

A.P. U.S. HISTORY NOTES

Chapter 41: “The Stormy Sixties”

~ 1960 – 1968 ~

- I. Kennedy’s “New Frontier” Spirit
 1. In 1960, young, energetic **John F. Kennedy** was elected to president of the United States—the youngest man ever *elected* to that office.
 2. The 1960s would bring a sexual revolution, a civil rights revolutions, the emergence of a “youth culture,” a devastating war in **Vietnam**, and the beginnings of a feminist revolution.
 3. JFK delivered a stirring inaugural address, and he also assembled a very young cabinet, including his brother, **Robert Kennedy**, as attorney general.
 - i. Robert Kennedy tried to recast the priorities of the FBI, but was resisted by **J. Edgar Hoover**.
 - ii. Business whiz **Robert S. McNamara** took over the Defense Department.
 4. Early on, JFK proposed the **Peace Corps**, an army of idealist and mostly youthful volunteers to bring American skills to underdeveloped countries.
 5. Graduated from Harvard, JFK was very vibrant and charming to everyone.
- II. The New Frontier at Home
 1. Kennedy’s social program was known as the **New Frontier**, but conservative Democrats and Republicans threatened to kill many of its reforms.
 - i. JFK did expand the **House Rules Committee**, but his program didn’t expand quickly, as medical and education bills remained stalled in Congress.
 - ii. JFK also had to keep a lid on inflation and maintain a good economy.
 - iii. However, almost immediately into his term, steel management announced great price increases, igniting the fury of the president, but JFK also earned fiery attacks by big business on the New Frontier.
 2. Kennedy’s tax-cut bill chose to stimulate the economy through price-cutting.
 3. Kennedy also promoted a project to land Americans on the moon, though apathetic Americans often ridiculed this.
- III. Rumbblings in Europe
 1. JFK met Russian Premier **Nikita Khrushchev** and was threatened, but didn’t back down.
 2. In August of the 1961, the Soviets began building the **Berlin Wall** to separate East and West Germany.
 3. Western Europe, though, was now prospering after help from the super-successful **Marshal Plan**.
 - i. America had also encouraged a **Common Market**, which later became the **European Union (EU)**.
 - ii. The so-called **Kennedy Round** of tariff negotiations eased trade between Europe and the U.S.
 4. Unfortunately, French leader **Charles de Gaulle** was one who was suspicious of the U.S., and he rejected British application into the Common Market.
- IV. Foreign Flare-Ups and “Flexible Responses”
 1. There were many world problems at this time:
 - i. The African **Congo** got its independence from Belgium in 1960 and then erupted into violence, but the **United Nations** sent a peacekeeping force.
 - ii. **Laos**, freed of its French overlords in 1954, was being threatened by Communism, but at the **Geneva conference** of 1962, peace was shakily imposed.

