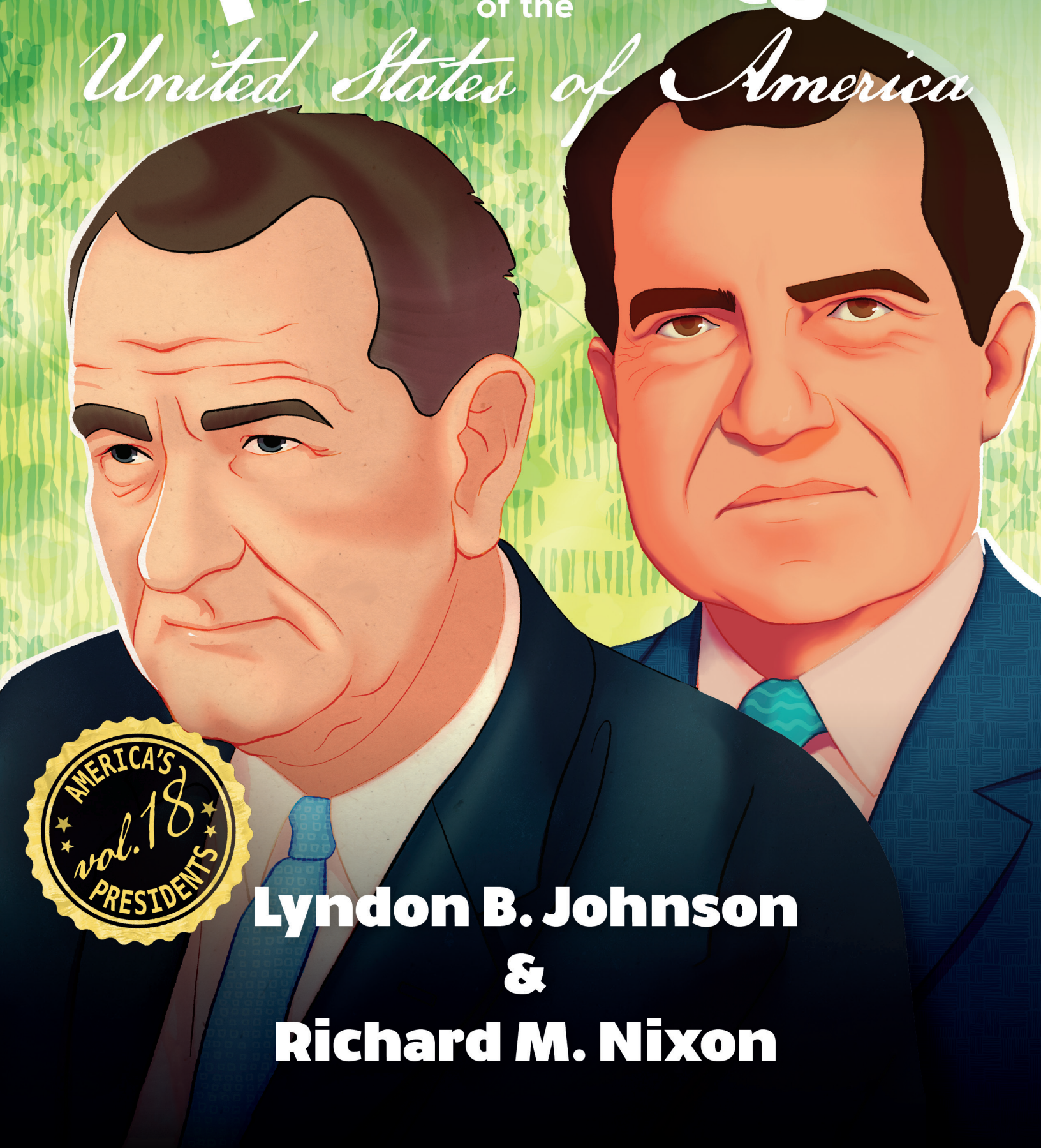


# presidents

of the

*United States of America*



**Lyndon B. Johnson**

**&**

**Richard M. Nixon**



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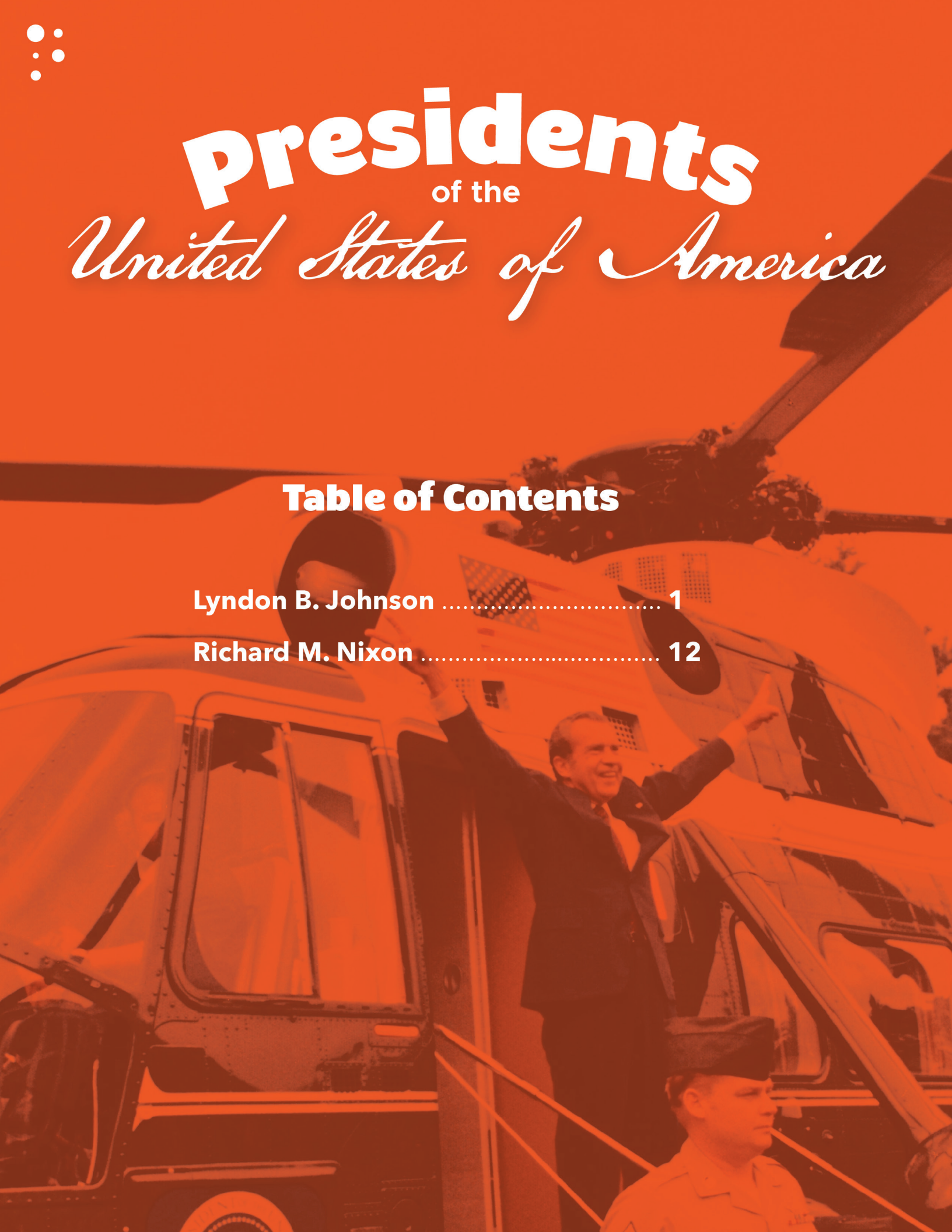


# **presidents** of the *United States of America*

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# Lyndon B. Johnson

"I was one of the most powerful senators in American history and served as the 36th President of the United States."







# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

In this book, you'll learn all sorts of facts about Lyndon B. Johnson's life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

President Johnson owned two beagles. We need your help to find out what their names were. Your task is to help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this book carefully to find them, and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

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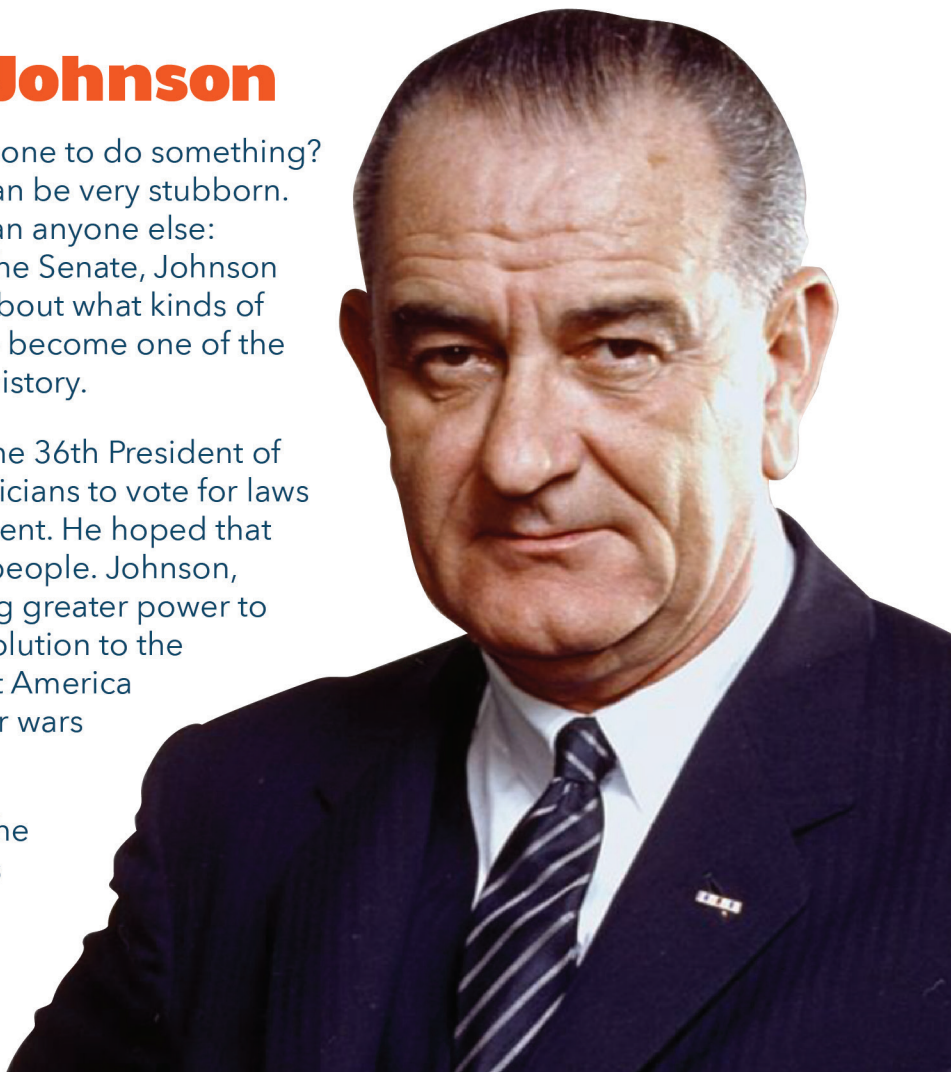
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

## Meet Lyndon B. Johnson

Have you ever tried to convince someone to do something? It isn't always easy to do so—people can be very stubborn. One man knew how to do it better than anyone else: Lyndon B. Johnson. As a member of the Senate, Johnson was able to convince his colleagues about what kinds of laws to vote for. He used this ability to become one of the most powerful senators in American history.

Johnson eventually rose to become the 36th President of the United States. He persuaded politicians to vote for laws that expanded the power of government. He hoped that these laws would help the American people. Johnson, however, didn't understand that giving greater power to the government wasn't the ultimate solution to the nation's problems. Even worse, he got America involved in one of the most unpopular wars in American history.

Although Johnson was blessed with the gift of persuasion, his story teaches us that it's not enough to have gifts—we have to think carefully about using them wisely.





# Young Lyndon

Lyndon Baines Johnson was born on August 27, 1908, on a farm near Stonewall, Texas. He was the oldest of Samuel and Rebekah Johnson's five children. His father, Sam, was a farmer and a state politician. **H**is mother, Rebekah, was a well-educated woman who was active in her local community.

The Johnson family lived the rural, hardscrabble life. Their home had no electricity or plumbing. Young Lyndon, however, felt he was destined for greater things. **H**is classmates later remembered him saying, "Someday, I'm going to be President of the United States."

He took his first steps toward that goal by getting elected president of his high school senior class. After that, he attended Southwest Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos. Since Lyndon was so poor, he worked as a janitor to pay for his tuition. He also took a job as a teacher. Most of his students—ranging from 5th to 7th grade—came from very poor Mexican-American families. Lyndon worked hard and became principal of the school. His experiences as a teacher also gave him a passion for helping the poor.

## Interesting Facts

- He is considered one of the most effective Senate leaders in American history.
- He was a member of the Democratic Party.
- He was often referred to as "LBJ."
- He is the only president (as of 2024) to take the oath of office in an airplane.
- He is the only president (as of 2024) to be sworn in by a woman (Sarah T. Hughes).
- He was the first president to appoint a black American to the Supreme Court (Thurgood Marshall).
- He was the first president to appoint a black American to a Cabinet position (Robert C. Weaver, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development).





## Early Career

After graduating college in 1930, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked as an aide for Democratic Congressman Richard Kleberg. From then on, Johnson was completely obsessed with politics. He poured his whole heart into succeeding in the political world. His colleagues were amazed at his tireless work ethic.

He did, however, find time for things besides work. Along the way, he met a young woman named Claudia Taylor, who came from a wealthy Texas family and was nicknamed "Lady Bird." They married in 1934 and eventually had two children, Lynda and Luci.



Franklin D. Roosevelt (left) and  
Lyndon B. Johnson (right)

## Entering Congress

Johnson wanted to do more than be an aide, so in 1937, he was elected as a congressman from Texas. He was just 29 years old and an up-and-coming politician. At the time, Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt was serving as president and implementing his progressive **New Deal** policies. Johnson idolized Roosevelt and loyally supported his programs.

During World War II, Johnson remained a congressman but served in the Naval Reserve and as an inspector of the war effort. He flew on one bombing mission and was awarded the Silver Star.

Johnson, however, always had his eye on reaching higher office. In 1948, he ran against former Texas Governor Coke Stevenson

for the Democratic Party's nomination to be a U.S. senator. Johnson knew how to get the voters' attention: he arrived at campaign events in dramatic fashion in a helicopter called "The Johnson City Windmill."

When the **primary election** was over, Johnson had won by 87 votes out of almost 1 million. Many historians believe that Johnson had engaged in fraudulent activities to win. His critics sarcastically nicknamed him "Landslide Lyndon." That fall, Johnson easily won the general election.





# Boss of the Senate

Johnson served in the Senate from 1949 to 1961 and quickly rose to become the most powerful senator in the country. He **did** anything and everything to gain power: learning the strengths and weaknesses of his rivals, cultivating close relationships with powerful people, and working longer hours than everyone else. By 1955, he had the chamber's top job: **Senate Majority Leader**.

Some believe he was the most powerful Majority Leader in American history—nothing happened in the Senate without his approval. Despite being from different parties, he worked closely with Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower to pass laws such as the **Civil Rights Act of 1957** and the **National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958**, which Johnson hoped would make America the world leader in space exploration.

## The Johnson Treatment

Johnson was a strong leader in the Senate because he had the gift of persuading people. He studied his fellow senators and learned about what motivated them and what they wanted. He used this information to negotiate with them and get lots of bills passed.

People that knew him talked about “the Johnson Treatment,” or the process he used to persuade others. Two journalists wrote that the treatment “could last ten minutes or four hours.” It included many different emotions: “supplication, accusation, exuberance, scorn, tears, complaint, and the hint of threat.” Johnson “moved in close, his face a scant millimeter from his target.” Those who got the treatment found it very difficult to say no to what he asked for.





# A Miserable Vice President

Johnson's ultimate goal, however, went far beyond the Senate. Just as he told his classmates in his youth, he wanted to be president. With Eisenhower leaving office, Johnson prepared to run for the 1960 Democratic presidential nomination. He felt confident that his impressive Senate record would carry him to victory.

