Analyze U.S. international and domestic policies including their influences on technological advancements and social changes during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.
The 1960s ushered in a time period of escalating international and domestic tensions. The Cold War was becoming more complex as the United States worked to contain Communism around the world, including highly charged incidents in the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. Simultaneously, the United States was faced with internal racial strife. Both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations implemented foreign and domestic policies that had significant influences on the events of the 1960s including war, technology, and social change.
Additional Resources

- The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History has a separate section included as part of this Historical Era devoted to the study of post-war politics and the Cold War. Historical Era #10- 1945 to the Present
  - [https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/1945-present](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/1945-present)
SSUSH 21 A

Analyze the international policies and actions taken as a response to the Cold War including U.S. involvement in Cuba and the escalation of the war in Vietnam as a result of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- The United States continued to be guided in its approach to foreign affairs by the *Truman Doctrine*, which emphasized the importance of containing communism.

- The 1960s was a time when the Cold War escalated to what could have potentially become direct military action between the United States and the Soviet Union.

- Both nations were equipped with massive nuclear capability that threatened the safety of the entire world.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- The period was tense, dangerous, and became internally divisive as Americans disagreed with each other about the merits of military involvement in distant locations.
- Cuba was a major exporter of sugar to the United States and received special incentives from the U.S. government.
- Cuba, being a Caribbean island just 90 miles off the coast of Florida, was also a major tourist destination.
- In 1952, General Fulgencio Batista overthrew the elected government of Cuba and established a military dictatorship.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- He allied himself with leading multinational businesses and mafia controlled hotels, casinos, & brothels.
- Batista exacted huge bribes for allowing these businesses to continue as usual in Cuba.
- In 1953, the 26th of July Movement led by Fidel and Raul Castro attempted to overthrow the Batista government.
- The movement’s stated goal was to restore democracy in Cuba.
- The coup attempt failed.
- In 1955, the Castro brothers were exiled from Cuba.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- In 1956, the brothers returned with a group of guerilla soldiers.
- After a couple of years of intense fighting, they were able to overthrow the Batista government in 1958.
- Upon gaining control of Cuba, Fidel Castro named himself president for life.
- Castro’s plans to nationalize foreign businesses and land reform policies alienated American businessmen and Cuba’s wealthy citizens.
- The United States responded by applying economic sanctions against Cuba.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- The US began planning for the overthrow of Fidel Castro after realizing that Cuba's new leader had become a Communist.
- Unwilling to be seen as directly involved in the overthrow of a populist government such as Castro’s, the US used the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to train and carry out a coup against the Castro government.
- The plan was to land along the Bay of Pigs and use U.S. supplied aircraft to support the landing.
- On April 5, 1961, Cuban exiles landed but were crushed by the Cuban Army and Air Force.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

● The newly elected Kennedy administration refused to use U.S. air support to cover the invasion forces.
  ○ Captured exiles revealed the U.S. backing

● Castro went to the Soviet Union for military and economic support.
  ○ Soviet Union saw Castro’s gesture as a way to expand the Cold War into the western hemisphere

