

presidents of the *United States of America*

"I was the 38th President of the United States and helped heal the country after a very difficult time."



Gerald Ford



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Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle

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

Ford's wife had a nickname but we need to find out what it was. You can 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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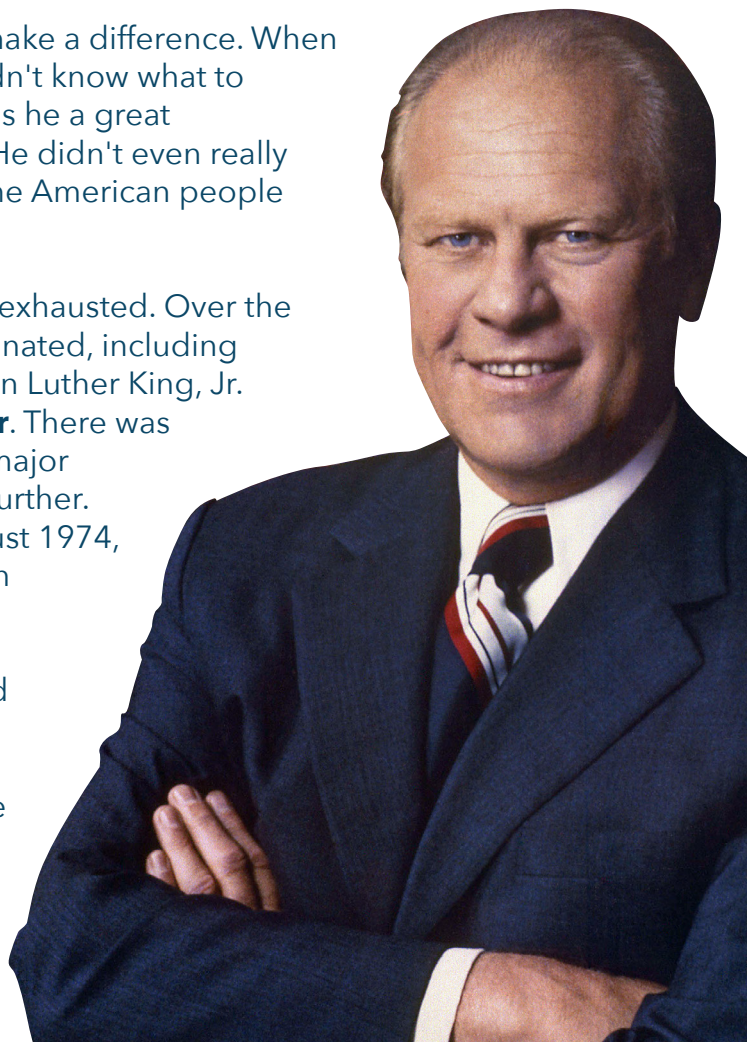
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

Meet Gerald Ford

Sometimes, it's the people you least expect that can make a difference. When Gerald Ford became president in 1974, Americans didn't know what to expect. He wasn't the most charismatic person, nor was he a great speaker—qualities that voters love in their presidents. He didn't even really want to be president. He was, however, exactly what the American people needed at that time.

When Ford entered office, the American people were exhausted. Over the previous 11 years, several of their leaders were assassinated, including President John F. Kennedy and civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. Thousands of Americans had died in the **Vietnam War**. There was violence in the cities, and the economy was failing. A major scandal, called **Watergate**, divided the country even further. Many Americans had lost faith in their leaders. In August 1974, Gerald Ford became president. He immediately began working to heal the wounds of the country.

Ford faced many challenges, and not everyone agreed with his decisions. When Ford ran to keep the presidency in 1976, he lost. Years afterward, however, people remembered how hard he worked to bring the country together. They remembered that he was a decent and honest man who was devoted to his family and tried his best to heal America. When Ford died in 2006, the nation had a greater appreciation of his leadership than when he was in office.

