

An Era of Social Change

*Postwar United States
(1945–1975)*



The Golden Age

Social change

The Great Society

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about the Great Society project of the 1960s and be able to answer these key questions:

- What was the New Frontier?
- What did the Great Society aim to do and what did it achieve?
- Was the Great Society a success?



John F. Kennedy

The 1960 election was extremely close. Democrat **John F. Kennedy** became the youngest man ever elected president. He was charismatic and attractive, from a rich family and the public were captivated by his young and glamorous family.

Key factors in Kennedy's victory were the first ever televised electoral debate, where he came across very well, and speaking out on civil rights, which won him black votes.



Kennedy entered office with ambitions to eradicate poverty and inspire Americans through the space program. His broad vision of progress was known as the **New Frontier**.



In his short tenure, Kennedy was prevented from turning his idea of the New Frontier into reality. However, he was still able to pass some legislation in the following areas:

- the space program
- countering an economic recession
- poverty abroad
- domestic poverty and segregation.



“We stand today on the edge of a new frontier. The new frontier is not a set of promises – it is a set of challenges. It sums up not what I intend to promise the American people – but what I intend to ask of them.”

Why did Kennedy struggle to pass legislation?



The Kennedy assassination



On 22 November, 1963, President Kennedy was shot and killed during a presidential visit to Dallas, Texas. Press the buttons to find out about the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the focus that surrounded it.

Press **start** to begin.

start



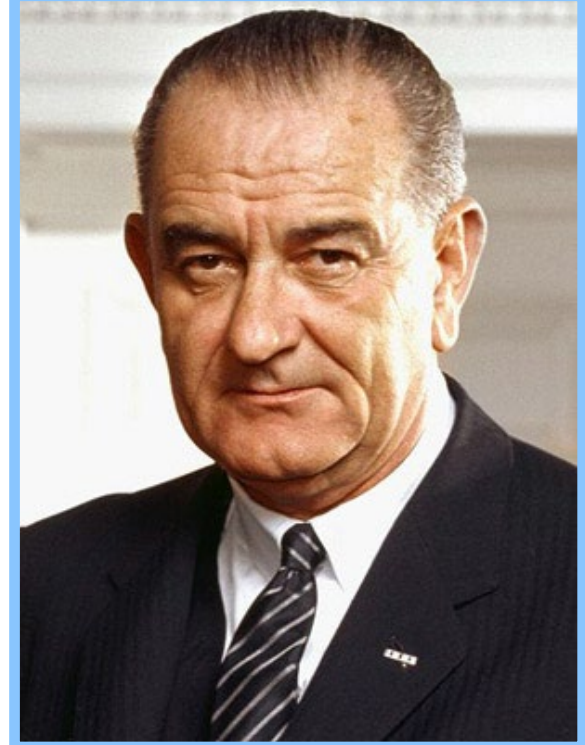
Why has the assassination had such a lasting impact?



The election of 1964 was a huge victory for the Democrats. Lyndon B. Johnson, a Texan with a reputation as a skilled negotiator and politician, won 61% of the vote. The Democrats also gained a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority in both houses of Congress.

With this overwhelming majority, the Democrats created the core legislation of what came to be known as the **Great Society**. It built on the themes of the New Frontier and had two primary goals:

- the elimination of poverty
- the elimination of racial injustice.





The Johnson administration, supported by many people, believed that the federal government should be responsible for the wellbeing of the American people through large-scale government programs.

They saw the success of the **New Deal** as a model to base the Great Society on in order to bring about social and economic change.



President Johnson signed into law 84 of the 87 bills that he introduced to Congress. As well as poverty and civil rights, the legislation focused on education, medical care, urban issues, and transportation.

How did the New Deal and the Great Society differ?



Civil rights legislation



The Great Society created legislation to grant equal rights and civil liberties in order to end discrimination, segregation and prejudice.

Can you match the different acts to the effects they had?

Press **start** to begin.