● The relationship between the US and Cuba was further strained in 1962, when Castro allowed the installation of medium range nuclear missiles
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- The Soviet government was worried that the U.S. nuclear weapons held a tactical and strategic edge over their own stockpile.
- Decided to place nuclear missiles in Cuba in order to shorten the time that Soviet missiles would have to reach targets in the U.S.
- These missiles would have placed most of the US, Canada, and Latin America within the range of attack.
- Castro saw the placement of Soviet missile batteries and their troops as a way of preventing future interference in Cuban affairs by the United States.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- When the missiles were discovered, the Kennedy administration ordered a naval blockade on Cuba rather than a direct military strike on the missiles.
- The President feared that such an attack would escalate into an all-out war with the Soviets.
- As nuclear warheads made their way to Cuba on Soviet ships, the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its missiles from Cuba if the United States would withdraw its missiles from Turkey and pledge not to invade Cuba.
- Both sides agreed and the crisis was concluded after 13-days.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- Kennedy emerged from the crisis with renewed public confidence after the missteps of the Bay of Pigs had hurt his approval ratings the year before.
- Another dramatic escalation in Cold War tension emerged in Southeast Asia.
- Vietnam became the site of a long struggle between communist and non-communist forces.
- Vietnam had been a colony of France during the late 19th century.
- The Japanese seized the region during World War II.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- In response to the takeover, the Vietnamese people organized a resistance movement, known as the Vietminh.
- They warred against both the Japanese and French.
- The organization was dominated by the communist party and led by Ho Chi Minh.
- When World War II ended, the French assumed they would regain control of the region.
- The Vietminh resisted the takeover and defeated the French in 1954.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- The United Nations attempted to broker the creation of new nations in what had been French Indochina.
- The nations of Cambodia and Laos were created.
- However, the people of southern Vietnam did not want to be ruled from Hanoi in the north and did not wish to be communist.
- The United Nations divided the nation at the 17th parallel and planned for an election that was to be held two years later to decide the unification of north and south.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- The South Vietnamese government rejected an all-Vietnam election because a communist backed guerilla movement, the Vietcong, had begun a terror campaign in the south.
- The Vietcong targeted village chiefs, schoolteachers, and government officials.
- South Vietnam requested and received U.S. military support in the form of training for its armed forces.
- The United States believed a communist takeover of South Vietnam would lead to further expansion of communism in Asia.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- President Eisenhower invoked the image of a row of falling dominoes, thereby creating the Domino Theory.
- In keeping with the U.S. policy of containment, the United States began its involvement in Southeast Asia.
- The United States increased aide, but remained largely in an advisory role under President John Kennedy.
- But, the United States assisted in a 1963 coup against the perceived weak South Vietnamese government.
- In the ensuing chaos that followed the coup, communist forces were able to strengthen their hold over South Vietnam.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- United States naval units in the Gulf of Tonkin supported the South Vietnamese Marine and Naval units as they staged a series of raids into North Vietnam.
- On August 2, 1964, North Vietnamese naval vessels were accused of attacking the United States Navy destroyers Maddox and Turner Joy.
- President Johnson responded by ordering an air attack on North Vietnamese naval bases.
- Prior to the U.S. attack, Johnson requested and received Congress's approval.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- Congress issued the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**, which gave the President authorization to conduct military operations in Southeast Asia without a formal declaration of war.
- Meanwhile, the Vietcong intensified their effort and decisively defeated larger South Vietnamese forces twice in 1964-1965.
- President Johnson made a marked change in U.S. policy by placing ground troops into combat in South Vietnam.
- The United States sent troops to Vietnam to protect its bases.
This increase in troop strength gradually grew to more than 500,000 men by 1968.

The growth of U.S. military influence in the region led the communist strongholds of the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China to give North Vietnam military aid.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- The United States took action in both Cuba and Vietnam to contain communism.
- The situation in Cuba could have easily escalated to direct conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States but was averted when the Soviets backed down.
- The world was on the brink of yet another war, but the issue was resolved at the last minute.
- In Vietnam, the United States was gradually increasing its involvement in the region to contain communism.
Cold War - International Policies and Actions

- What began as military aid to the South Vietnamese, gave way to military training and eventually American forces engaged in combat with the communist fighters in the region.
- Both presidents Kennedy and Johnson made their foreign policy decisions based on what they believed would be important for protecting the United States and stopping the spread of communism.
Additional Resources

- The Choices Program of Brown University offers a lesson that analyzes leadership in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Primary documents are used for students to assess the handling of the situation.

- The Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) offers a lesson on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. It relies on primary documents for students to assess the actions taken by the United States in escalating the military operation in Vietnam.
  - [https://sheg.stanford.edu/gulf-tonkin-resolution](https://sheg.stanford.edu/gulf-tonkin-resolution)
Connect major domestic issues to their social effects including the passage of civil rights legislation and Johnson’s Great Society, following the assassination of John F. Kennedy.
Domestic Issues

- Race relations and poverty in the United States were major issues in the 1960s.
- The Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum in an effort to speed up integration, as ruled on by the Supreme Court in the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education case.
- President John Kennedy supported Civil Rights legislation but it was being blocked in the Congress by Southern opposition.
- As a Democrat, Kennedy even faced opposition by many of his own Southern party members.
Domestic Issues

- Kennedy's assassination in 1963 had a significant effect on his domestic policy agenda, which became the responsibility of the new president Lyndon Johnson.
- President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963.
- Kennedy was in Dallas for a political rally, as he was running for re-election the following year.
- The Kennedy-Johnson ticket needed to shore up the Democratic support that was waning in Texas.
Domestic Issues