**H**e was disappointed, however, when a young senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, won the nomination instead. Kennedy's Senate record was nowhere near as impressive as Johnson's, but he was young, charismatic, and an eloquent speaker. The voters fell in love with the senator from Massachusetts.

Kennedy, however, was from the Northeastern part of the country and needed support from the South to win the presidency. So he chose Johnson, a Southerner, to be his running mate. The strategy worked—that fall, Kennedy and Johnson defeated the Republican ticket of Richard Nixon and Henry Cabot Lodge.

Being vice president, however, was a miserable experience for Johnson. Kennedy's advisors, who were mostly wealthy, well-educated men from the Northeast, looked down on Johnson and made fun of him. Kennedy rarely sought Johnson for advice and instead relied mostly on his own brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy. There were even rumors that Kennedy was planning to replace Johnson during the 1964 presidential election. Some felt that Johnson's career was over.

## Quote

*"This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America."  
- January 1964*



## Tragedy in Dallas

All of that changed on November 22, 1963. That afternoon, Johnson was riding in a motorcade a couple of cars behind Kennedy when shots suddenly rang out. Kennedy was fatally wounded and died in a nearby hospital half an hour later. At that moment, Lyndon Johnson became the 36th President of the United States. He took the oath of office shortly after in **Air Force One**, sworn in with Kennedy's widow, Jackie, by his side.

Although Johnson had attained his ultimate life goal—the presidency—it occurred in the midst of a national tragedy. Kennedy had been a very popular president—the American people were shocked and devastated at his loss. Johnson had to lead the nation in a time of great mourning. In a televised speech five days after the assassination, he said, "All I have I would have given gladly not to be standing here today."





## Quote

*"The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning."  
- May 1964*

## President

Johnson promised to continue Kennedy's policies. The nation, still holding on to JFK's memory, overwhelmingly elected Johnson in the 1964 presidential election. He defeated Republican candidate Barry Goldwater in a landslide.

LBJ modeled his presidency after his hero and the father of the New Deal, Franklin Roosevelt. Johnson created his own version of the New Deal, called the **Great Society**. The New Deal and Great Society were both based on the same idea—that giving government more control over people's lives could help the poor and make the world a better place. Johnson even declared a "**War on Poverty**" and created or expanded many **welfare** programs to help people. These included **Medicare** and **Medicaid**, which provided health care to the elderly and the poor. They also included food stamps, which gave people money to buy food, and **Head Start**, to help poor children.

Like most **utopian** ideas, Johnson's Great Society programs have failed to eliminate poverty. Instead, they led to more rules for all Americans to follow. These programs, to this day, cost a lot of money and have contributed to America's current massive

debt. LBJ didn't realize that the best way to eliminate poverty was not through more rules and bigger government but through greater freedom for all.

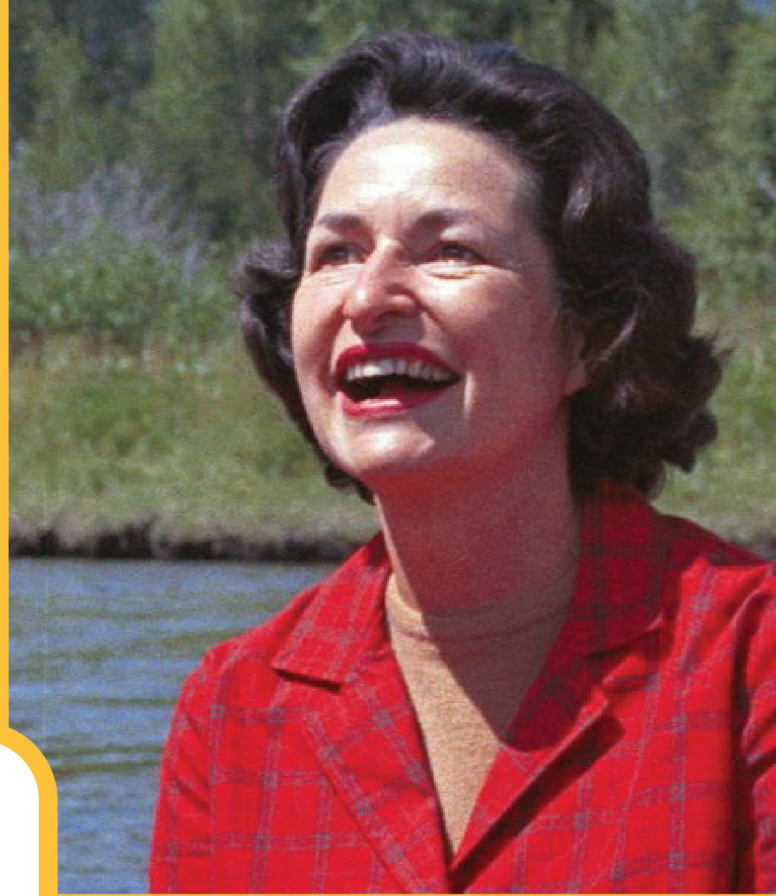
Johnson's greatest successes, after all, were those that protected the rights and freedom of all Americans. These included the **Civil Rights Act of 1964**, the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**, and a tax cut, which helped America become more prosperous.

In addition, Johnson got America heavily involved in the **Vietnam War**. Although the cause of the war—to stop communism—was a meaningful and worthwhile goal, Johnson did not know how to use military power effectively. He controlled the military's strategy so much that it didn't have the freedom to do what was necessary to win the war. LBJ sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers to Vietnam, and about 58,000 Americans died in the war, but victory never came. Soon, thousands of Americans were protesting against the war, and the entire nation was torn over what to do. Johnson became unpopular and decided to leave office in 1969.



## Lady Bird the Businesswoman

Lady Bird Johnson was a well-educated woman who was an active First Lady. She supported her husband's Great Society programs and worked to protect the environment. Mrs. Johnson was also a shrewd businesswoman. When she was 30 years old, she invested some retirement money in a small Austin radio station, KTBC. She worked hard to revitalize the station, making it a profitable business. The station eventually made the Johnsons millionaires.



### Quote

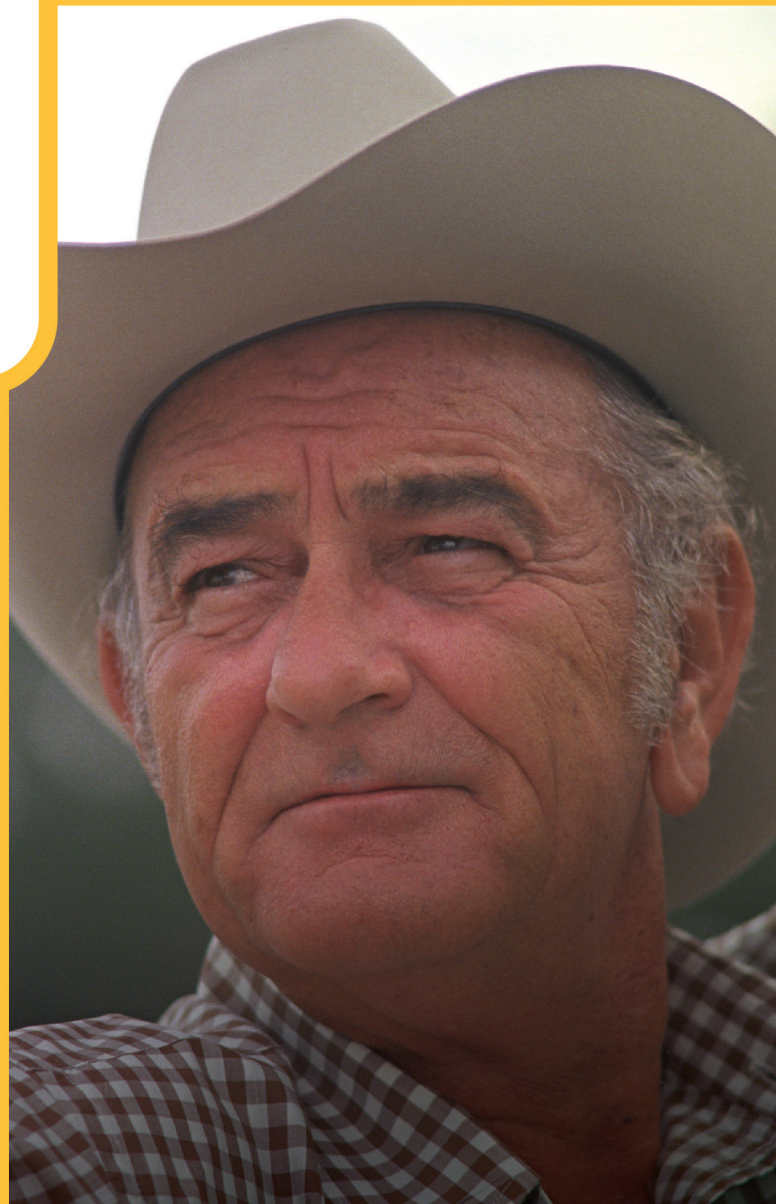
*"I do not believe that the Great Society is the ordered, changeless, and sterile battalion of the ants. It is the excitement of becoming—always becoming, trying, probing, falling, resting, and trying again—but always trying and always gaining."*

*- January 1965*

## Retirement

Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson retired to their ranch in Texas. He wrote his memoirs defending his career and his presidency. It fell to his successor, Republican President Richard Nixon, to end America's involvement in Vietnam.