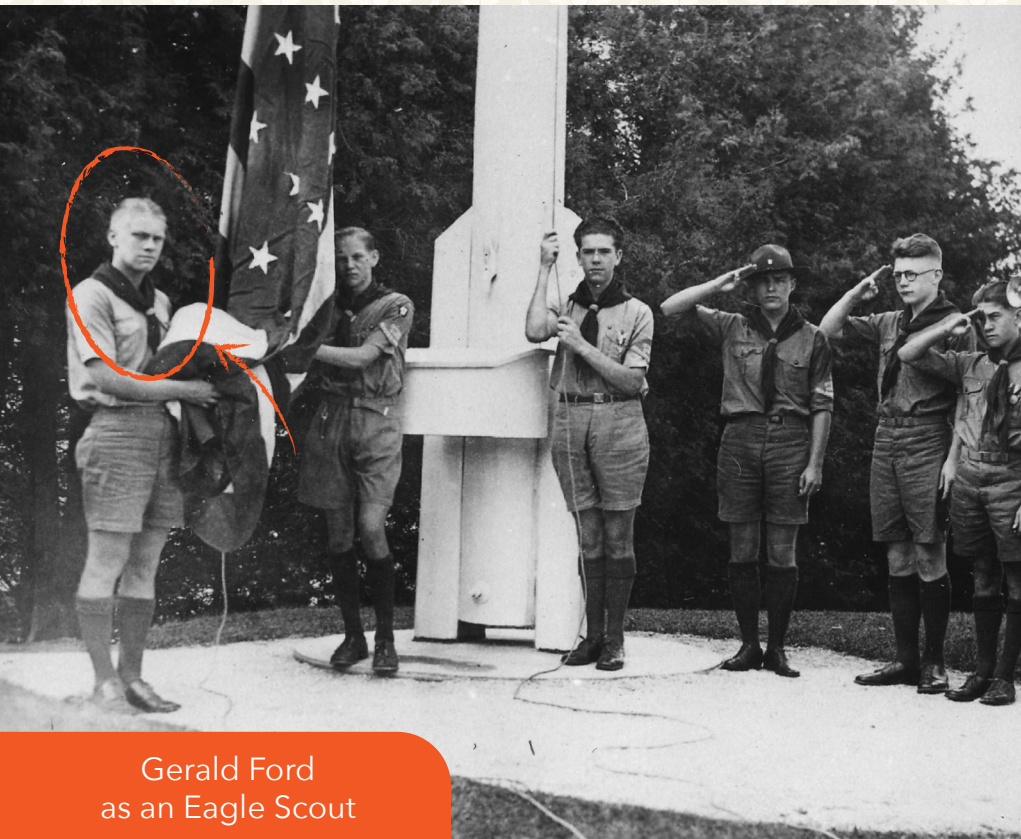


Young Gerald

Gerald Ford was born on July 14, 1913, in Omaha, Nebraska as Leslie Lynch King, Jr. After his parents divorced and his mother remarried a businessman named Gerald Ford, young Leslie Jr. took his stepdad's name and started going by Gerald Ford, Jr.

Young Gerald grew up in a close-knit family and eventually had three younger half-brothers. On his 12th birthday, he joined the **Boy Scouts** and eventually attained the rank of **Eagle Scout**. He then attended South High School in Grand Rapids, where he was a star student and athlete. He was named to the honor society and was the captain of the football team. Gerald became known as one of the top high school football players in Michigan. He also earned some extra money working at his family's paint business and a local restaurant.

The University of Michigan recognized Gerald's talent and recruited him to play for their football team. While there, he studied economics and political science and graduated in 1935.



Gerald Ford
as an Eagle Scout



Interesting Facts

- He was the first Eagle Scout to become president.
- He was a member of the Republican Party.
- He was the first president that was neither elected to presidency or vice presidency.
- He was the first president to take office after the resignation of another president.
- He survived two assassination attempts as president.
- He was the first president to visit Japan and Finland while in office.



Rise to Power

In 1938, Ford was admitted to Yale University Law School. He worked hard and graduated in the top quarter of his class in 1941. After World War II broke out that December, Ford joined the U.S. Navy and served in the South Pacific. He was almost swept overboard during a devastating typhoon in the Philippine Sea in 1944 but survived.

After the war ended in 1945, Ford returned to Michigan to start his legal career, but soon his family and friends encouraged him to run for office. In 1948, he won a seat as a Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he would serve for almost 25 years. He also married a woman named Elizabeth Bloomer Warren in 1948—their marriage would last 58 years.

Congressman Ford earned a reputation as a hard worker who worked well with both Democrats and Republicans. In 1965, Ford was chosen to be the minority leader of the Republican Party in the House. At the same time, however, the country was going through difficult times, with many **assassinations** and many Americans fighting and dying in Vietnam.