- The assassination took place as Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, were riding in a convertible limousine waving to the spectators who lined the streets in Dallas.
- Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin who shot and killed the president along the motorcade route.
- Vice President Lyndon Johnson was from Texas and was in Dallas at the time of the shooting.
- He was sworn in as the new President aboard Air Force One, as it flew back to Washington D.C. carrying Kennedy's body.
Domestic Issues

- Kennedy's death had a profound impact on the nation.
- The assassination gave the new President, Lyndon Johnson, the political capital to force his domestic legislative package through Congress.
- The Civil Rights legislation that Kennedy supported but had not been able to get passed in the Congress was pushed through in 1964.
- Johnson depicted passage of the proposed Civil Rights law as being one of the best ways to honor the dead president's legacy.
Domestic Issues

- Congress responded to the call to action and passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed segregation in American schools and other public places.
- The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was also passed, which launched President Johnson's War on Poverty.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed major forms of discrimination against Blacks and women.
Domestic Issues

- The law ended unequal application of voter registration requirements and the racial segregation of schools, places of work, and facilities that served the general public ("public accommodations").
- The Supreme Court upheld the law when it was tested in the courts.
- Later, the law's provisions were extended to include private work facilities and wage discrimination against women.
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed the year after Congress moved on the issue of Civil Rights.
Domestic Issues

- Made it illegal for Black voters to be disenfranchised through unfair voter registration criteria.
- It ended the practice of using literacy tests as a qualification to vote and mandated federal oversight of elections in the Southern states.
- President Johnson launched his Great Society program as a way of attacking the endemic problem of poverty in the United States.
- He believed that the United States' post-World War II prosperity could be harnessed to solve key quality of life issues.
Domestic Issues

- Johnson's Great Society programs involved the following:
  - **War on Poverty** - forty programs intended to eliminate poverty by improving living conditions and enabling people to end the cycle of poverty.
  - **Education** - sixty separate bills provided for new and better-equipped classrooms, minority scholarships, and low-interest student loans.
  - **Medicare** - guaranteed health care to every American over 65 years of age.
Domestic Issues

- Johnson's Great Society programs involved the following:
  - **Medicaid** - provided health care assistance to the poor.
  - **Environment** - introduced measures to reclaim clean air and drinking water.
  - **National Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities** - created with the philosophy that artists, performers, and writers were a priceless part of the United States identity and deserved support.

*The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents... It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community... It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.*

(Lyndon B. Johnson)
Domestic Issues

- Johnson's Great Society programs involved the following:
  - **Job Corps** - provided job training for young men and women.
  - **Head Start** - program for four and five year olds from disadvantaged families that gave them a chance to start school on an even basis with other children.
Additional Resources

- The National Archives Teaching With Documents collection features the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The site includes comprehensive background essays, documents, lesson activities, standard correlations, and worksheets for document analysis.
  - [https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act](https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act)
Describe the impact of television on American culture including the presidential debates (Kennedy/Nixon, 1960), news coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, the moon landing, and the war in Vietnam.
Impact of Television

- Although television predates World War II, it was not commercially feasible until after the production demands of the war subsided.
- Prior to WW II, radio & print were the dominant media by which news, entertainment, & marketing was delivered.
- By the late 1950s, television had replaced radio.
- The growth of television was dramatic.
- From 1939 to 1941, only an estimated 7,000 television sets had been purchased.
- By 1959, the number of television sets had grown to 67 million.
Impact of Television

- *Television had the same effect that radio had on the previous generation.*
- Many Americans watched the same entertainment and news programming regardless of location, which created a common national culture.
- Four events illustrate how television impacted modern American politics and social culture in the 1960s.
  - The Presidential debate between candidates Kennedy & Nixon in 1960
  - Events of the Civil Rights Movement
  - Reporting from the combat zones of Vietnam
  - The moon landing
Impact of Television

- Prior to 1960, Presidential campaigns were limited by time and distance.
- Candidates tended to go from campaign stop to campaign stop by rail or air.
- Mass audiences were reached via radio.
- In the 1960 Presidential campaign between the Republican Richard Nixon and the Democrat John F. Kennedy, four nationally televised debates were held.
- While the substance of both campaigns was very similar, the candidates were not.
- Physically, the men were very different.
- Kennedy was tanned, clean-cut, and physically fit.
Impact of Television

