vietcong (South Vietnamese rebels) and sent 16,000 American “military advisers” to help South Vietnam resist. After Kennedy’s assassination, President Johnson faced the unpleasant reality that unless the United States acted soon, the “rice basket of Asia” would be lost. The Republican presidential candidate in 1964, Barry Goldwater, criticized the no-win war in Vietnam and urged that we become fully involved. Johnson said it was an Asian war, not ours; but in August 1964, that changed. Using the reported attack of three North Vietnamese patrol boats on an American destroyer as justification, he urged Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin resolution to permit him to use “all necessary measures” to “repel any armed attack” and prevent “future aggression.” It easily passed in Congress.

### Public Opinion and the Draft

After Johnson’s decisive victory in the 1964 election, the United States became deeply committed to the war in Vietnam. Thousands of young men were drafted to fight in a different type of war without front lines and against enemies who set different types of traps, then blended back into the jungles.

Some young men avoided the war by getting college deferments. Anti-war movements began on college campuses among idealists and those fearing their deferments would end before the war did. Some avoided the draft by moving to Canada, and others defied the government by burning their draft cards. Anti-war feeling even grew among the soldiers fighting the war. Public opinion was divided on the war, and that split was obvious in Congress. In the Senate, J. William Fulbright led the “doves” (those urging withdrawal), and Barry Goldwater led the “hawks” (those wanting to do whatever it took to win). Adding pressure was taxpayer discontent with an expensive war.

After President Johnson assured the public that the war was nearly won, the Tet Offensive (January 1968) proved it was not. His popularity dropped so low that he did not seek another term as president.

### Nixon and Ford Era

Hostility to the war became even stronger during the Nixon and Ford era. On April 23, 1975, in a speech at Tulane University in New Orleans, President Gerald Ford announced, the Vietnam War “is finished as far as America is concerned.” The war ended on April 30, 1975, when the last American troops left Saigon. At the time, many felt Vietnam was an experience to forget, and those returning home from the war felt bitter and defeated.





## 1968—A Tragic Year

By 1968, conservatives were loudly complaining about civil rights protesters, anti-war demonstrators, “women’s libbers,” and those favoring an end to obscenity, drug, and alcohol laws. The TV family of the 1950s with its wise mom and dad had been replaced in the 1960s by parents who were no match for wise-cracking offspring. Polite manners in the workplace and on buses were now seen as “male chauvinism.” Respect for police was replaced by insulting name calling. Business was under attack for polluting air, requiring ties and dresses, and placing greed over community needs. The flag was being burned at campus protests while men were dying for their country in Vietnam.

### Supreme Court Decisions

Some blamed this atmosphere on Earl Warren and the Supreme Court. In 1962, the Court banned prayer in public schools, and the next year it banned Bible reading. The *Gideon v. Wainwright*, decision required that a state provide an attorney for the accused, if he could not afford to pay for his own defense. The *Miranda v. Arizona* decision required that a person must be informed of his rights before questioning began. The Court also restricted a community’s right to ban objectionable books and movies. “Impeach Earl Warren” signs began to appear in many parts of the country.

### Election of 1968

President Johnson’s “Great Society” seemed more like a “fractured society.” Johnson barely won the New Hampshire primary in March 1968 against the little-known senator, Eugene McCarthy. Then Robert Kennedy, the younger brother of former President John Kennedy, entered the primary race. President Johnson, realizing he had little chance for reelection, announced he would not seek a second term. With support from party leaders, Vice President Hubert Humphrey became a Democratic primary candidate.

On April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., a civil rights advocate who promoted racial harmony and non-violence, was shot and killed. A rampage of looting and burning broke out in 125 cities. Then, on June 6 in Los Angeles, California, Robert Kennedy was killed while he and his supporters were celebrating his victory in the California primary.

The Yippies, a counterculture group, announced their intention to disrupt the Democratic National Convention in August. Chicago’s Mayor Richard Daley warned that it was not going to happen in his town. While delegates met behind barbed-wire fences, the police battled with demonstrators in the streets. A badly divided party chose Humphrey as their candidate.

Richard Nixon was chosen as the Republican nominee and drew support from many traditional conservatives. George Wallace, former governor of Alabama, appealed to the working class and poor whites as the American Independent candidate. Nixon and Wallace both promised that if elected, they would do whatever was necessary to restore order.