Johnson had suffered from heart problems for several years. It didn't help that he smoked heavily in his retirement (despite quitting many years earlier). On January 22, 1973, Johnson suffered a heart attack and died at the age of 64.





# Legacy

Lyndon B. Johnson dedicated his career to public service and worked diligently toward advancing his political goals, often attaining more power for the federal government and himself in the process. As a representative, a senator, and a president, he was willing to do anything to advance his agenda. Historians suspect that he even cheated in 1948 to win his Senate seat.

LBJ often promised that if the voters gave him and the government more power, he could get rid of problems like poverty. Decades after Johnson left office, it is very clear how empty those promises were. Despite all of the programs he created—many of which are still in place—poverty still exists in the United States. Americans are now left with a massive national debt from the cost of those programs.

Johnson also unwisely escalated America's involvement in the Vietnam War without a real strategy to win it. This proved to be a costly decision, as thousands of American families lost their sons, husbands, and fathers.

Lyndon Johnson was one of America's most ambitious presidents, but it is America that continues to pay the price for his policies.

## Quote

"We have chosen to fight a limited war in Vietnam... I wish I could report to you that the conflict is almost over. This I cannot do. We face more cost, more loss, and more agony."  
- January 1967

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## Answers

**NAMES OF JOHNSON'S  
TWO BEAGLES:  
HIM AND HER**





# Writing Activity

**Consider the pros and cons of ambition.**

What are the consequences of being overly ambitious or not ambitious enough?



# Glossary



**New Deal:** A series of government laws, regulations, and programs implemented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the 1930s. Although the stated goal of the New Deal was to provide economic relief during the Great Depression, it also implemented many policies progressives had supported for several decades. The New Deal greatly expanded government control of the economy and American people's lives.

**Primary Election:** An election that determines a party's nominee for a political office. The general election determines which party's candidate wins.

**Senate Majority Leader:** The senator who leads the party with the majority in the U.S. Senate. The Senate Majority Leader usually has significant influence over the laws that the Senate debates and passes.

**Civil Rights Act of 1957:** The first significant civil rights legislation passed since the Civil War, aimed at protecting voting rights and establishing a federal commission to investigate allegations of voter discrimination.

**National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958:** Legislation that established the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to coordinate and oversee space exploration and research activities in the United States.

**Air Force One:** The official designated call sign for the U.S. Air Force aircraft whenever the President of the United States is on board. The aircrafts used for Air Force One—Boeing 707s and 747s—are iconic symbols of presidential power.

**Great Society:** A set of programs signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 and 1965. These laws sought to continue the work begun by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in implementing progressive policies. They expanded the size and reach of government in the areas of healthcare, education, the economy, housing, and the environment.

**War on Poverty:** A set of government programs and policies initiated in the 1960s to eliminate poverty in the United States and assist the extremely poor through measures such as job training, education, and healthcare assistance. It set a precedent for big government to address social issues through legislation such as the "War on Crime" and "War on Drugs."

**Welfare:** Government aid, often in the form of money, to address social problems.

**Medicare:** The national program run by the federal government to provide health insurance for the elderly (65 and older), as well as those with disability status. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Medicare into law in 1965.

**Medicaid:** A program run by the federal government and the states to provide assistance for healthcare costs for people with low incomes. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Medicaid into law in 1965.

**Head Start:** A government-run early childhood education program in the United States that provides educational, health, and social services to children from low-income families.

**Utopian:** Aiming for a perfect society; usually considered unrealistic and often harmful to society.

**Civil Rights Act of 1964:** A bill signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964, that ended discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin.

**Voting Rights Act of 1965:** A bill signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on August 6, 1965, that protects the voting rights of all Americans. It specifically protects minorities who, previously, were prevented from voting because of their race.

**Vietnam War:** A military conflict from 1955 until 1975 that began when communists in North Vietnam tried to impose a dictatorship over the entire country. The United States ultimately sent about 2.7 million soldiers to support the South Vietnamese against the communists, but this decision became unpopular among Americans.



# Richard M. Nixon

"I had one of the greatest political comebacks in American history and served as the 37th President of the United States."







# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

In this book, you'll learn all sorts of facts about Richard M. Nixon's amazing life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

The Secret Service had a codename for President Nixon. We need your help to find out what it was. Your task is to help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this book carefully to find them, and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

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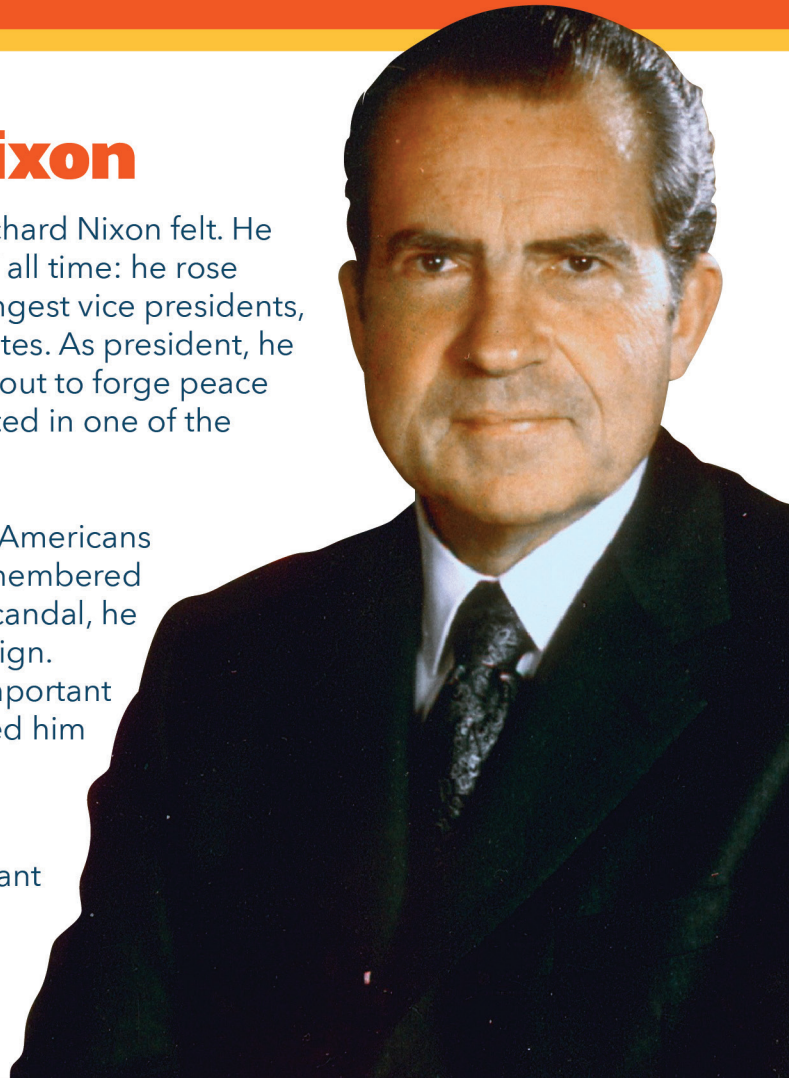
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

## Meet Richard M. Nixon

Did you ever feel misunderstood? That's how Richard Nixon felt. He was one of the most accomplished Americans of all time: he rose from poverty to become one of the nation's youngest vice presidents, and later on, the 37th President of the United States. As president, he ended the unpopular Vietnam War and reached out to forge peace with many of America's enemies. He was re-elected in one of the greatest landslides in U.S. history.