- Nixon was not particularly handsome, prone to excessive sweating, had a perpetual five o'clock shadow, and looked weak after a recent illness.
- The first debate was broadcast on September 26, 1960.
- Television accentuated every bit of each candidate's physicality.
- According to ratings and polls, 74 million viewers watched and most deemed Kennedy to have been the debate's winner.
- Overnight, the Kennedy campaign picked up momentum
Impact of Television

- In contrast, voters who had listened to the debate over the radio reported that they felt Nixon had come across as the more experienced and knowledgeable of the two candidates.
- Television proved that image matters.
- The events of the Civil Rights Movement were also captured on video for people to see for themselves on television.
- Nightly news programs provided a regular reminder of the on-going struggle for civil rights in the South.
- Civil rights leaders used media coverage to illuminate their issues.
Impact of Television

- News footage of attack dogs biting demonstrators or fire hoses blasting children made for dramatic images and caused many viewers to question the equity of segregation laws.
  - One of the most dramatic events broadcast was the Alabama State Patrol's attack of the Selma Marchers.
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech was broadcast live to a nation-wide audience in 1963,
  - bringing more awareness to the social issue of segregation that had yet to be resolved
Impact of Television

- Americans were also fascinated by the ingenuity of the space program, which was soon able to send a man to the moon.
- The lunar module carrying Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon July 20, 1969.
- The television broadcast showed the astronauts planting an American flag on the moon.
- The space race between the United States and the Soviet Union was symbolically complete with the planting of the American flag in space.
Impact of Television

- The space race was yet another area where television had an impact on the public.
- Television news reporters were also imbedded with troops in Vietnam.
- They broadcast nightly from combat zones and involved Americans in what became known as the first "living room war."
- People were watching the events unfold in Vietnam and also watching the protest movements in the United States on television.
Impact of Television

- It was difficult for the government to convince Americans that victory in the war was eminent when they were seeing otherwise on the nightly news.
- Television proved it could sway public opinion through the images of the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War.
Additional Resources

- The Digital Public Library offers a Document Set and Teaching Guide entitled "The Impact of Television on News Media." Documents include print images, audio recordings, and video to help students grasp the impact of television of significant news issues.
Investigate the growth, influence, and tactics of civil rights groups, Martin Luther King, Jr., the Letter from Birmingham Jail, the I Have a Dream Speech, and Cesar Chavez.
Civil Rights Groups

- The 1960s was a decade of great social change.
- The Civil Rights Movement became more influential and was mainly focused on advocating for rights that had long been denied to Blacks.
- There were other groups that formed during the same time period that focused on Latino rights.
- The tactics used by the various movements were intended to draw attention to their cause and peacefully demonstrate to spread the message of equal rights.
Civil Rights Groups

- There were various Civil Rights organizations that were born in the 1960s and gained notoriety for their success.
- The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) grew out of the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- After achieving success and forcing an end to discriminatory practices in Montgomery, other groups followed the same methodology to end segregation on municipal bus lines.
- In order to better coordinate actions, a meeting was held in Atlanta in January 1957 to form the SCLC.
Civil Rights Groups

- The group, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., had as its goal to carry out non-violent crusades against the evils of second-class citizenship.
- SCLC members tended to be from large urban areas, where there was a strong, wealthy Black middle class.
- The growing reputation of Dr. King helped to draw a large number of northern elites to the Civil Rights cause.
- The SCLC used several different tactics to fight segregation.
Civil Rights Groups

- They filed class action lawsuits against state and local governments for failing to end segregation and used non-violent civil disobedience actions such as sit-ins, kneel-ins, and wade-ins.
- They also sponsored boycotts, mass rallies, and marches.
- Another important component of the SCLC agenda was to affect change in local politics by helping Blacks register to vote.
- **Another group that had a great impact on the Civil Rights Movement was the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).**
Civil Rights Groups

- SNCC (pronounced SNICK) grew out of an impromptu sit-in protest in Greensboro, North Carolina.
- A group of Black students worked to integrate lunch counters by staging sit-ins in which they seated themselves in the White-only dining sections.
- SNCC sought to create an organized movement composed primarily of students who would systematically challenge the legality of segregationist laws in the South.
- Members of the student group organized sit-ins across the South.
Civil Rights Groups

- They also arranged the Freedom Rides in 1961 to test the new federal laws that outlawed discrimination on interstate bus lines.