It appeared at first that Nixon would win easily, but Humphrey surged toward the end; however, in the popular vote Nixon received 31.7 million votes to Humphrey’s 31.2 million. Nixon won the presidency easily in the Electoral College. The combined votes for Nixon and Wallace were 41.1 million, signaling the public was ready for a conservative solution to America’s problems.

### Did You Know?

The “Great Society” was a group of programs during the Johnson administration that mainly focused on eliminating poverty and racial injustice in the United States.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## To the Moon—and Back

Tragedy canceled the United States' plans to send astronauts to the moon in 1967. Three astronauts scheduled to make the first trip to the moon on *Apollo 1* were killed during a routine test when the oxygen in the capsule burst into flames. Those killed were Ed White, Gus Grissom, and Roger Chaffee.

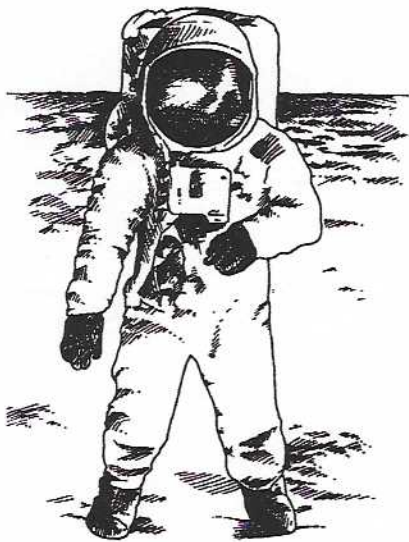
Four days later, two astronauts died in another fire in a flight simulator. All manned flights were canceled for over a year.

Finally, in December 1968, *Apollo 8* carried three men into orbit around the moon and back to Earth.

Eventually, the stage was set for the next mission: landing men on the moon and returning them safely to Earth. After a four-day journey, three astronauts aboard *Apollo 11* reached their destination.

After orbiting the moon, Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin landed the lunar module *Eagle* on the surface of the moon on July 20, 1969.

An estimated 600 million people watched as Neil Armstrong became the first person to walk on the moon's surface. Most who saw the event remember his first words: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."



While on the moon, Armstrong and Aldrin set up a solar wind experiment, a seismometer to detect moonquakes, and a laser reflector, which allowed scientists to make very accurate measurements of the distance from Earth to the moon.

The astronauts brought back samples of rocks and soil from the moon. Before they left, they planted an American flag and erected a plaque attached to the landing craft's descent stage. On the plaque was a map of Earth, the signatures of Richard M. Nixon and the three astronauts, and these words:

HERE MEN FROM THE PLANET EARTH  
FIRST SET FOOT UPON THE MOON  
JULY 1969, A.D.  
WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND

1. Knowing the tragedies that had happened during the testing and training, how would you have felt if you were one of the people training to be an astronaut?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Use the Internet and other reference sources. Who was the third astronaut on this mission with Armstrong and Aldrin? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What do you think Armstrong meant in his first words when walking on the moon?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## RICHARD NIXON

(1913–1994, P. 1969–1974)

President Nixon had survived many battles in his political life, but it became clear in the summer of 1974 he would not overcome the opposition this time, and he resigned as president. For all his knowledge of the art of politics, he had blundered in a colossal way in the campaign of 1972. It cost him his job and reputation.

Nixon was born in Yorba Linda, California, in 1913, into a poor but hardworking family. Richard graduated from Whittier College as student body president in 1934, and he received a scholarship to Duke University School of Law, from which he graduated near the top of his class in 1937. After five years of practicing law, he joined the navy in 1942 and was sent to the Pacific as an officer. He was discharged in 1946.

He ran for Congress in 1946 as a Republican and was named to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). There, he became famous for his attacks on Alger Hiss, a former State Department official accused of having been a Communist. In 1950, Nixon won a hard-fought campaign for the U.S. Senate, in which he accused his opponent of being a Communist stooge. His reputation as a leader of conservative Republicans made him a possible running mate for Eisenhower, a middle-of-the-road Republican.

After he was chosen, Nixon was accused of having \$18,000 of his living expenses as a senator paid for by a group of wealthy businessmen. As a result, he appeared on television with his wife, his daughters, and his dog "Checkers." He then stated that the only gift he had received was the dog, which had been given to his daughters. Thousands of letters were received from all over the country in support of keeping Nixon on the ticket.

As vice president, he was sent as Eisenhower's representative into some tough situations. On one trip he was sent to Latin America, and his motorcade was surrounded by angry protesters who rocked his limousine back and forth.