Quote

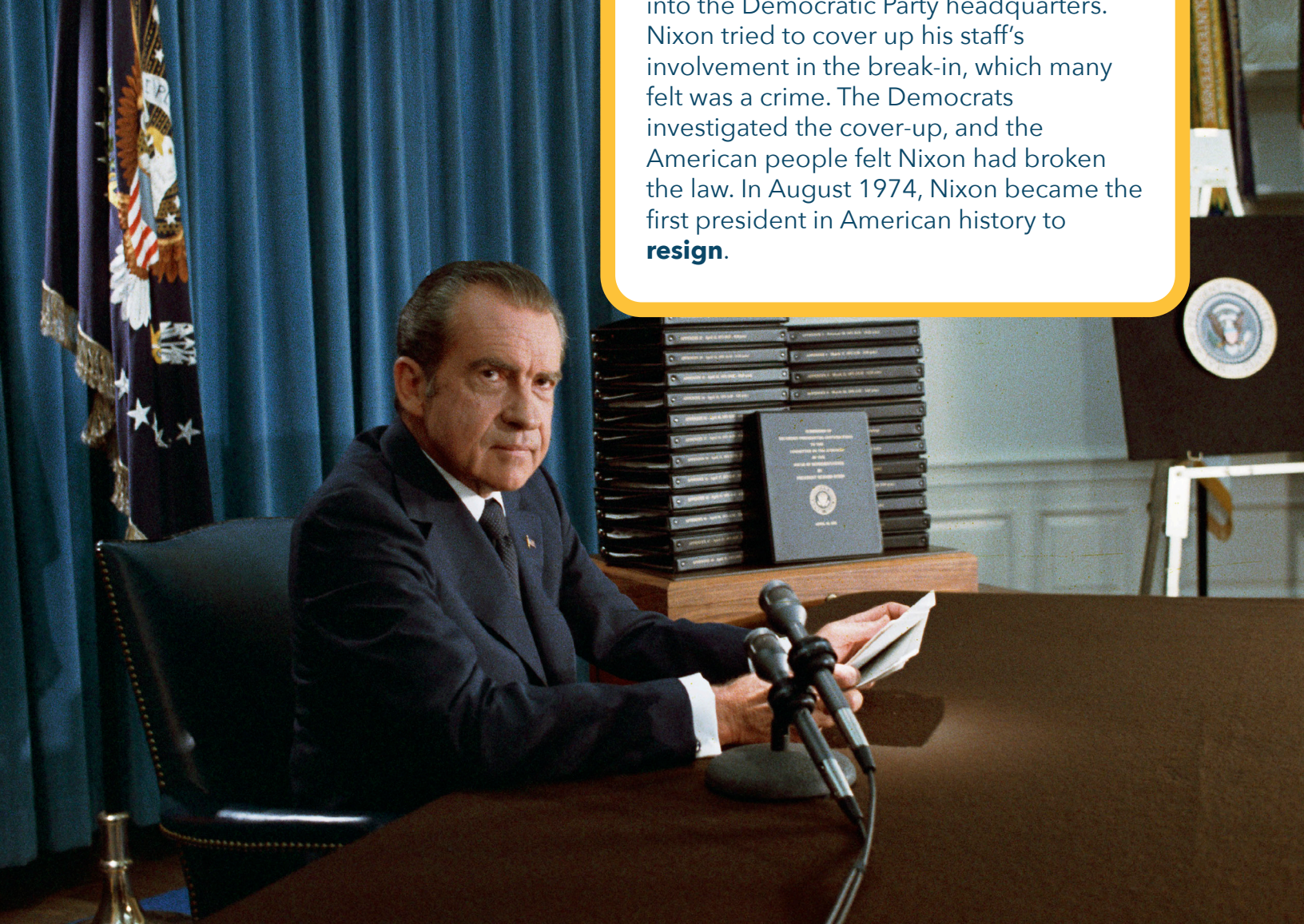
*"Being a citizen of the United States of America is the greatest honor and privilege in this world."
- January 1977*



Vice President

In 1968, Richard Nixon was elected president, and Spiro Agnew was elected vice president. They were both Republicans and were re-elected in 1972. Unfortunately, both were involved in major **scandals**. In 1973, Vice President Agnew resigned due to financial crimes. Knowing that many people liked Ford, President Nixon appointed him to replace Agnew as vice president.

In the meantime, Nixon was dealing with his own scandal—the Watergate scandal. Several people knew Nixon's staff broke into the Democratic Party headquarters. Nixon tried to cover up his staff's involvement in the break-in, which many felt was a crime. The Democrats investigated the cover-up, and the American people felt Nixon had broken the law. In August 1974, Nixon became the first president in American history to **resign**.





Quote

*"My fellow Americans,
our long national
nightmare is over."
- August 1974*

President

The American people were very upset about the Watergate scandal and many other things happening at the time, such as the Vietnam War. They wanted a fresh start. President Ford captured that feeling when he said, "Our long national nightmare is over." People across the United States felt better that such an honest, kind man was now in the White House.