Despite these impressive accomplishments, few Americans appreciate Nixon today. Instead, he is mainly remembered for one thing: that as a result of the Watergate **S**candal, he was the only president in American history to resign. While Nixon gets criticized for the scandal, it's important to remember that many of his opponents attacked him unfairly throughout his career, ignoring his many contributions to our country.

To understand the real Richard Nixon, it's important to study not just Watergate, but his entire career and all he did for the United States.



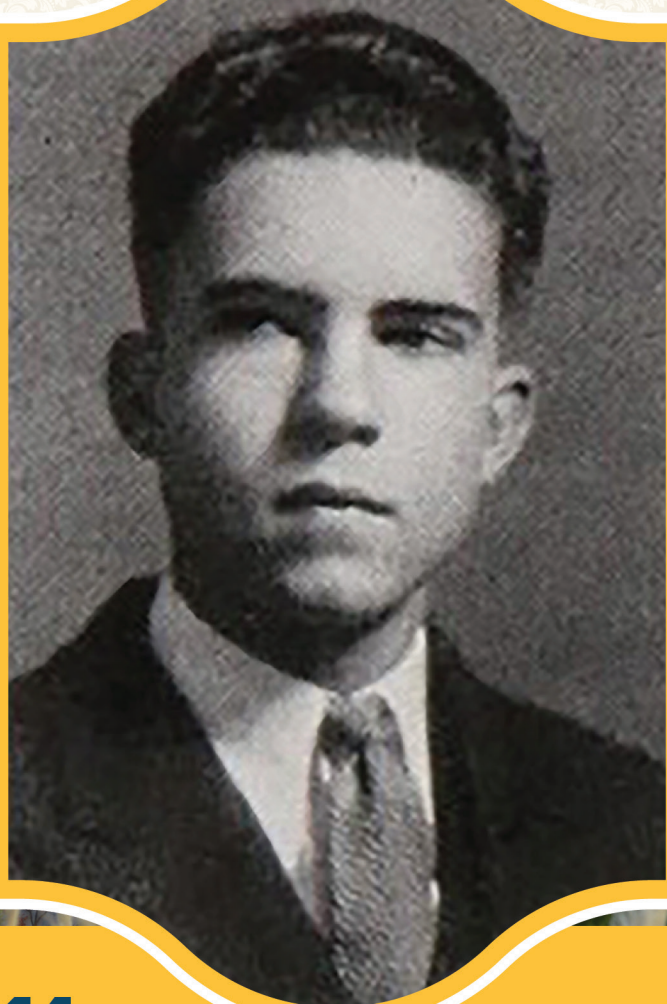


## Young Richard

Richard Milhous Nixon was born on January 9, 1913, in Yorba Linda, California. He was the second of Frank and Hannah Nixon's five children—all boys. Frank supported his family by running a grocery store and a gas station. Hannah raised young Richard and his brothers, teaching them the values of her **Quaker** faith.

The Nixons knew hardship and tragedy. They were very poor, and two of the boys, Arthur and Harold, eventually died due to illness. Young Richard, however, was determined to make something of himself. He was a smart, hard-working student. As a student at Whittier College, he was very active, serving in student government, performing in theater plays, and playing on the football team.

After finishing college, Richard attended law school at Duke University, graduating in 1937.



## Interesting Facts

- He is the only president (as of 2024) born in California.
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He was the second Quaker to serve as president.
- He was the first president to visit all 50 states.
- He is tied with Franklin D. Roosevelt for the most appearances on a national ticket for a major political party (as of 2024)—five times (in 1952, 1956, 1960, 1968, and 1972).
- During his presidency, the United States landed six manned missions on the moon.
- He won 49 out of 50 states during his 1972 re-election campaign.
- He is the only president (as of 2024) to resign from office.



## Early Career

Nixon returned to Whittier and began practicing law. In 1938, he fell in love with a school teacher named Thelma Ryan, who was nicknamed "Pat." He worked hard to win her over. They got married in 1940 and eventually had two daughters, Tricia and Julie.

After World War II broke out, Nixon joined the Navy and served in the Pacific. He was awarded several medals and a letter of commendation for his service.

When the war was over, Nixon caught the eye of a group of Republicans. They were impressed by his intelligence and suggested that he run for Congress. In November of 1946, Nixon won his first election at the youthful age of 33. At the same time, another young veteran of the war from Massachusetts—John F. Kennedy—won a seat as a congressman. As freshmen members of Congress, Kennedy and Nixon became friends. Eventually, they would be rivals.



## Anti-Communist Leader

The late 1940s saw the start of the **Cold War**. At the time, the **Soviet Union** was aggressively spreading **communism** around the world. It posed a dangerous threat to freedom. The United States, led by President Harry S. Truman, began implementing a strategy to stop communism from spreading.

Congressman Nixon was an outspoken opponent of communism. He suspected that there were people in the United States who, as spies, were secretly supporting the Soviet Union and giving the communists information to help them win the Cold War. Nixon joined the House Un-American Activities Committee, where he worked hard to uncover spies in the federal government. He even exposed a State Department official, Alger Hiss, as a spy. This made Nixon famous and a hero for many Americans. Those who were sympathetic to communism, however, attacked him and his reputation. They claimed he was dishonest and nicknamed him "Tricky Dick."

The voters of California, however, were glad he was such a strong opponent of communism. They elected him as senator in 1950.





# Vice President

In 1952, the Republican Party chose World War II General Dwight D. Eisenhower as its presidential nominee. Since Eisenhower was over 60 years old, the Republicans wanted to balance the ticket with a young leader as his running mate, so they nominated Nixon for the vice presidency.

Nixon's enemies, however, tried to sabotage his candidacy. They spread a story that a group of corrupt, wealthy California businessmen were inappropriately giving him money so he would vote for certain laws.

In September 1952, Nixon gave a speech on television where he defended himself. He said that he didn't receive any gifts or money improperly. He revealed that the only gift he did receive from supporters was a cute little dog his daughter named Checkers. Nixon insisted they were going to keep it. The speech, now known as the "Checkers

speech," touched the American people—they felt he was a good family man who could be trusted.

Eisenhower and Nixon won the election in a landslide. At just 39 years old, Nixon was the second highest-ranking official in the country. He and Eisenhower were re-elected in 1956.

Throughout most of American history, vice presidents did not play major roles and had little to do. By contrast, Nixon was a very active vice president. Eisenhower gave Nixon many responsibilities and allowed him to travel around the world and meet with foreign leaders. He even met with and debated the dictator of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, face-to-face. When Eisenhower dealt with health issues, he allowed Nixon to perform some presidential duties.





# Devastating Defeats



Nixon built up an impressive record as vice president. The mainstream media, however, disliked him and wrote negative stories about him. It also didn't help that many people felt he had an awkward and moody personality.

In 1960, the Republicans chose Nixon as their candidate for president. The Democrats chose his old colleague, John F. Kennedy, as their candidate. By then, Kennedy was a senator from Massachusetts. Like Nixon, Kennedy was a young leader, but unlike Nixon, he was very charismatic. The Massachusetts senator gave speeches that inspired people around the world.