In 1960, Nixon ran against John Kennedy and lost by a small margin. Two years later, he ran for governor in California and lost again. At that point, he was ready to quit politics, and he told the press, whom he blamed for his defeat, "Now you won't have Nixon to kick around anymore." His vacation from politics did not last long, however, and in 1964, he was one of the few Republicans campaigning hard for Goldwater. His party loyalty was rewarded with the party nomination for president in 1968.

**The campaign of 1968.** Nixon's opponents in the 1968 Republican race were Nelson Rockefeller from New York and California's governor, Ronald Reagan, but Nixon was nominated on the first ballot. For vice president, he chose Maryland's governor, Spiro Agnew. Nixon's Democratic opponent was Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who had a difficult situation, getting support from Johnson Democrats without losing the newly formed anti-Vietnam War demonstrators. A third candidate, George Wallace, created a new ticket, the American Independence Party, which was against integration of schools and in favor of law and order. Wallace





was more likely to take votes from Nixon than Humphrey. By the end of the campaign, Humphrey was gaining on Nixon, but he lost in a close contest. In electoral votes, Nixon won by 301-191 over Humphrey; Wallace came in third with a respectable 46 votes. In popular vote, Nixon won by only a half-million votes over Humphrey.

**NIXON AS PRESIDENT (first term).** Nixon had been elected president, but the Democrats controlled Congress. He could not always control spending, but he found a way around that problem. Nixon simply refused to spend all the money that had been budgeted for some programs; he rarely called cabinet meetings and ignored many of his "official" family. Instead, he turned to other advisors, some of whom became especially important. Henry Kissinger, a Harvard professor, became his National Security Advisor; H.R. Haldeman, an advertising executive, became his chief of staff; John Mitchell, another close friend, was named attorney general.

Inflation became a more serious issue during Nixon's first term. Reasons for inflation were the cost of fighting the Vietnam War, rising food prices, and the cost of gasoline. OPEC, a group of oil producing countries, began cutting back on production and prices increased slowly at first, then jumped quickly in 1973.

Supreme Court appointments are important choices for a president. Nixon wanted conservatives on the Court who were likely to support his positions on limiting defendants' rights and other issues. Warren Burger, a moderate, was chosen as chief justice. Then two men he chose for associate justice vacancies were rejected by the Senate. Nixon then chose three able men to fill vacancies. Once chosen, however, a Supreme Court justice makes decisions that sometimes surprise, and even oppose, the president who chose them.

**Foreign policy.** Nixon had always been strongly anti-Communist, but as president, he realized that circumstances change, and the United States needed to use those changes to its advantage. He and his foreign affairs advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger, began to change United States policies that had been held since the beginning of the Cold War.

Anti-war protests were common in 1969 and 1970; many colleges had closed because of them. Nixon began pulling U.S. troops out of South Vietnam and relying on bombing attacks on the North to end the war. U.S. troop numbers dropped from 543,000 to 39,000 in 1972.

The Soviet Union and China were clearly unfriendly with each other, and Nixon saw an opportunity to improve relations with China. In 1972, he made a trip to China that went well. A few months later, he visited Moscow, and agreements were made to limit arms and increase trade.

**The election of 1972.** Nixon was going strong by 1972, and Republicans were united behind him. The Democrats, on the other hand, were divided into warring camps. Older Democrats preferred Ted Kennedy, Edmund Muskie, or Hubert Humphrey. Young Democrats rallied behind Senator George McGovern, who was anti-Vietnam War and wanted to pull all U.S. troops out. McGovern was chosen as the party candidate, but he had angered many party members in the process.

Nothing went right for McGovern. Because other speakers droned on, he did not give his acceptance speech until 3:00 A.M. His running mate, Senator Thomas Eagleton, was dropped because he had once had electric shock treatments for depression. After burglars were caught inside Democratic headquarters at the Watergate complex, McGovern charged that it was a Republican plot, but most Americans assumed he was just grasping at straws. The McGovern campaign was starved for money, while big donations flooded into Nixon headquarters.



**NIXON AS PRESIDENT (second term).** The election was a clear victory for Nixon, who received over 60 percent of the popular vote; McGovern won only in Massachusetts and the District of Columbia. As often happens in politics, the glory of the moment was short, and dark days lay ahead. In 1973, Vice President Agnew was forced to resign because of criminal charges brought against him. Nixon chose Gerald Ford as his new vice president. Then Watergate and its cover-up became the focus of attention.

