

Modern America

Part Two



Part One

Part Two

Part Three

Thematic Icons



Economics



Geography



Historical concepts



Government

Icons



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page

For more instructions, see the *User Guide*.





The 1960 election was extremely close. Democrat **John F. Kennedy** became the youngest man ever elected president. He was a charismatic and attractive person 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 African American 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



What impact has the assassination had?

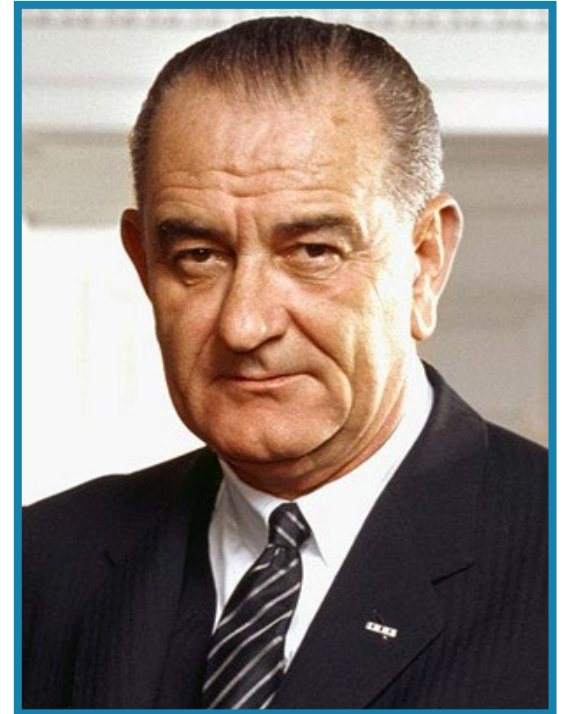




The election of 1964 was a huge victory for the Democrats. Lyndon B. Johnson, a Texan with a reputation as a skilled negotiator and politician, won 61% of the vote. The Democrats also gained a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority in both houses of Congress.

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

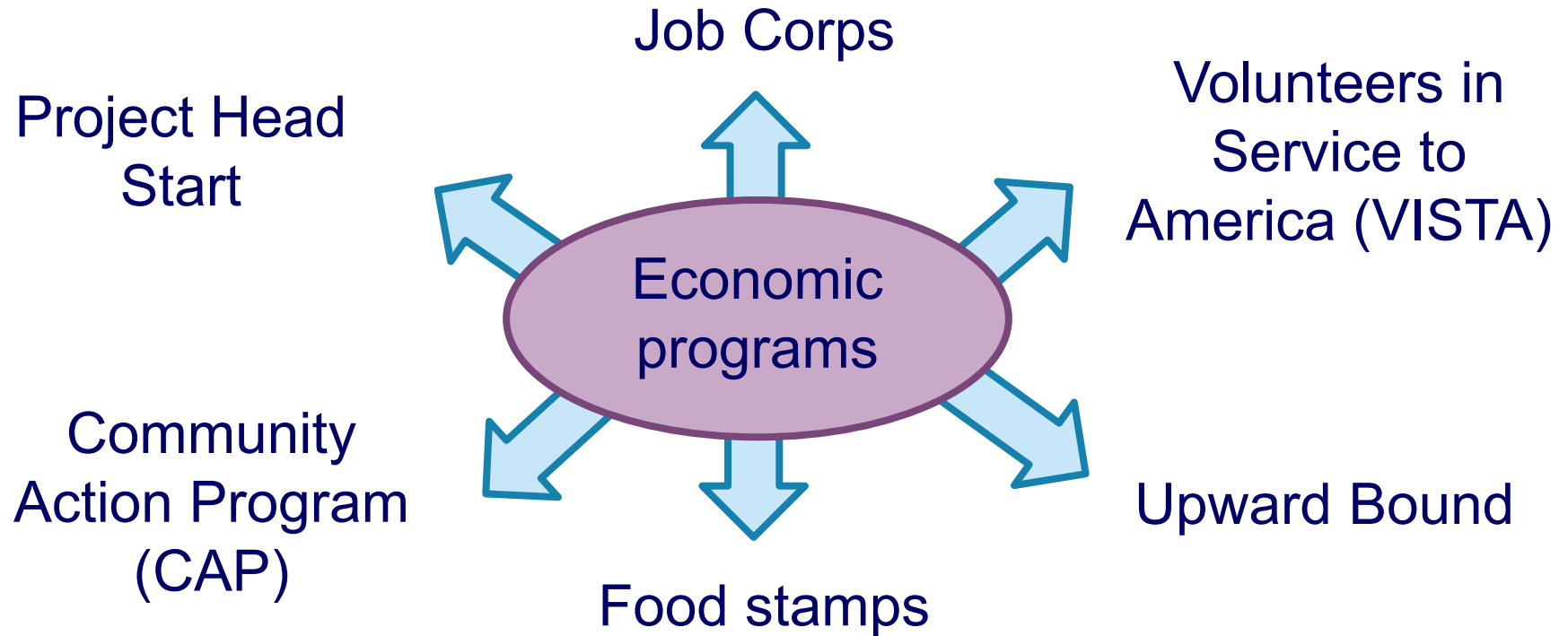




The war on poverty



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.



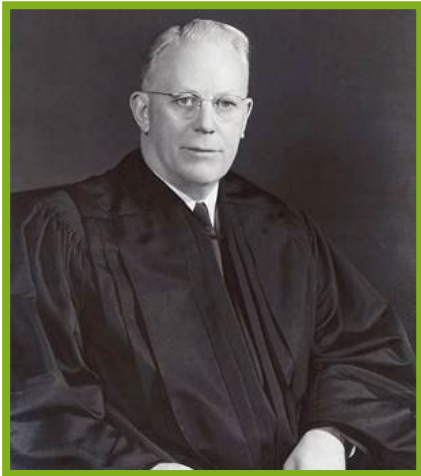


Great Society programs





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



What do you think caused such turmoil in 1968?

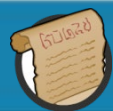


In the 1964 presidential election, conservative Barry Goldwater lost by a major landslide to **Lyndon B. Johnson**. This defeat invigorated the conservative movement, which then became highly organized and successful.



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 African American vote, but solidly gained the votes of white southerners.

How else did Nixon aim to get Southern support?



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 Re-elect 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?





Watergate scandal



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?



James “Jimmy” Carter was elected president in 1976. He moved away from realpolitik and focused his foreign policy on promoting human rights. He criticized and refused to deal with countries that violated human rights.



“Our policy is based on a historical vision of America’s role. Our policy is rooted in our moral values, which never change. Our policy is designed to serve mankind.”

What do you think of Carter’s change of foreign policy from Nixon’s?