- SNCC was also heavily involved in organizing both the March on Washington in 1963 and the 1964 "Freedom Summer," which was a voter registration drive in Mississippi and Alabama.

Civil Rights Groups

- In 1964, the organization split after some members began to push the Black Power Movement and question the effectiveness of nonviolence.
- SNCC dropped "non-violence" from its name and became known as the Student National Coordinating Committee.
- The organization lost most of its influence by 1970.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. grew to be a very influential leader of the Civil Rights Movement.
Civil Rights Groups

- He was a minister at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery and emerged as a leader through organizing the bus boycotts.
- Over the course of the growing Civil Rights Movement and the founding of the SCLC, Martin Luther King set the tone and example for non-violent protest.
- In April 1963, Dr. King led sit-ins to protest the segregation of Birmingham, Alabama.
- The police arrested him for violating a city ordinance that banned sit-ins.
Civil Rights Groups

- While in jail, King read an appeal by a number of Alabama clergy urging him to end the protest and to allow time to take its course in ending segregation in the state.
- King's response to the clergy ultimately became a key document in the Civil Rights Movement.
- **King's letter from the Birmingham jail**
  - defense of the non-violent methods being used to attack racism
  - criticized the clergy for urging patience in light of continued violence

"For years now I have heard the word 'Wait!' It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never.' We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that 'justice too long delayed is justice denied.'"
Civil Rights Groups

- One of the most famous statements by Martin Luther King, Jr. was his speech given in 1963 at the March on Washington.
- In the summer of 1963, the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement decided to replicate A. Philip Randolph's planned 1941 March on Washington.
- This time, various civil rights organizations were marching in support of Kennedy's proposed civil rights legislation that was being debated in Congress.
- The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom was held on August 28, 1963.
Civil Rights Groups

- It was the largest demonstration for civil rights in U.S. history.
- Various civil rights organizations and their leaders spoke before the Lincoln Memorial, including Martin Luther King, Jr. King's seventeen-minute speech, I Have a Dream
- It was these remarks that have become perhaps one of the most famous pieces of American oratory in U.S. history.
- The speech called forth an ideal in which racism and bigotry would end and all races could live in harmony with one another.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEgnkIfYs
Civil Rights Groups

- The 1963 March and speech helped to garner support for Kennedy's civil rights proposals.
- The 1960s was also a time of greater organization to protest against Latino discrimination.
- The United Farm Workers (UFW) organized farm laborers in California.
- The UFW represented a largely Hispanic group in pressing for higher wages and better work conditions.
- It sought to gain concessions by using the non-violent tactics of the Civil Rights Movement.
Civil Rights Groups

- One of the primary leaders of the UFW was Cesar Chavez.
- He was the son of a poor, Mexican-American agricultural laborer.
- Determined to better the lives of his family and other Hispanic workers, Chavez began work as a community organizer.
- Chavez founded the first agricultural labor union in California, the National Farm Workers Association.
- Chavez's primary tactic was to politically organize a community in order to influence elections.
Civil Rights Groups

- He later helped to create the UFW, which was based around local California farm communities.
- The first notable success for the UFW was the Delano Table Grape strike, which forced grape growers to end discriminatory contracts.
- The UFW used consumer boycotts as a way of forcing producers to accede to workers' demands.
- Chavez also used water-only fasts as a weapon to obtain fair contracts for lettuce, vegetable, and fruit pickers and other agricultural workers.
Civil Rights Groups

- All of the Civil Rights Movement organizations grew from the publicity they received for their non-violent protests.
- The SCLC and SNCC organizations focused on ending segregation.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged as a leader in the non-violent form of protest.
- Other minority groups, such as the UFW, borrowed the tactics of the Civil Rights Movement in their own protests.
Additional Resources

- The Digital Library of Georgia offers a Civil Rights Digital Library. There are vast resources compiled in this portal pertaining to the Civil Rights Movement.
  - [http://crdl.usg.edu](http://crdl.usg.edu)
SSUSH 21 E

