



Offline Learning Activity for AP United States History

Day: 20

Topic: The 1960s and 1970s Overview

Standard: 8.7; 8.9; 8.11; 8.14

Time: 30 minutes



Overview

This learning activity is for students to use when they do not have access to the course.



Objectives

After completing this activity, students will be able to . . .

- Develop positions on the changing roles of the federal government.
- Determine effective methods for creating social change in the United States.



Assignment Instructions

Read the summaries provided below and then respond to the two questions that follow using complete sentences (and paragraphs).

The Kennedy Promise

The arrival of the Kennedys in the White House seemed to signal a new age of youth, optimism, and confidence. Kennedy spoke of a “new frontier” and promoted the expansion of programs to aid the poor, protect African Americans’ right to vote, and improve African Americans’ employment and education opportunities. For the most part, however, Kennedy focused on foreign policy and



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countering the threat of Communism—especially in Cuba, where he successfully defused the Cuban Missile Crisis, and in Vietnam, to which he sent advisors and troops to support the South Vietnamese government. The tragedy of Kennedy’s assassination in Dallas brought an early end to the era, leaving Americans to wonder whether his vice president and successor, Lyndon Johnson, would bring Kennedy’s vision for the nation to fruition.

Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society

Lyndon Johnson began his administration with dreams of fulfilling his fallen predecessor’s civil rights initiative and accomplishing his own plans to improve lives by eradicating poverty in the United States. His social programs, investments in education, support for the arts, and commitment to civil rights changed the lives of countless people and transformed society in many ways. However, Johnson’s insistence on maintaining American commitments in Vietnam, a policy begun by his predecessors, hurt both his ability to realize his vision of the Great Society and his support among the American people.

The Civil Rights Movement Marches On

The African American civil rights movement made significant progress in the 1960s. While Congress played a role by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968, the actions of civil rights groups such as CORE, the SCLC, and SNCC were instrumental in forging new paths, pioneering new techniques and strategies, and achieving breakthrough successes. Civil rights activists engaged in sit-ins, freedom rides, and protest marches, and registered African American voters. Despite the movement’s many achievements, however, many grew frustrated with the slow pace of change, the failure of the Great Society to alleviate poverty, and the persistence of violence against African Americans, particularly the tragic 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Many African Americans in the mid- to late 1960s adopted the ideology of Black Power, which promoted their work within their own communities to redress problems without the aid of whites. The Mexican American civil rights movement, led largely by Cesar Chavez, also made significant



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progress at this time. The emergence of the Chicano Movement signaled Mexican Americans' determination to seize their political power, celebrate their cultural heritage, and demand their citizenship rights.

Challenging the Status Quo

During the 1960s, many people rejected traditional roles and expectations. Influenced and inspired by the civil rights movement, college students of the baby boomer generation and women of all ages began to fight to secure a stronger role in American society. As members of groups like SDS and NOW asserted their rights and strove for equality for themselves and others, they upended many accepted norms and set groundbreaking social and legal changes in motion. Many of their successes continue to be felt today, while other goals remain unfulfilled.

Questions

- 1) Describe the changing role of the federal government in the 1960s. What new roles and responsibilities did the government assume? In your opinion, can the government effect permanent social change? Why or why not?
- 2) Were groups that advocated the use of violence in the 1960s justified in doing so? Why or why not?
- 3) In your opinion, what is the most effective method for changing society—voting, challenges in the courts, nonviolent civil disobedience, or violence? What evidence can you provide from actual events in the 1960s to support your argument?

Sources

Summary Text: P. Scott Corbett. (n.d.). In US History. Houston, Texas: OpenStax.
Retrieved from <https://openstax.org/books/us-history/pages/29-summary>



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Grading Info

Students will be graded on their response to the questions.