Kennedy and Nixon faced off in four **debates**. They were the first televised

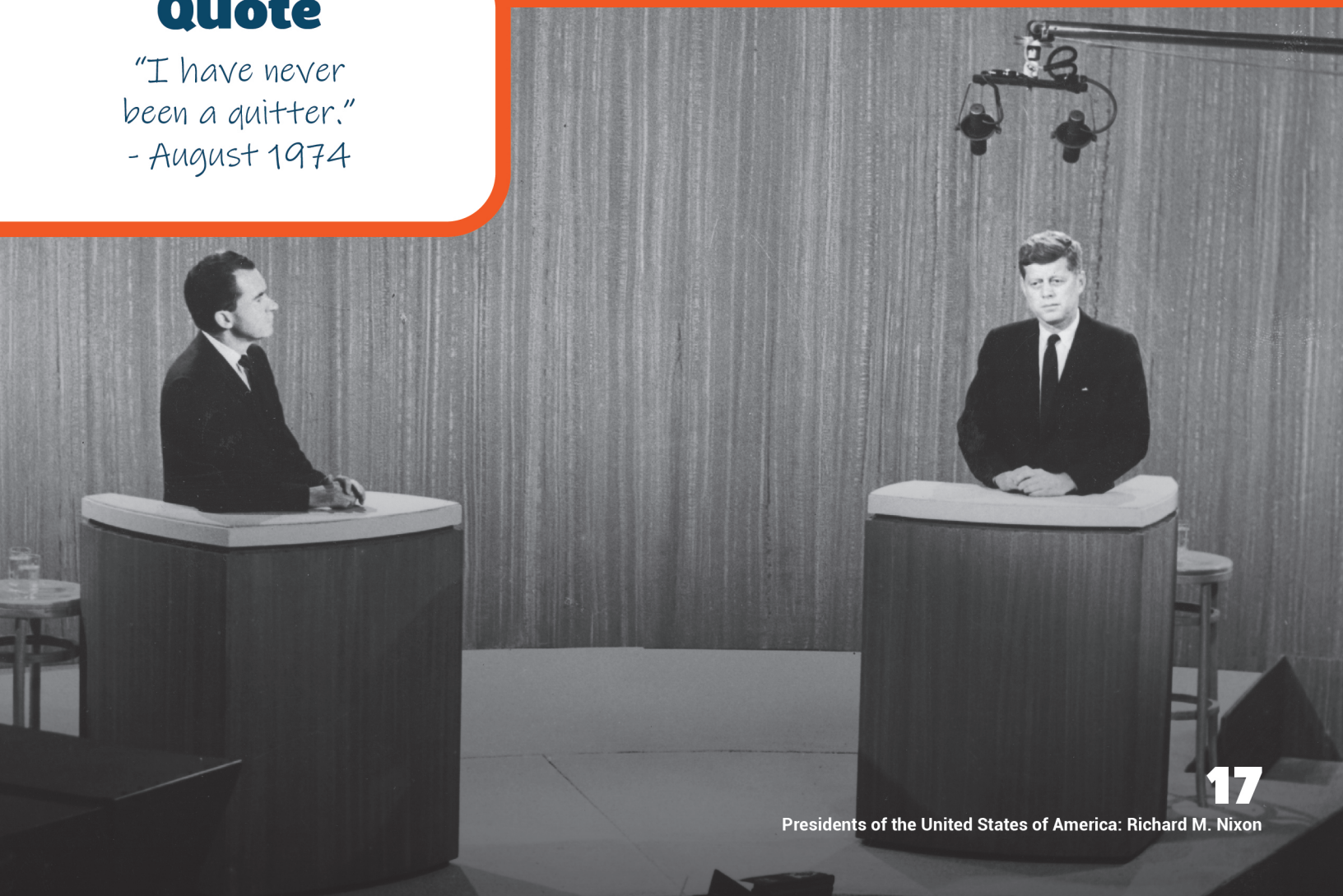
presidential debates in American history. The election was very close, but in the end, Kennedy won. In the popular vote, he only beat Nixon by less than one percent.

Nixon was devastated by his loss. Even worse, he heard rumors that the Democrats had cheated to win votes in Illinois. This left Nixon feeling embittered, and it may have convinced him that, to win elections, he had to be tougher on his opponents.

Two years later, he attempted a comeback by running for Governor of California, but he lost that election too. It was a major embarrassment—he had been rejected by the nation and by his own home state within two years. Nixon's career had once been so promising—now it appeared to be over.

## Quote

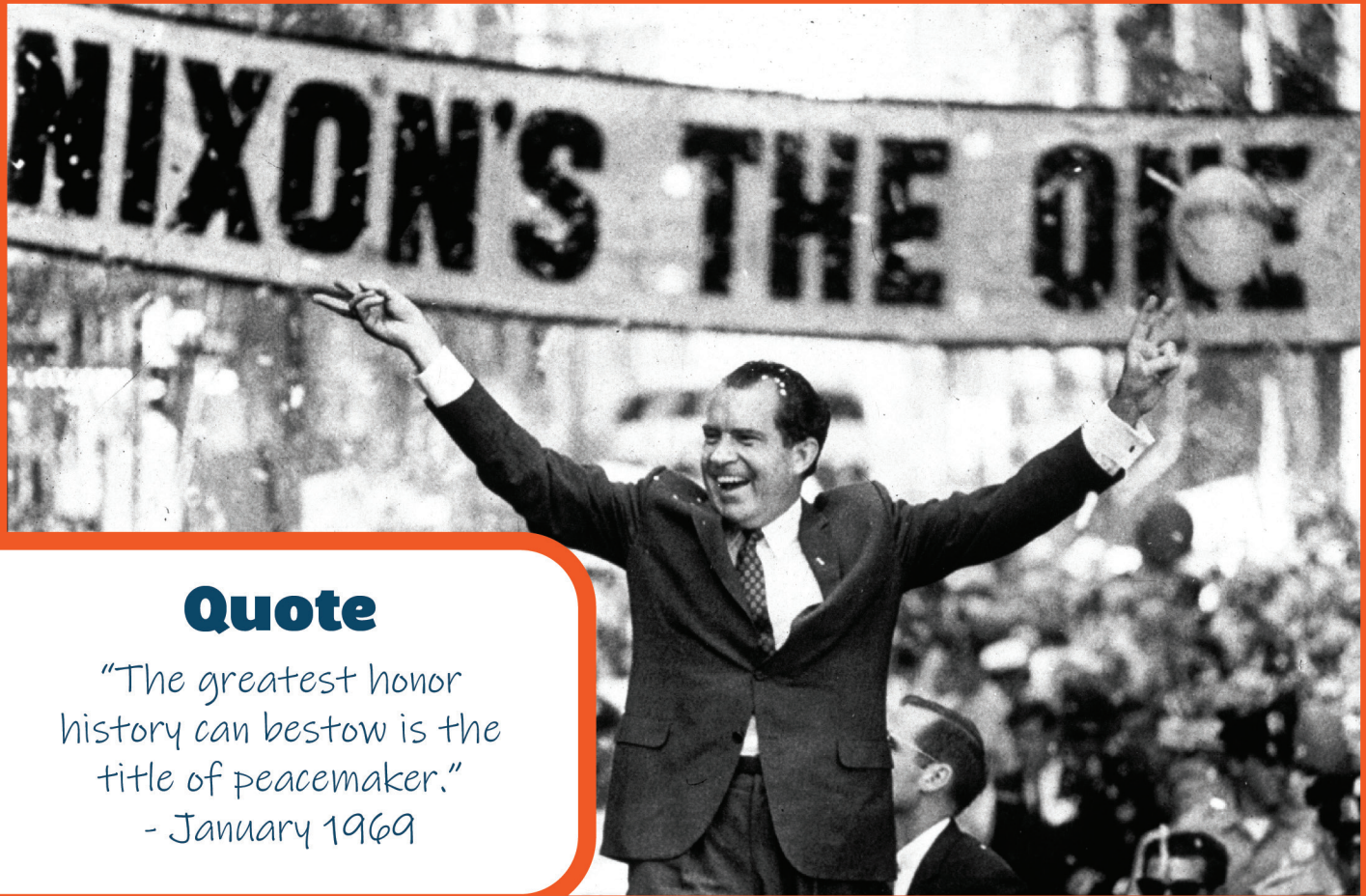
*"I have never  
been a quitter."  
- August 1974*







## Epic Comeback



### Quote

"The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker."  
- January 1969

After his failed campaigns, Nixon went back to his original profession: law. He joined a New York City law firm and earned a decent amount of money. He reminded everyone of his brilliant legal skills by arguing a case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, things were not going well for the country. In November of 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. The nation was shocked and devastated. Then, the new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, led the country deeper into the **Vietnam War**. Thousands of Americans were dying in the fighting, and many began protesting against the conflict. The country became divided—young and old, black and white, men

and women all disagreed strongly on many issues. Crime and violence ran rampant in the cities.

