

Limits and Conservatism

*Contemporary United States
(1968–Present)*



Political fallibility

Energy and economics

Social concerns

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 internal policies of Richard Nixon's administration and be able to answer these key questions:

- How did Richard Nixon try to steer the U.S. towards conservatism?
- What is stagflation?
- Why was Watergate so important? What were its consequences?



Looking back timeline



Use this timeline to recap key historical events and contextualize the period of American limits and conservatism. Either press on a date or drag the pointer along the timeline to find out information about what happened in each year.

Press **start** to begin.

start





In the 1964 presidential election, conservative Barry Goldwater lost by a major landslide to **Lyndon B. Johnson**. This defeat invigorated the conservative movement, which then became highly organized and successful.



The increasing conservatism within the United States resulted in **Richard Nixon** taking office as president in 1969. While in power, one of Nixon's main domestic plans was to install **New Federalism** in the U.S. government.

What do you know about Nixon's domestic policies?



The social programs introduced under Lyndon B. Johnson's **Great Society** had angered many conservatives.

In particular, Richard Nixon argued that these policies gave federal government too much power and responsibility.

When Nixon became president, he tried to give more control to state and local governments.

He planned to introduce **revenue sharing** to give more fiscal freedom to local governments. It came into effect in 1972.



Why have some found his policies to be contradictory?





Nixon had also inherited a weak economy. Due to Johnson's expenditure for the Vietnam War and social programs, the U.S faced **stagflation** – high **inflation** and unemployment.



In order to combat this situation, Nixon:

- wanted to raise taxes; but Congress refused
- increased interest rates to restrict the circulation of money
- **impounded** funds for programs he disagreed with
- froze workers' wages and business prices for 90 days.

What else might have caused stagflation?



Nixon wanted to retain his presidency at the next election and adopted the **Southern Strategy** in an attempt to achieve this.

The South, usually a democratic stronghold, had broken from the perceived **liberalism** of Democrats and their support of the civil rights movement.

In order to tap into this group of voters, Nixon took measures to slow the **desegregation** process, by arguing that these acts violated states' rights.



The Republicans lost 90% of the black vote, but solidly gained the votes of white southerners.

How else did Nixon aim to get Southern support?



Throughout his presidency, Richard Nixon tried to move American domestic policy in a more conservative direction. How much can you remember about his policies and key terms?
Can you match each term or policy to the most appropriate description?

Press **start** to begin.

start





The campaign for reelection



In 1972, Nixon ran for a second term. On November 7, he won a **landslide victory**, receiving nearly 18 million more popular votes than his Democrat opponent George McGovern.



However during the election, Nixon's campaign team, the **Committee to Reelect the President** (nicknamed CREEP), had tried to use illegal measures to gain an advantage.

On June 17, five men linked to CREEP were arrested trying to break into the Democratic National Committee's headquarters in the **Watergate Building** in D.C.

Why did this scandal not affect Nixon's reelection?



After Nixon was reelected in November 1972, public interest in and media coverage of the **Watergate scandal** intensified. What do you know about the developments and outcomes of this political scandal? Watch this animation to find out more about Watergate.
Press **start** to begin.

start



What action would you take against Nixon? Why?



Prior to Watergate, many Americans believed that the U.S. government was a democracy free from the corruption often associated with fascist or communist regimes.

However, Watergate left Americans with a deep distrust of and **cynicism** towards government officials.

In total, 25 members of Nixon's administration were jailed for their involvement in this scandal.

Despite this, on September 8, 1974 President Gerald Ford pardoned Nixon.



Why do you think Ford pardoned Nixon?



What do you think?



Do you think President Gerald Ford's decision to pardon Richard Nixon was the right response to the Watergate scandal?
Discuss this question in small groups.
Then press on a button to cast your vote and voice your opinion.

Press **start** to begin.

start



With a partner discuss the reasons for your vote.