

Modern America

Part Three



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*.



In the 1960s, the **baby-boomer** generation became used to prosperity and **consumerism**. The average income had doubled and credit cards were made easily available.

However, the Vietnam War diverted funds and resources from the domestic market. There was also a shortage of supplies, making U.S. prices rise, and cheaper, foreign imports more popular.

The 1970s saw ongoing economic problems, such as inflation and the energy crisis.

The result was **stagflation**, where prices rose, but employment and economic productivity decreased.





Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, after winning a landslide presidential election. He vowed to win the Cold War and adopted a strategy of **rollback** – forcing change within the policies and outlook of a foreign country.

“The Soviet Union is an Evil Empire, and Soviet communism is the focus of evil in the modern world.”

Reagan increased the **arms race** and created a renewed image of U.S. power on a global scale.



Why did the U.S. change to a new strategy?





“Reaganomics”



How else did Reagan change the economy?



In 1980, inflation had risen to about 14%. As a result of this, the U.S. sank into a **recession** between 1981 and 1982. However, things began to change in 1984 with an increase in **consumer spending**.



Reagan’s policy to reduce taxes seemed to have been successful in encouraging public expenditure. Consequently, both inflation and unemployment were reduced. The market improved dramatically, as did the **Gross National Product**.

Do you think “Reaganomics” helped everyone?

During this period, the Republican Party gained much support by speaking to issues at the heart of religious conservatism, such as abortion, gay marriage and family values.



In so doing, the Republicans attracted many small-town working class voters. However, much of the legislation enacted by Republican politicians actually favored big businesses and the rich, at the expense of the working class.

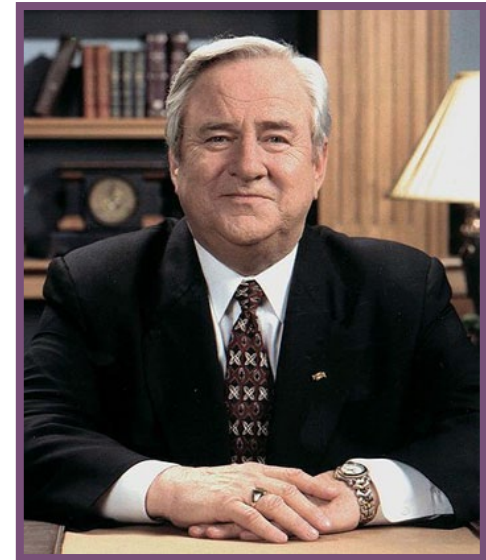
Why did people continue to vote for the Republicans?



The strength of conservatism increased partly as a result of the religious revival in the 1970s and the actions of religious groups, such as evangelical Christians.

One important evangelical Christian group was called the **Moral Majority**.

Founded by the **televangelist** Jerry Falwell, the group believed that the Bible should be interpreted literally.



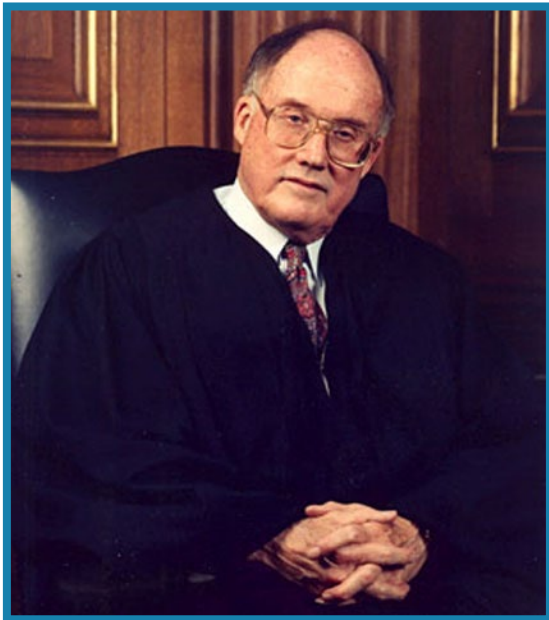
They supported traditional moral values and lobbied politicians with the aim of seeing their views reflected in policies.

What do you think this group campaigned for?



From the 1950s to the 1970s, the Supreme Court was led by **Earl Warren** and then Warren Earl Burger.

Both made liberal rulings in cases such as **Brown v. Board of Education** on desegregation, and **Roe v. Wade** on abortion.



Then in the mid-1980s, President Ronald Reagan appointed **William Rehnquist** as Chief Justice.

Both he and his successor, John Roberts, moved the Supreme Court in a more conservative direction.

Why was the court's move to conservatism important?

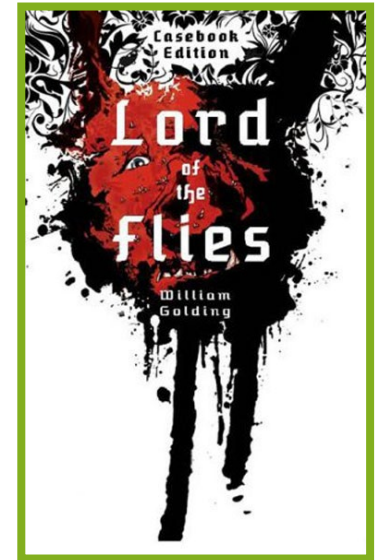


Education was another area that was affected by the strengthening of the conservative movement.

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk*. This report stated that standards had declined due to inadequacies in the education system.

To improve education, national standardized testing and key subjects were promoted.

The door was also opened for religious groups to influence public education. This led to religious conservatives banning certain books from many schools and libraries.



What other educational changes were proposed?



Do you think it is fair to cut the non-basic subjects?





Why do you think people ban books?



During the 1980s, health and fitness became new obsessions that began spreading through the U.S.

In particular, society became more proactive about exercise. New trends included:

- new, fancy fitness clubs and spas becoming increasingly popular
- **Jane Fonda** leading a home exercise routine and fitness video craze
- commercials increasingly advertising home exercise equipment.



How else did health become important at this time?



Why do you think the population shifted?



As the population of the U.S. shifted to the South and West, it also became more diverse. In particular, **immigration** from Latin American and East Asian countries grew sharply.

This led to many governmental debates on topics such as:

- language difficulties in schools
- immigrant assimilation
- basic services for immigrants
- penalties for illegal immigration
- immigration quotas
- the granting of **citizenship**.



Why do you think immigration increased?



