



Social Studies Virtual Learning

U.S. History

Lesson 34

May 7, 2020



US History:

Lesson #34: May 7

Government Corruption: The Election of 1972 and the Watergate Scandal

Learning Target: The learner will identify elements of government corruption in the Election of 1972 and the Watergate Scandal and explain how they impacted American voters.

Warm Up

Click on the link here and watch a clip

[Election of 1972](#)

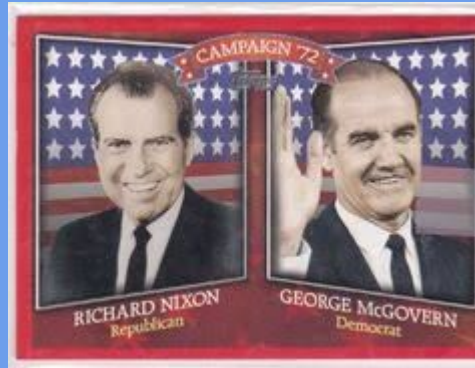
Richard Nixon's third time running for President of the United State was his charm.

- 1) Who was his opponent in this election?
- 2) What other story on election night went fairly unnoticed but would eventually lead to the death of his presidency?

Lesson

Watch the video clips and read the articles below.

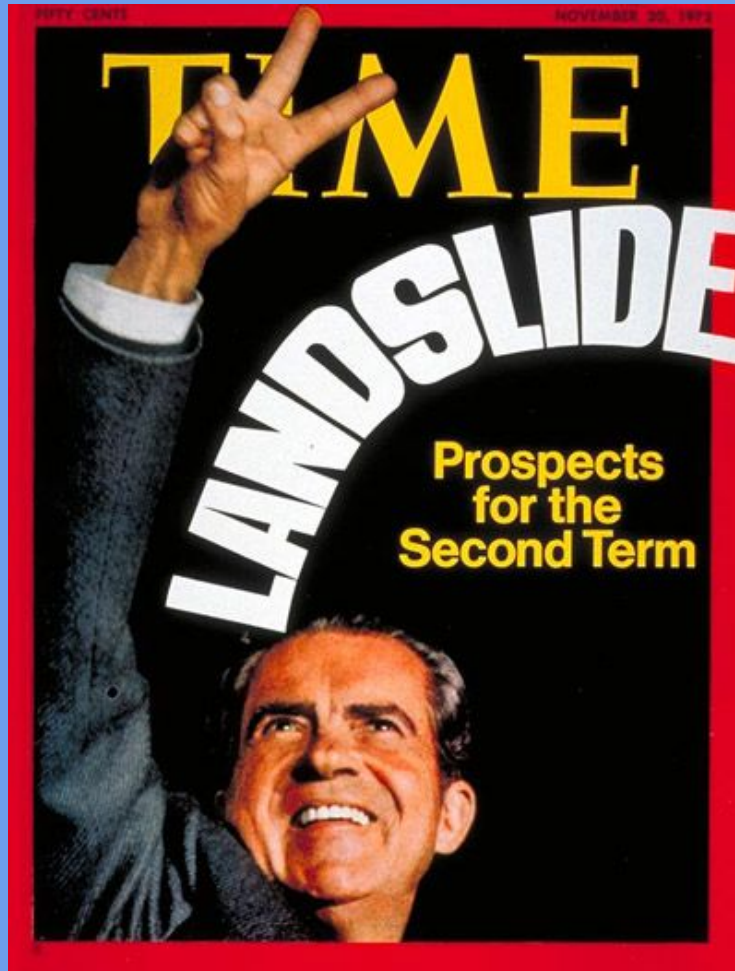
Election of 1972



Lesson

270 to Win

Politico

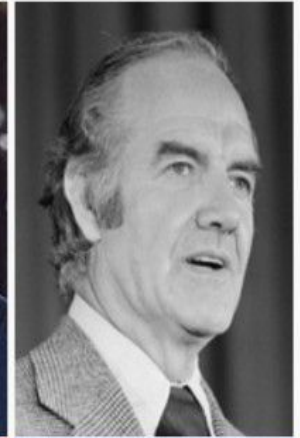
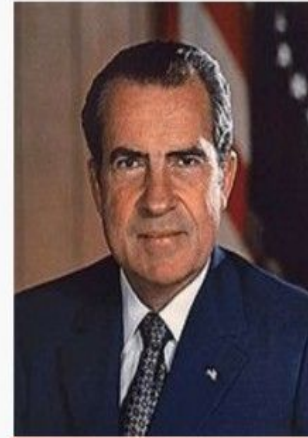