1. On November 22, 1963, while riding down a street in Dallas, Texas, JFK was shot and killed, allegedly by **Lee Harvey Oswald**, who was himself shot by self-proclaimed avenger **Jack Ruby**, and there was much controversy and scandal and conspiracy in the assassination.
 2. **Lyndon B. Johnson** became the new president of the United States as only the fourth president to succeed an assassinated president.
 3. It was only after Kennedy's death that America realized what a charismatic, energetic, and vibrant president they had lost.
- IX. The LBJ Brand on the Presidency
1. Lyndon Johnson had been a senator in the 1940s and 50s, and his idol was **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, and he could manipulate Congress very well (through his in-your-face "Johnson treatment"); also, he was very vain and egotistical.
 2. As a president, LBJ went from conservative to liberal, helping pass a **Civil Rights Act** of 1964, which banned all racial discrimination in most private facilities open to the public, including theaters, hospitals, and restaurants.
 - i. Also created was the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**, which was aimed at eliminating discriminatory hiring.
 3. Johnson's program was dubbed the "**Great Society**", and it reflected its **New Deal** inspirations.
 - i. Public support for the program was aroused by **Michael Harrington's** *The Other America*, which revealed that over 20% of American suffered in poverty.
- X. Johnson Battles Goldwater in 1964
1. In 1964, LBJ was opposed by Republican Arizona senator **Barry Goldwater**, who attacked the federal income tax, the **Social Security** system, the **Tennessee Valley Authority**, civil rights legislation, the nuclear test-ban treaty, and the Great Society.
 2. However, Johnson used the **Tonkin Gulf Incident**, in which North Vietnamese ships had *allegedly* fired on American ships, to attack (at least partially) Vietnam, and he also got approved the **Tonkin Gulf Resolution**, which gave him a virtual blank check on what he could do in affairs in Vietnam.
 3. But on Election Day, Johnson won a huge landslide over Goldwater to stay president.
- XI. The Great Society Congress
1. Johnson's win was also coupled by sweeping Democratic wins that enabled him to pass his Great Society programs.
 2. Congress doubled the appropriation on the **Office of Economic Opportunity** to \$2 billion and granted more than \$1 billion to refurbish Appalachia, which had been stagnating.
 3. Johnson also created the **Department of Transportation** and the **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**, headed by **Robert C. Weaver**, the first Black cabinet secretary in the United States' history.
 4. LBJ also wanted aid to education, medical care for the elderly and indigent, immigration reform, and a new voting rights bill.
 - i. Johnson gave money to students, not schools, thus avoiding the separation of church and state by not technically giving money to Christian schools.
 - ii. In 1965, new programs called **Medicare** and **Medicaid** were installed, which have certain rights to the elderly in terms of medicine and health maintenance.
 - iii. The **Immigration and Nationality Act** of 1965 abolished the "national origin" quota and doubled the number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. annually, to 290,000.
 5. An antipoverty program called **Project Head Start** improved the performance of the underprivileged in education.
- XII. The Black Revolution Explodes
1. Johnson's **Voting Rights Act** of 1965 attacked racial discrimination at the polls.
 2. The **24th Amendment** eliminated poll taxes, and in the "freedom summer" of 1964, both Blacks and White students joined to combat discrimination and racism.

- i. However, in June of 1964, a Black and two White civil rights workers were found murdered, and 21 White Mississippians were arrested for the murders, but the all-White jury refused to convict the suspects.
 - ii. Also, an integrated “**Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party**” was denied its seat.
3. Early in 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. resumed a voter-registration campaign in **Selma**, Alabama, but was assaulted with tear gas by state troopers.
 - i. LBJ’s response the stunned American people sped more reform.

XIII. Black Power

1. 1965 began a time of violent Black protests, such as the one in the **Watts** area of the LA, as Black leaders mocking Martin Luther King, Jr. like **Malcolm X** (born Malcolm Little), who was inspired by the **Nation of Islam** and its founder, **Elijah Muhammed**, urged action now, even if it required violence, but he was killed in 1965.
2. The **Black Panther** openly brandished weapons in Oakland, California.
3. Trinidad-born **Stokey Carmichael** led the **Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee** urged an abandonment of peaceful demonstrations.
4. Black power became a rallying cry by Blacks seeking more rights, but just as they were getting them, more riots broke out, and nervous Whites threatened with retaliation.
5. Tragically, on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.
 - i. Quietly, though, thousands of Blacks registered to vote and went into integrated classrooms, and they slowly built themselves into a political power group.

XIV. Combating Communism in Two Hemispheres

1. Johnson sent men to put down a supposedly Communist coup in the Dominican Republic and was denounced as over-anxious and too hyper.
2. In Vietnam, though, he slowly sent more and more U.S. men to fight the war, and the South Vietnamese became spectators in their own war. Meanwhile, more and more Americans died.
3. By 1968, he had sent more than half a million troops to Asia, and was pouring in \$30 billion annually, yet the end was nowhere in sight.