Describe the social and political turmoil of 1968 including the reactions to assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy, the Tet Offensive, and the presidential election.
1968

- The cultural and political landscape of the 1960s seemed to come to a head in 1968.
- In addition to continued protests over the Vietnam War, there were assassinations that changed the political and social landscape, and a presidential election that was thrown into chaos.
- The year 1968 began with the Tet Offensive in the Vietnam War.
- United States forces were unable to totally destroy communist forces in South Vietnam and communist forces lacked the ability to drive out the Americans.
1968

- However, the United States commander, General William Westmoreland, was under the impression that the communist forces were on the verge of collapse as his publication of enemy body counts indicated.
- He urged Congress to authorize an additional 200,000 men to finish off the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong once and for all.
- The communist forces were not on the verge of defeat.
- They had instead withdrawn to their sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos to rebuild and train.
1968

- The North Vietnamese forces staged a massive offensive into the south in order to shatter the morale of the United States' and South Vietnamese units.
- The Tet Offensive, as it was called, occurred during the traditional lunar New Year festival.
- One hundred South Vietnamese cities were attacked simultaneously.
- Although initially caught off guard, the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces and U.S. forces rallied to counter-attack and inflict severe casualties on the Viet Cong.
1968

- Televised scenes of heavy street fighting in Saigon and Hue played out against Westmoreland's earlier report that the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong were finished as a fighting force.
- The January Tet Offensive started 1968 in turmoil.
- The war, which the United States government said was nearing victory, was not close to ending as evidenced by the extreme force demonstrated by communist efforts in the Tet Offensive.
The presidential election of 1968 was thrown into chaos.

- President Johnson’s March 31st announcement that he would not seek nor accept the Democratic Party’s nomination for a second term.

The election was thus wide open less than nine months before the President was to be chosen on Election Day.

- The Democratic Party was divided over whom their candidate would be to challenge the Republican, Richard Nixon.
1968

- Over the course of the spring of 1968, Robert Kennedy was picking up momentum within the Democratic Party.

- Two events further shook the nation.
  - Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy were assassinated within a few months of one another.
  - Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot and killed on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee.
    - James Earl Ray was the shooter who held highly racist convictions.
1968

- Dr. King's death was marked by riots in several cities despite the call for a non-violent response to his death by leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.
- His death further fragmented the Movement as the more aggressive Black Power effort began to take hold.
- On June 5, 1968, Robert Kennedy was assassinated at a victory celebration in California on the night that he won that state's Democratic Party primary election.
- Sirhan Sirhan, a Palestinian immigrant who was angry over Kennedy's support of Israel, was responsible for shooting and killing the presidential candidate.
Kennedy's popularity and growing electoral strength may have resulted in his nomination for the Presidency had he not been killed.

Again, the 1968 Presidential Election was wrought with turmoil.
- Democratic Party arrived in Chicago for their nominating convention without a clear frontrunner.
- The protest groups were in full force outside the convention hall
  - City of Chicago struggled to maintain control
1968

- Various anti-war groups managed to become the main focus of media attention as the convention began.
- Chicago Mayor, Richard J. Daley, was a strong advocate of law and order.
- He used police and National Guard units to violently suppress groups who were attempting to disrupt the Democratic Convention.
- The confrontations between the police and demonstrators were broadcast live on national television.
- Demonstrators believed they would receive greater national support by inciting the police to action.
• However, the opposite reaction occurred.
• Most Americans, as they watched from home on television, were appalled by the protestors' challenges to policemen.
• The melee between police and protestors was portrayed differently based on who was recounting the event.
• The protestors blamed the police and the police blamed the protestors for the hostility.
• The frenzied violence of the Democratic Convention played into the Republican campaign message.
1968

- Richard Nixon claimed that he represented the "silent majority" of socially conservative Americans who had grown tired of the liberal excesses and violence of the 1960s.
- He won the election in November, beating out the Democratic nominee Hubert Humphrey.
- The complex social and political issues of 1968 resulted in a transition for the Civil Rights Movement and the conservative Republican Party claiming the White House.
Additional Resources

- The History Channel has a short background essay on the election of 1968. Included are links to video clips that support the study of the pivotal election.
  - [http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nixon-wins-presidential-election](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nixon-wins-presidential-election)