**Vietnam.** To help South Vietnam, which was losing badly to the North, Nixon began bombing attacks on Viet Cong supply lines through Laos and Cambodia. Campus demonstrations began again, and at Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen killed four students.

**Watergate.** For the 1972 campaign, Nixon assembled a group of zealous supporters willing to do anything to win. Heading the Committee to Re-Elect the President (dubbed CREEP) was former Attorney General Mitchell. A group was sent to Democratic headquarters to plant listening devices. They were caught but refused to talk. The judge sentenced them to 20 years in prison. One of those convicted told the judge they had been sent by CREEP. Others began to talk to save themselves. Another said conversations had been held in the president's office to cover up CREEP's part in the affair. This was denied by Mitchell and Nixon, but then it was learned there was a taping machine in the office.

The Supreme Court in a 9-0 decision ordered Nixon to turn over some of the tapes to a special prosecutor. When the contents were revealed, impeachment proceedings were begun by the House. The House Judiciary Committee voted to impeach the president, and Nixon resigned rather than face a Senate trial. Trials for Watergate defendants continued for months, and many of those involved served prison time. Nixon was pardoned by President Ford.

Nixon lived long enough after leaving office to improve his reputation, and he gave helpful advice to other presidents on foreign affairs. Watergate remains a topic for speculation, and people wonder how someone as intelligent as Nixon could have permitted such a blunder.





## President Richard Nixon and Watergate



Richard M. Nixon

Richard Nixon's first term was far more tranquil than Johnson's had been. Nixon quickly reduced the U.S. military force in Vietnam to 50,000, which meant fewer men being drafted. Strongly anti-communist in his early years, he and his chief foreign policy advisor, Henry Kissinger, worked toward *detente*, a relaxing of tension, between the United States and the U.S.S.R. He opened diplomatic relations with communist China and visited Chairman Mao in Peking. National pride ran high when the American flag was planted on the moon on July 21, 1969.

To the surprise of many, Nixon pushed two new agencies: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). He approved increasing social security benefits, a reform of the tax system, and federal aid to low- and middle-income home buyers. When the economy became sluggish, he started spending more money; when inflation came, he put on price and wage controls.

Not everyone was happy, though. African-American leaders found him opposed to busing students to achieve integration. The anti-war movement was still strong, and it wanted all American troops out of Vietnam. Many did not trust Nixon, and reporters were unhappy with the devoted followers who surrounded the president.

### Watergate Leads to Nixon's Resignation

The 1972 election was an easy victory for Nixon, who received over 60 percent of the popular vote and won 520–17 in electoral votes. Few had believed George McGovern's charge that the five burglars caught at the Democratic National Committee's headquarters inside the Watergate complex in Washington D.C., were in fact agents of the Committee to Reelect the President (CREEP). Judge John Sirica, who tried the men, sentenced them to 20 years in prison. Jim McCord, one of the defendants, told the judge that higher officials in CREEP were involved. Two *Washington Post* reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, were fed information about a cover-up from a secret source. Then a Senate committee chaired by Sam Ervin began an investigation, and Attorney General Elliot Richardson appointed a special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, to look into charges.

John Dean, a lawyer for Nixon, said he had been at White House meetings where a cover-up was discussed, and he included dates and times. Nixon denied wrongdoing, and the matter might have stopped there, except that it was discovered there was a taping machine in the Oval Office; Cox tried without success to get the tapes. During this controversy, Vice President Agnew was forced to resign because of bribes he had taken while governor of Maryland. Agnew was replaced by Gerald Ford.

Cox went to court to get the tapes, and Nixon ordered Richardson to fire him. When the attorney general refused, he was fired and so was the number-two man at the Justice Department. The number-three man fired Cox, but public outrage was so strong that a new prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, was appointed. After the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to turn over all the incriminating tapes, he was ruined. The House Judiciary Committee voted three charges of impeachment. Senate Republican leaders went to Nixon and told him, if he did not resign, he would most certainly be impeached. Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974, and Vice President Ford became president. President Ford said, "Our long national nightmare is over."



## GERALD FORD

(1913–~~2001~~, P. 1974–1977)

No fortuneteller could have predicted the circumstances that made it possible for Gerald Ford to become president in 1972. He had not been chosen for president or vice president and had been very content to serve his Michigan district and as minority leader in the House. But these were unusual times, and after only a few months as vice president, he took the oath of office as president. As his wife put it, he was an “accidental vice president, and an accidental president, and in both jobs he replaced disgraced leaders.”