Ford felt it was important for the country to move on from the past. Many people wanted Nixon to be tried and imprisoned for Watergate, but Ford decided to **pardon** the former president. At the time, the decision was controversial, but he felt that a trial

would divide the country even further.

Ford also worked hard to revive the economy, especially since **inflation** was rising. In addition, he tried to help the South Vietnamese fight against the communists, but Democrats in Congress prevented him from doing so. Without American assistance, the communists took over South Vietnam and created a brutal dictatorship there, and the Vietnam War finally ended.

In 1976, Ford ran for his own term as president, but he lost a close race to the former Governor of Georgia, Jimmy Carter.



Retirement

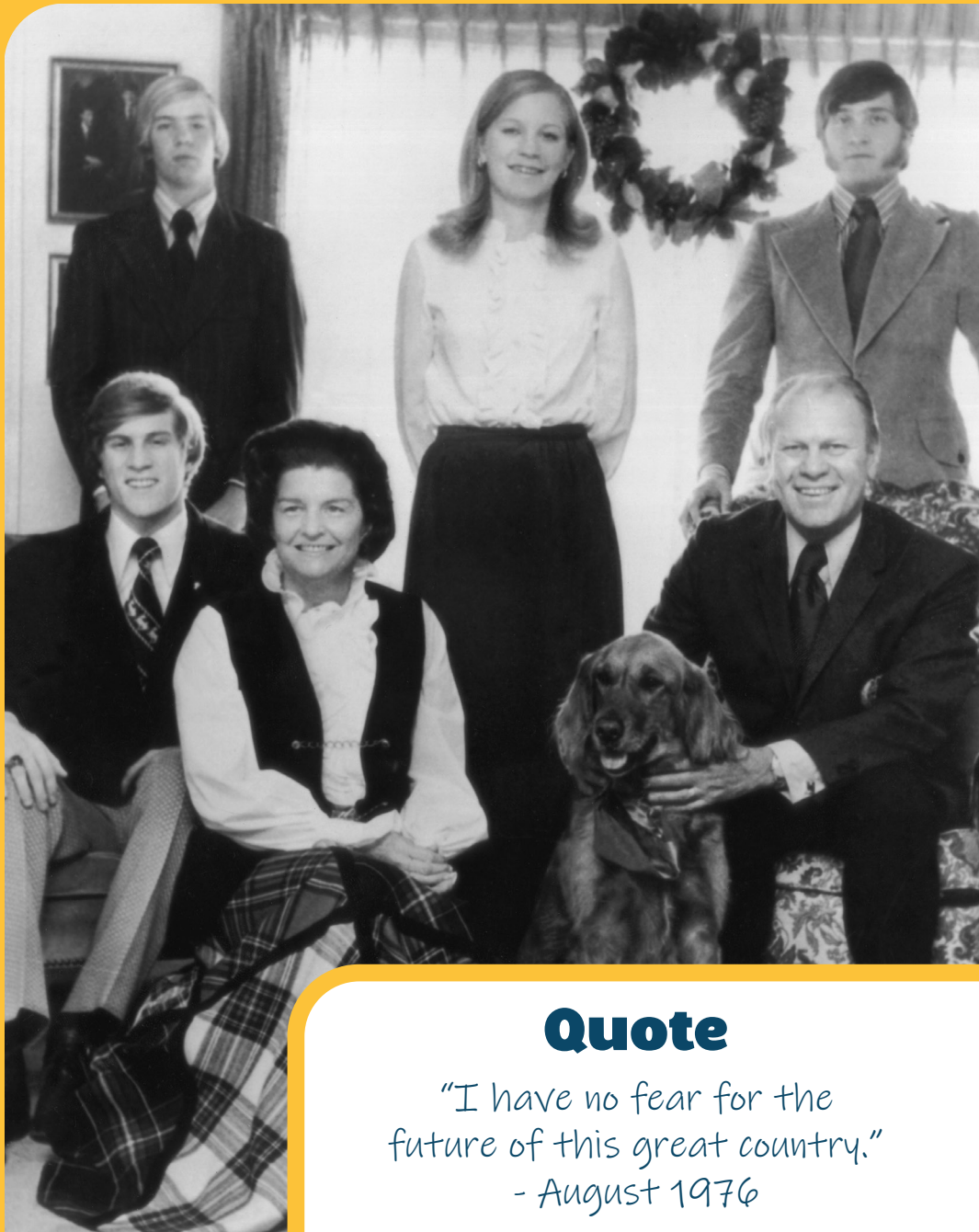
After leaving the White House, he retired to Rancho Mirage, California. He spent his retirement writing books, playing golf, and giving speeches. He almost ran in the 1980 election as Ronald Reagan's vice presidential running mate, but, in the end, Reagan chose George H.W. Bush instead.