All 538 electoral votes of the Electoral College

270 electoral votes needed to win

Turnout

55.2%



Nominee

Richard Nixon

George McGovern

Party

Republican

Democratic

Home state

California

South Dakota

Running mate

Spiro Agnew

Sargent Shriver
(replacing Thomas Eagleton)

Electoral vote

520

17

States carried

49

1 + DC

Popular vote

47,168,710

29,173,222

Percentage

60.7%

37.5%

Assignment

Take out a piece of paper and label the assignment:
Lesson #34, May 7 - Nixon Watergate Scandal

- 1) What was the big challenge that McGovern faced leading up to the 1972 election?
- 2) What changed in the voting population prior to the 1972 election?
- 3) What was significant about Nixon's margin of victory in this election?

Lesson

Read the information below about the cover up that eventually unravelled the Nixon presidency and caused a surge of public distrust for public officials.

President Nixon and His White House



The Watergate scandal centered on the Nixon administration's attempt to cover up a burglary of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters at the Watergate office and apartment complex in Washington, DC. However, the Watergate story began long before the actual burglary. Many historians believe that Watergate truly began with the personalities of Richard Nixon and his advisers, and with the changing role of the presidency.

An Imperial Presidency

When Richard Nixon took office, the executive branch—as a result of the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War—had become the most powerful branch of government. In his book *The Imperial Presidency*, historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. argued that by the time Richard Nixon became president, the executive branch had taken on an air of imperial, or supreme, authority.