start

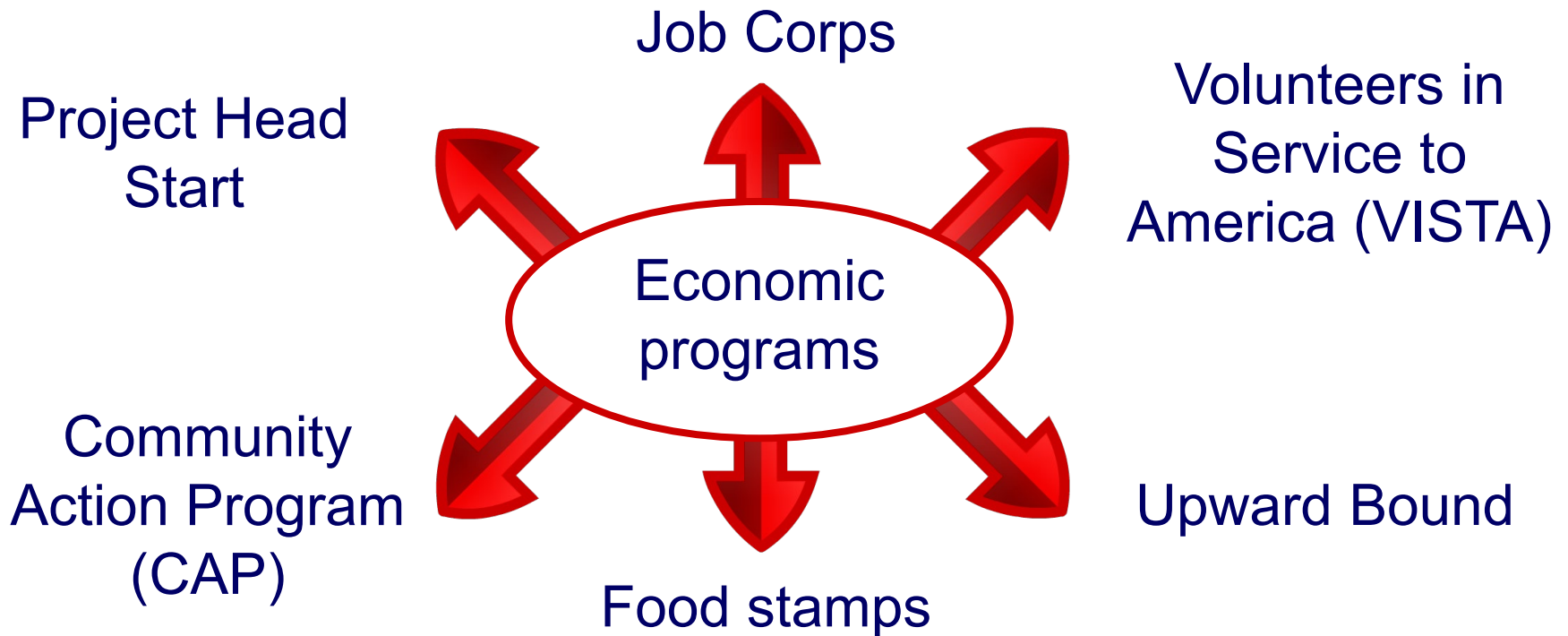




The war on poverty



In 1964, Congress created the **Office of Economic Opportunity** to implement the **Economic Opportunity Act**. This agency oversaw various economic programs designed to help the disadvantaged and break the cycle of poverty.





Many different reforms and pieces of legislation were passed in the Great Society in a large number of different policy areas.

Press on each button to find out about reforms and legislation in that category, when they occurred and what they did.

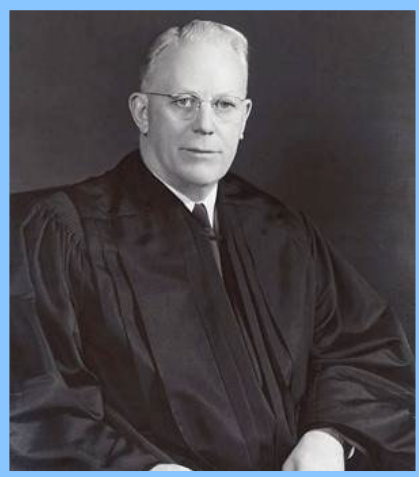
Press **start** to begin.

start





The Supreme Court was known as the **Warren Court** between 1953 and 1969 while **Earl Warren** served as Chief Justice. The court's liberal majority used its power to expand civil rights and federal power alongside Great Society programs.



The Warren Court also **reapportioned** voting districts so all areas were equally represented. Urbanization and the growth of the suburbs had left rural areas with more power.

Miranda v. Arizona was a landmark case that protected the rights of the accused when being questioned by the police. Evidence seized illegally could also no longer be used.



A year of turmoil



Many events came to a head in 1968.
It proved to be a year of turmoil in the
U.S. for many reasons as riots and
protests swept the nation.
Can you match each event to the correct
photograph and consequences?
Press **start** to begin.

start



What do you think caused such turmoil in 1968?



Was the Great Society a success?



Whether the Great society was a success remains one of the most debated topics in modern American history.



Certainly the motives and goals of the effort were noble and it did create specific programs that were successful.

However, as it did not achieve its stated goals, it cast doubt as to the effectiveness of large-scale government programs.



Were its goals realistically achievable? How did foreign policy interfere with the Great Society?





Test your knowledge of America in the
1950s and 1960s with this quiz.
Choose the correct answer to each
question to see how much you can
remember about the 1950s and 1960s.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Test your understanding of America in the 1950s and 1960s by recapping key terms and important people using this glossary. Press on the tabs and then each term to see a definition.

Press **start** to begin.

start