Ford lived until 2006 and died on December 26, 2006 in Rancho Mirage, California. He was 93 years old and was, at the time, the longest-lived president.

Legacy

When people learn about Gerald Ford and watch videos of his speeches, they notice that he wasn't the most charismatic president. They also learn that he lost the 1976 election, which leads many to believe that Ford was a weak or failed president. There is, however, more to the story.

After Ford left office, people began to appreciate him more. They realized that, after the painful events of the 1960s and early 1970s, they needed a president who was honest and maybe even a little **bland**. At the time, they were upset that Ford pardoned Nixon, but **y**ears later, they realized that he was helping the country move on from the past. Gerald Ford might not be considered a great president, but he is now respected for his character and for the way he helped heal the divisions in America.



Quote

"I have no fear for the future of this great country."
- August 1976

Football Star

While he was president, Ford accidentally tripped a few times in public. This gave him a reputation for being clumsy. People forgot, however, that Ford was one of the most athletic men to ever become president. While at the University of Michigan, Ford played on the 1932 and 1933 championship teams and was named the team's most valuable player in 1934. He also played in the 1935 College All-Star Game.

After Ford graduated, the Detroit Lions and Green Bay Packers offered him contracts to play for them, but he declined to attend law school instead. Even in law school, Ford continued to be involved in sports. He served as an assistant football coach and also coached boxing. Michigan University eventually retired Ford's jersey number, and *Sports Illustrated* named him to their Silver Anniversary All-American Football Team.



Quote

"Our Constitution works; our great Republic is a government of laws and not of men."
- August 1974

Writing Activity

Write about the importance of integrity. Consider your personal integrity and write about how you might be even more honest.

Gerald Ford's Character

Solve the puzzle to learn one of Gerald Ford's attributes.

1 Someone who is photographed wearing newly-designed clothes or using products.



2 The killing of an important person, especially a country's leader.



3 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.



4 An event involving dishonest and/or illegal activity that provokes outrage.



5 A major scandal from 1972 to 1974 that resulted in Richard Nixon resigning from the presidency.



6 A famous youth organization in the United States that helps prepare boys to be good citizens and participate in outdoor activities.



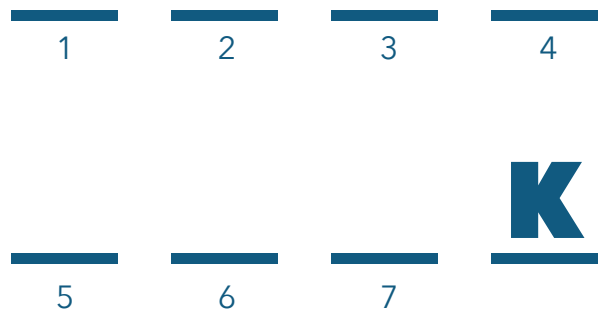
7 To voluntarily leave a job or position.



One of Gerald Ford's character attributes:

Our First Model President

Like most presidents, Gerald Ford was a lawyer and politician. Unlike other presidents, however, Ford was once a **fashion model**—which he did for some extra money. His handsome looks and athletic physique made him an ideal model. He even appeared on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1942.



Glossary

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.

Watergate: A major scandal from 1972 to 1974 that resulted in Richard Nixon resigning the presidency. Several people who worked with Nixon's staff broke into the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate Hotel. When investigators discovered Nixon tried to hide the connection between the burglars and his staff, Congress voted to impeach him, so he resigned.

Boy Scouts: A famous youth organization in the United States that helps prepare boys to be good citizens and participate in outdoor activities.

Eagle Scout: The highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouts.

Assassination: The killing of an important person, especially a country's leader.

Scandal: An event involving dishonest and/or illegal activity that provokes outrage.

Resign: To voluntarily leave a job or 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.

Inflation: When things that you buy, such as food, clothes, and other products, are more expensive.

Bland: Being unexciting but pleasant.

Fashion Model: Someone who is photographed wearing newly-designed clothes or using products. They are often considered good-looking and work for advertising companies that want to convince people to buy that product.

Sources

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Answers

FORD'S WIFE'S NICKNAME:
BETTY

GERALD FORD'S CHARACTER:

1 F A S H I O N M O D E L
2 A S S A S S I N A T I O N
3 P A R D O N
4 S C A N D A L
5 W A T E R G A T E
6 B O Y S C O U T S
7 R E S I G N

One of Gerald Ford's character attributes:

H A R D
1 2 3 4
W O R K
5 6 7

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