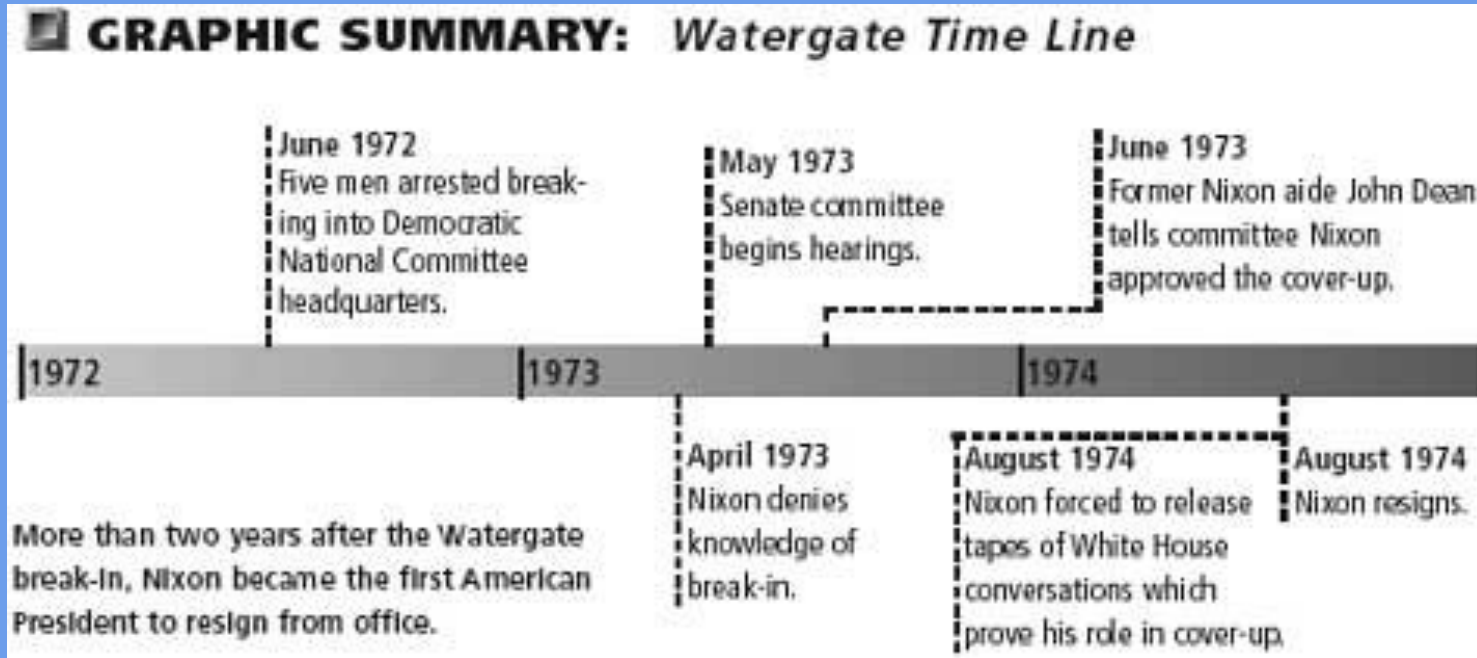
The Cover-Up

The cover-up quickly began. Workers shredded all incriminating documents in Haldeman's office. The White House, with President Nixon's consent, asked the CIA to urge the FBI to stop its investigations into the burglary on the grounds of national security. In addition, the CRP passed out nearly \$450,000 to the Watergate burglars to buy their silence after they were indicted in September 1972.

Throughout the 1972 campaign, the Watergate burglary generated little interest among the American public and media. Only the *Washington Post* and two of its reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, kept on the story. As the two men dug deeper into the Watergate break-in, a mysterious inside source helped them uncover the scandal. In a series of articles, the reporters uncovered information that linked numerous members of the administration to the burglary. The White House denied each new *Post* allegation. Upon learning of an upcoming story that tied him to the burglars, John Mitchell told Bernstein, "That's the most sickening thing I ever heard."

Lesson

Timeline of key events in the Nixon Watergate Scandal



Click on the link below to watch a summary of the Watergate scandal.

The Watergate Scandal: Timeline and Background (5:51)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHnmriyXYeg>

Lesson

The president then went on television and denied any attempt at a cover-up. He announced that he was appointing a new attorney general, Elliot Richardson, and was authorizing him to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate Watergate. "There can be no whitewash at the White House," Nixon said.

The president's reassurances, however, came too late. In May 1973 the Senate began its own investigation of Watergate. A special committee, chaired by Senator Samuel James Ervin of North Carolina, began to call administration officials to give testimony. Throughout the summer, millions of Americans sat attentively by their televisions as the "president's men" testified one after another.

Startling Testimony

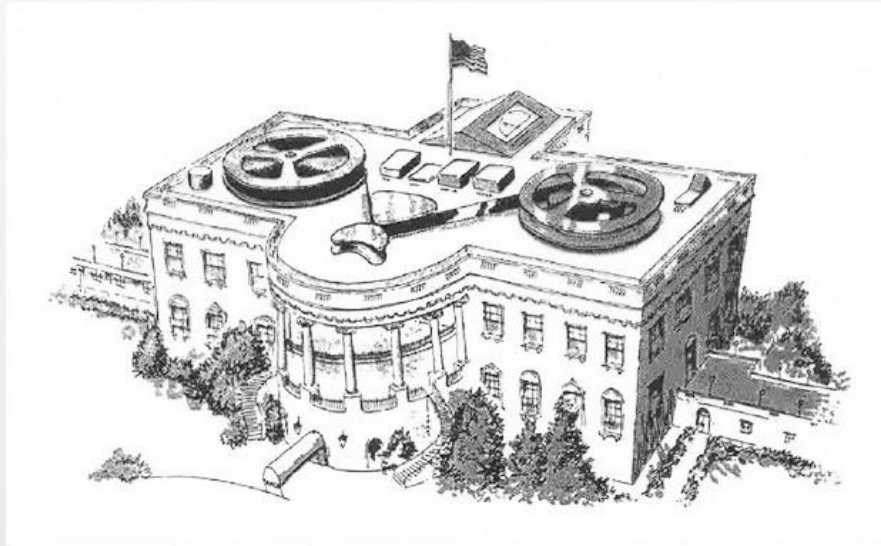
John Dean delivered the first bomb. In late June, during more than 30 hours of testimony, Dean provided a startling answer to Senator Howard Baker's repeated question, "What did the president know and when did he know it?" The former White House counsel declared that President Nixon had been deeply involved in the cover-up. Dean referred to one meeting in which he and the president, along with several advisers, discussed strategies for continuing the deceit.