By 1968, the nation wanted someone who could find a solution to the Vietnam War and restore law and order. Nixon ran for president once again, promising to do just that. The voters remembered the peaceful years of the 1950s when Eisenhower and Nixon were in office. They hoped that, by finally electing Nixon, America would be at peace once again.

Nixon easily won the Republican nomination. He promised to find a solution to the war and, in November, won a close race against Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey.



# President



President Nixon's first task was to end the Vietnam War. At the time, there were about 500,000 American soldiers fighting in Vietnam. Nixon had to act very carefully. For many years, the United States had promised to support its ally, South Vietnam, against the communist North Vietnamese. If Nixon pulled out of the war too quickly and abandoned South Vietnam, America's other allies might believe that the United States couldn't be counted on to keep its promises.

Nixon came up with a solution called **Vietnamization**. He would continue to support the South Vietnamese, but he would remove American soldiers from the war. Meanwhile, the U.S. military would help train the South Vietnamese so they could do more of the fighting themselves. By the end of his presidency, almost all U.S. soldiers were out of Vietnam. Americans were relieved that their servicemembers were no longer dying in Vietnam.

President Nixon and his brilliant advisor **Henry Kissinger** also worked hard to soothe tensions with America's enemies—specifically the Soviet Union and the **People's Republic of China**.

These policies were described as "**Détente**," which is the French word for "relaxing," as in a relaxing of tensions.

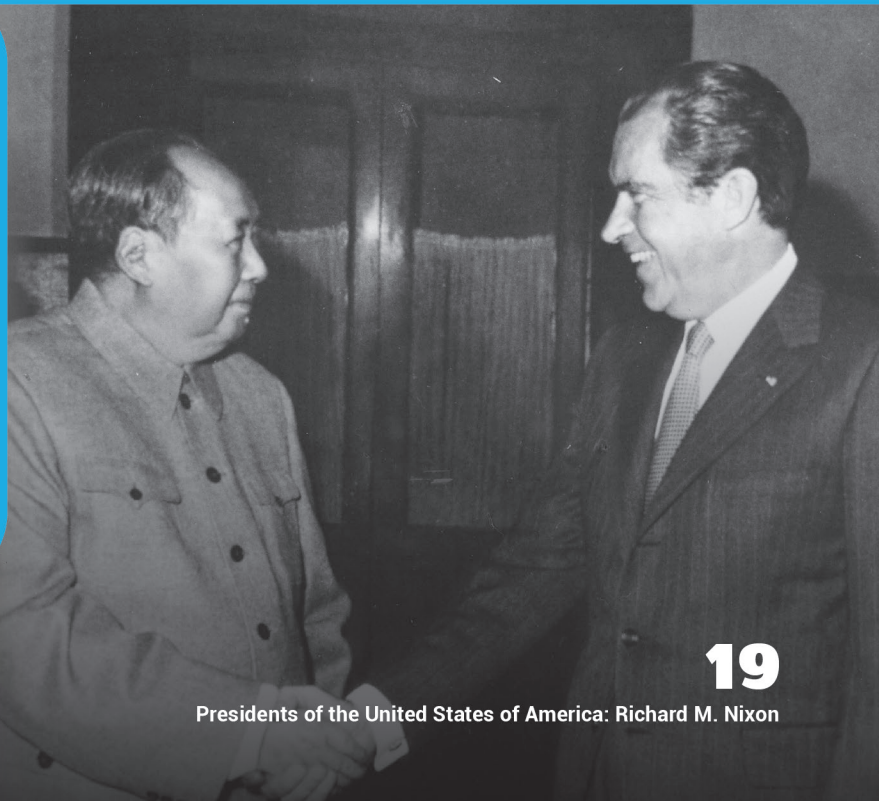
In 1972, he met with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev during the **Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)** and signed a major agreement to limit the number of nuclear weapons. That same year, Nixon became the first president to visit the People's Republic of China. While he was there, he met with Chinese dictator **Mao Zedong**.

Many people were surprised Nixon was able to work with the two major communist countries, especially since he had been a strong opponent of communism. American voters were impressed by his diplomatic accomplishments. As a result, Nixon was re-elected in a landslide in 1972. In fact, he defeated the Democratic candidate George McGovern in 49 out of the 50 states!

In January 1973, Nixon and Kissinger achieved their goal in Vietnam. They had successfully negotiated the **Paris Peace Accords**—which meant that the war, for America, was basically over.

## Quote

"Let us remember that America was built not by government, but by people—not by welfare, but by work—not by shirking responsibility, but by seeking responsibility."  
- January 1973







# Tragic Downfall

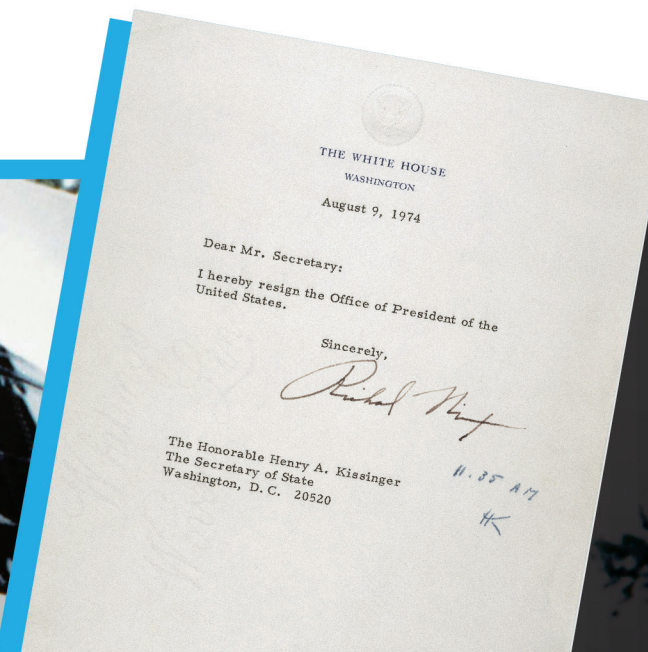
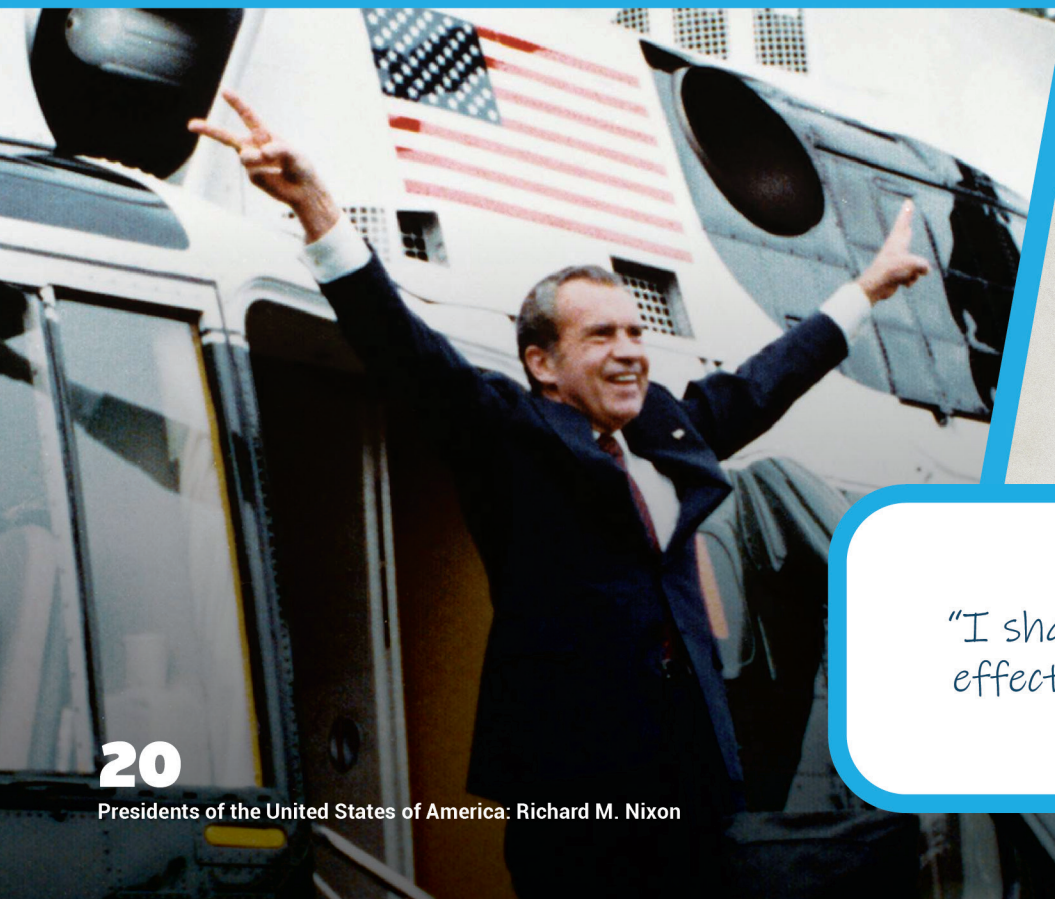
As Nixon started his second term, things seemed to be going well for him. Unfortunately, everything would unravel in a short period of time. All the years of political battles left Nixon convinced he had to be tough on his opponents. His loss to Kennedy in 1960 was especially difficult since he felt that the Democrats had cheated in that election. Like many other leaders of his time, such as Kennedy and Johnson, he tried to find out bad things about his political rivals. Some of his aides, however, took it too far. They created a group called the Plumbers to investigate Nixon's political opponents.