XV. Vietnam Vexations

1. America was floundering in Vietnam and was being condemned for its actions there, and French leader Charles de Gaulle also ordered NATO off French soil in 1966.
2. In the **Six-Day War**, Israel stunned the world by defeating Egypt (and its Soviet backers) and gaining new territory in the **Sinai Peninsula**, the **Golan Heights**, the **Gaza Strip**, and the **West Bank** of the Jordan River, including **Jerusalem**.
3. Meanwhile, numerous protests in America went against the Vietnam War and the draft.
 - i. Opposition was headed by the influential **Senate Committee of Foreign Relations**, headed by Senator **William Fullbright** of Arkansas.
 - ii. “Doves” (peace lovers) and “war hawks” (war supporters) clashed.
4. Both sides (the U.S. and North Vietnam) did try to have intervals in bombings, but they merely used those as excuses to funnel more troops into the area.
5. Johnson also ordered the **CIA** to spy on domestic antiwar activists, and he encouraged the FBI to use its counterintelligence program (“**Cointelpro**”) against the peace movement.
6. More and more, America was trapped in the awful **Vietnam War**, and it couldn’t get out, thus feeding more and more hatred and resentment to the American public.

XVI. Vietnam Topples Johnson

1. Johnson was personally suffering at the American casualties, as he wept as he signed condolence letters and even prayed with Catholic monks in a nearby church—at night, secretly, and the fact that North Vietnam had almost taken over Saigon in a blistering offensive during **Tet**, the Vietnamese new year, didn’t help either.
2. Johnson also saw a challenge for the Democratic ticket from **Eugene McCarthy** and **Robert Kennedy**, and the nation, as well as the Democratic Party, was starting to be split by Vietnam.
 - i. LBJ refused to sign an order for more troops to Vietnam.

3. Then, on March 31, 1968, Johnson declared that he would stop sending in troops to Vietnam and that he would not run in 1968, shocking America.
- XVII. The Presidential Sweepstakes of 1968
1. On June 5, 1968, Robert Kennedy was shot fatally, and the Democratic ticket went to **Hubert Humphrey**, Johnson's "heir."
 2. The Republicans responded with Richard Nixon, paired with **Spiro Agnew**, and there was also a third-party candidate: **George C. Wallace**, former governor of Alabama, a racist who wanted to bomb the Vietnamese to death (what a radical!).
- XVIII. Victory for Nixon
1. Nixon won a nail-biter, and Wallace didn't do that badly either, though worse than expected.
 2. A minority president, he owed his presidency to protests over the war, the unfair draft, crime, and rioting.
- XIX. The Obituary of Lyndon Johnson
1. Poor Lyndon Johnson returned to his Texas ranch and died there in 1973.
 2. He had committed American into Vietnam with noble intentions, and he really wasn't a bad guy, but he was stuck in a time when he was damned if he did and damned if he didn't.
- XX. The Cultural Upheaval of the 1960s
1. In the 60s, the youth of America experimented with sex, drugs, and defiance.
 2. They protested a lot against conventional wisdom and beliefs.
 3. Such poets like **Allen Ginsberg** and novelists like **Jack Kerouac** voiced these opinions.
 4. Movies like *Rebel without a Cause* also showed this belief.
 5. At the **UC Berkeley**, in 1964, a so-called **Free Speech Movement** began.
 - i. Kids tried drugs, "did their own thing" in new institutions, and rejected patriotism.
 6. In 1948, Indiana University "sexologist" **Dr. Alfred Kinsey** had published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, and had followed that book five years later with a female version, and his findings about the incidence of premarital sex and adultery were very controversial.
 - i. He also estimated that 10% of all American males were gay.
 - ii. The **Manhattan Society**, founded in LA in 1951, pioneered gay rights.
 7. **Students for a Democratic Society**, once against war, later spawned an underground terrorist group called the **Weathermen**.
 8. The upheavals of the 1960s can largely be attributed to the three P's: the youthful population bulge, the protest against racism and the Vietnam War, and the apparent permanence of prosperity, but as the 1970s rolled around, this prosperity gave way to stagnation.
 9. However, the "counterculture" of the youths of the 1960s did significantly weaken existing values, ideas, and beliefs.