Lesson

The White House Tapes

During the Watergate hearings, a bombshell exploded when it was revealed that President Nixon secretly tape-recorded all conversations in the Oval Office. Although Nixon hoped the tapes would one day help historians document the triumphs of his presidency, they were used to confirm his guilt.



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The Nixon White House tape recorder and tape from the 1970s

Even without holding the original tapes, the House Judiciary Committee determined that there was enough evidence to impeach Richard Nixon. On July 27, the committee approved three articles of impeachment, charging the president with obstruction of justice, abuse of power, and contempt of Congress for refusing to obey a congressional subpoena to release the tapes.

Lesson

The Effects of Watergate

4) Why was President Nixon charged with contempt of Congress?

- A) because he knew about the Watergate break-in**
- B) because Nixon leaked information to the press**
- C) because he refused to turn over his tapes claiming it was a threat to national security**
- D) because his administration was ordered to break the law**

The effects of Watergate have endured long after Nixon's resignation. Eventually, 25 members of the Nixon administration were convicted and served prison terms for crimes connected to Watergate. Along with the divisive war in Vietnam, Watergate produced a deep disillusionment with the "imperial" presidency. In the years following Vietnam and Watergate, the American public and the media developed a general cynicism about public officials that still exists today. Watergate remains the scandal and investigative story against which all others are measured.

Assignment

Continue your assignment on the Nixon Watergate Scandal

- 5) What happened in 1972 prior to the election?
- 6) What did the Senate decide to do in May of 1973?
- 7) Why did President Nixon eventually resign in August of 1974?
- 8) How did the Watergate scandal impact American voters in the years that followed?

Reflection

Thinking Exercise:

After completing this lesson reflect on the questions posed here.

- In what ways are there still questions and attitudes about distrusting politicians?
- What changes have been made to help restore voter confidence?

Additional Resources

Check out these links for
more information on this topic

The Watergate Scandal (1:45)

[Watergate in Two Minutes](#)

History vs. Richard Nixon (5:39)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MX_HYL6-0Co

The Watergate Scandal in 7 Minutes (7:09)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOY_KlrMsUg

President Richard Nixon Address Announcing Resignation (3:49)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEOGJJ7UKFM>

Answers

- 1) He changed his vice presidential candidate which made people believe that his campaign wasn't stable.
- 2) With the passage of the 26th amendment, the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 in the U.S.
- 3) Nixon received nearly 18 million more votes than McGovern. He still holds the record as having achieved the widest popular vote margin in any presidential election.
- 4) Why was President Nixon charged with contempt of Congress? because he refused to turn over his tapes claiming it was a threat to national security
- 5) What happened in 1972 prior to the election? Five men were arrested for breaking into the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Hotel.
- 6) What did the Senate decide to do in May of 1973? The Senate opened an investigation of the Watergate Scandal.
- 7) Why did President Nixon resign? He resigned in order to avoid being impeached and removed from office. Nixon claimed this would take government time and resources away from vital issues like peace in Vietnam and domestic economic issues related to inflation.
- 8) How did the Watergate scandal impact American voters in the years that followed? The American media and voters developed a cynical attitude and distrust of public officials in the years that followed Watergate.