Back in June of 1972, some in the Plumbers team broke into the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C. The Plumbers, however, were caught and arrested for burglary.

The newspapers and Congress began investigating what happened. The controversy became known as the **Watergate Scandal**. Investigators learned that Nixon often recorded his conversations and meetings at the White

House. The Supreme Court ordered that Nixon release the tapes of those recordings. One of those tapes revealed that Nixon tried to prevent an investigation into the burglary.

Members of the House of Representatives believed this was a crime and voted to impeach him. The country had lost faith in Nixon, and Congress was ready to remove him from office. On August 8, 1974, Nixon announced that he would **resign** from the presidency. The following day, he officially left office, and his vice president, Gerald Ford, became the 38th President of the United States. As Nixon got onto the helicopter to leave the White House—at the lowest point of his career—he famously flashed the victory sign. It was a moment that Americans would never forget.



## Quote

"I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow."  
- August 1974





## Retirement



It had been a dramatic downfall. Even though Nixon had won re-election in a landslide less than two years earlier, much of his popularity and support had disappeared.

Nixon might have been tried in a court of law for the scandal, but President Ford officially **pardoned** him, which meant he was forgiven for whatever crimes he may have committed. This angered many Americans, who wanted him to be punished. Over the years, however, people's opinions have changed. Most Americans now believe it was the right thing to do. Historians believe that had Nixon been tried in a court of law, the nation would have been divided further. By pardoning Nixon, Ford helped America move on from the scandal.

Nixon spent much of his retirement engaged in important issues. He wrote many books and gave interviews defending his career. Americans began to remember that he was very intelligent and was an expert on foreign policy. Many subsequent presidents reached out to him for advice. Some Americans began to respect him once again, especially when he acknowledged his mistakes. In 1978, he admitted that, when it came to Watergate, "I screwed it up, and I paid the price."

Nixon spent his retirement in California and New Jersey. He enjoyed spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren. In 1993, he suffered a terrible loss when his beloved wife Pat died. On April 22, 1994, Nixon died of a stroke at the age of 81.





# Writing Activity

**Everyone makes mistakes, but it's important to take responsibility for our decisions.**

Write about a recent mistake you made and how  
you took responsibility for your decisions.



## Legacy

When Richard Nixon took office, America was at a low point. Thanks in large part to his predecessor Lyndon Johnson, the nation was stuck in an unpopular and unwinnable war, divided along racial and generational lines, and ravaged by violence in its cities. Nixon was able to restore order and end America's involvement in the Vietnam War, as well as establish new relationships with other countries. For these reasons, the American people re-elected him in one of the greatest landslides in history.

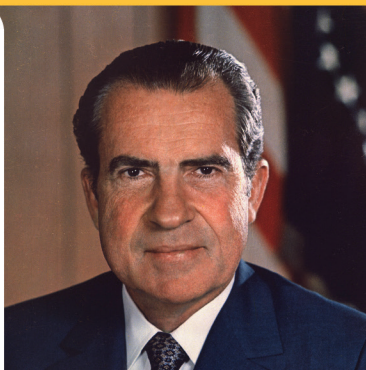
In many ways, Nixon lived the American dream. He rose from poverty to reach the nation's highest office. He suffered devastating defeats, including heartbreaking election losses, but he always seemed to overcome them. His 1968 election to the presidency is considered one of the greatest political comebacks of all time.

Americans remember Nixon as the first, and thus far, only president to resign. It is true that Nixon made mistakes during the scandal, but it is also true that his enemies (especially in the media) unfairly attacked him and took advantage of the situation. They never acknowledged Nixon's great successes and excused his predecessors, Kennedy and Johnson, when they did dishonest things. When the Watergate Scandal broke out, they did everything they could to destroy Nixon.

With all of that said, it is important to remember Nixon for more than the Watergate Scandal. As Democrat President Bill Clinton once said, "May the day of judging President Nixon on anything less than his entire life and career come to a close."

## Quote

"I know America. I know the heart of America is good."  
- January 1969



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**Images:** Wikicommons, FreePik, Nandaro (pg. 3)

## Answers

**NIXON'S CODE NAME:**  
SEARCHLIGHT





# Glossary

**Quaker:** A member of the Religious Society of Friends, a Christian denomination that is known for valuing direct experience with God, silent worship and meditation, commitment to social works, and non-violence (including not participating in war).

**Cold War:** The conflict between America, which was free, and the Soviet Union, which was a communist dictatorship, that lasted from the 1940s to the late 1980s.

**Soviet Union:** A country that existed from 1922 to 1991 which oppressed its people and tried to spread its communist system around the world.

**Communism:** A political and economic system where all property and resources are owned and controlled by the government. The result of this system is often dictatorship and government control of every aspect of people's lives.

**Debate:** A discussion of the issues in public between candidates for political office.

**Vietnam War:** A military conflict from 1955 until 1975 that began when communists in North Vietnam tried to impose a dictatorship over the entire country. The United States sent about 2.7 million soldiers to support the South Vietnamese against the communists, but this decision became unpopular among Americans.

**Vietnamization:** President Richard Nixon's policy during the Vietnam War, in which the U.S. military trained the South Vietnamese to fight the North Vietnamese communists. This policy allowed the United States to bear less of the burden of the war and to pull out its troops from Vietnam.

**Henry Kissinger:** An American diplomat who served as President Nixon's National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. Dr. Kissinger, a professor from Harvard University, was Nixon's most influential foreign policy advisor. He played a critical role in all of Nixon's major diplomatic accomplishments.

**People's Republic of China:** The name of the ancient country of China while being ruled by the Communist Party of China. The communist government of the People's Republic of China took

over the country in 1949 and has killed millions of Chinese citizens and, as of 2024, continues to oppress its people.

**Détente:** The French word for "relaxing." It refers to President Richard Nixon's policies towards the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. During the Cold War, the United States had tense relations with both nations. Nixon's Détente policies, however, aimed to "relax," or ease, those tensions and make the world more peaceful.

**Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT):** Negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union during Richard Nixon's presidency. The talks, a major part of Nixon's Détente policies, resulted in a treaty in 1972 that limited how many nuclear missiles the two nations could have.

**Mao Zedong:** The communist founder of the oppressive People's Republic of China, whose policies caused immense suffering and economic devastation for millions of Chinese people. His "Great Leap Forward" resulted in the deaths and imprisonment of tens of millions of people.

**Paris Peace Accords:** A peace agreement signed in January 1973 between the United States, North Vietnam, and South Vietnam. The agreement allowed the United States to end its involvement in the war.

**Watergate Scandal:** A political controversy from 1972 to 1974 that resulted in Richard Nixon's resignation from the presidency. The scandal began when members of a group called the Plumbers were arrested for burglarizing the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate Hotel. When Congress prepared to impeach him, Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974.

**Resign:** To give up, or leave, a position.

**Pardon:** When a president or other government figure decides someone who is accused of or has been found guilty of a crime is forgiven and no longer has to be punished for that crime.





# Notes

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of multiple horizontal blue lines.



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