Ford's original name was Leslie King, and he was born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1913. After his parents divorced, his mother moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he was adopted by his stepfather and renamed Gerald R. Ford. While there, he was captain of his high school football team. He received a football scholarship to the University of Michigan where he was an outstanding center on the team for three years. The 1932 and 1933 teams went undefeated, and he was chosen as the most valuable player in 1934. Yale University chose him as an assistant coach, which made it possible for him to attend Yale Law School. He graduated in the top third of his class in 1941. Ford then returned to Grand Rapids to practice law.

In 1942, he joined the navy and was an officer on an aircraft carrier in the South Pacific. After his discharge in 1946, he returned to Grand Rapids and his law practice. Two years later, he married Elizabeth (Betty) Bloomer. He was elected to the House in 1948, and he served for 13 terms. In the House, he was a conservative who, in his own words, was moderate on domestic policy, a conservative on financial issues, and was in favor of the United States playing an important role in world affairs.

In 1973, Vice President Agnew was forced to resign, and acting under the Twenty-fifth Amendment, President Nixon chose Ford as the new vice president. He was approved by both Houses of Congress. The importance of that change in job was becoming more clear. President Nixon was fighting charges of covering up the Watergate break-in, and after the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to turn over the White House tapes, the House Judiciary Committee voted to impeach the president. He resigned before the Senate trial began. On August 9, 1974, Ford took the presidential oath of office.

**FORD AS PRESIDENT.** The public had complained for years that presidents acted like kings with large staffs to serve them. Ford quickly showed that he was different. When his dog made a mess, he cleaned it up himself. Ford liked to fix his own breakfast in the morning. His old friends in Congress talked about how friendly he was, and despite some bitter arguments, a long-time opponent said Ford had no enemies.

In September 1974, Ford granted a pardon to President Nixon, explaining that it was to begin the national healing process after Watergate and to save Nixon and his family from further suffering. A week later, he granted an amnesty (forgiveness) for many of those who had



evaded the draft or deserted from the armed forces during the Vietnam War. The Nixon pardon was very unpopular, and Ford thought it may have cost him the election of 1976.

For vice president, Ford chose Nelson Rockefeller, who had served in the federal government and had been governor of New York for 15 years. Rockefeller was approved by Congress in December 1974.

**Domestic policies.** The main problems Ford faced were high unemployment and inflation. Before acting on them, he held an economic conference to look for the best way to solve these problems. He tried to control inflation by cutting some government programs, and when Congress tried to put money back into cut budgets, he vetoed the bills. During his time in office, inflation dropped from 11.2 percent to 5.3 percent. In 1975, he proposed tax cuts, but most of his efforts to improve the economy failed to convince Congress.

**Foreign affairs.** Ford kept Henry Kissinger as his secretary of state, and worked to improve relations with the Soviet Union. In 1975, he traveled to Helsinki, Finland, where he signed an agreement with the Russians promising to honor European borders.

The situation in Vietnam continued to worsen, and Ford did not want to be the president who lost the war. In 1975, the United States pumped more aid into South Vietnam and Cambodia, but by March the governments of both countries were in danger of total collapse. An airlift of children out of Vietnam began early in April. In mid-April, Cambodia surrendered to Communist forces. On April 24, a major airlift of Vietnamese to Guam began. By April 27, Saigon was being shelled, and the president ordered a helicopter evacuation to begin for those Americans still in Vietnam. The last helicopters left April 29 as Communist forces entered the city. South Vietnam surrendered the next day.

The war had cost the United States nearly 58,000 men and \$150 billion. It had been the nation's longest and least popular war.

**The election of 1976.** To get the party nomination, Ford had to fight off those conservatives who liked Governor Ronald Reagan of California more. The contest was close from the very beginning, but at the convention Ford won the nomination by only 117 votes. Ford chose Senator Bob Dole of Kansas as his running mate. Like Reagan, the Democratic candidate, former Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia, appealed to many as an outsider who was not part of the Washington crowd.

Carter got off to an early lead in the polls, but Ford moved up in the latter days of the campaign. In the end, Ford lost the popular vote by 1.7 million and the electoral vote by 240 to 297. The Democrats had large majorities in both houses of Congress.

After the Fords left public life, Mrs. Ford was treated for alcoholism. She later started the Betty Ford Center in 1982, which has treated many people for addictions ever since.

