



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 1, WEBISODE 16

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview

Richard Milhouse Nixon served as the thirty-seventh president of the United States when political and social upheaval and a war in Vietnam gripped the nation. Formerly vice president in the Eisenhower administration, Nixon bounced back from political obscurity in 1968 to capture the White House. His domestic agenda included revenue sharing, crime and environmental legislation, a round of conservative Supreme Court appointments, and the first moon landing in 1969.

Nixon's foreign policy accomplishments rank his tenure as one of the most dynamic in presidential history. Inheriting the war in Vietnam from previous administrations, Nixon first sought a military solution, but then turned to diplomacy to end United States' involvement. By approaching Communist China in a historic visit in 1972, Nixon drove a wedge into the powerful Soviet/Chinese block, which began to diplomatically isolate the various Communist dominated countries around the world. This strategy not only ended the war in Vietnam (1973) but also led to the first nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union and limited the spread of soviet influence in the Middle East.

For many years, Nixon's involvement in the cover-up of a politically motivated break-in known as the Watergate scandal overshadowed his accomplishments. Faced with the threat of impeachment over Watergate and sensitive to America's strained political resilience, Nixon resigned the presidency on August 9, 1974.

Teacher Directions

1. Share the following background information with students.

Nixon served as the thirty-seventh president of the United States from 1968 until his resignation on August 9, 1974. During his presidency, Nixon accomplished many significant domestic and foreign policy initiatives including some of the first environmental legislation; ending the war in Vietnam; opening relations with Communist China; the first nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union; and a 1974 negotiated peace between Israel, Egypt, and Syria. Nixon resigned under threat of impeachment



Let's Discuss

because of his role in a cover-up of the politically motivated break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate building in Washington, D.C.

2. Discuss the following tenets with the students and help them understand that even though a president may accomplish great things that person is still not above the law. Include the following points in the discussion.
 - In our democracy, no one is above the law, not even the president.
 - The president and all other elected officials are the servants of the people.
 - The consequences of the Watergate scandal on the country affected Nixon's presidency and his presidential legacy.
 - Nixon put the country above himself when he resigned.

Teacher Directions

Activity One:

1. Distribute the Student Sheet: *President Nixon History Cube* and explain the activity to the students.
2. Students work in small teams to discover more about the presidency of Richard Nixon using reference books, websites, and other resources such as Book 10: *All the People* of Joy Hakim's *A History of US* series. Students seek information to complete the information spaces (Domestic Policies, Foreign Policies, Greatest Failures, Greatest Contributions, and Personal Characteristics) on the President Nixon History Cube.
3. Students discuss the Nixon presidency, using their cubes to share information on each topic with the class.

Note to the Teacher: The History Cube can be enlarged or students can use cardboard boxes. Students may work on the History Cube in small learning teams with each student responsible for researching and recording information for one topic on the cube (e.g. Nixon's domestic policies or his personal characteristics). In other History Sleuth activities for Webisode 16, students can create cubes for the presidents from Nixon to G. W. Bush, which they can manipulate to compare and contrast the presidents, their policies, and legacies.



History Sleuth

History Sleuth, Cont.

Activity Two:

1. Hold up a coin. Ask the students to interpret the saying, "...two sides of the same coin." Help the students understand that the coin has different images and words on each side, and that the phrase means that an issue or an individual often has two very different sides.
2. Connect the personality and actions of Richard Nixon to the two-sided analogy. Help the students identify Nixon's brilliant foreign policies with China and Russia, his pragmatic ending of war in Vietnam, and his expert guidance of America as an active world power. Students contrast these accomplishments to Nixon's fear and hatred of political enemies, domestic protest, liberal ideas, and Communists.
3. Using the Student Sheet: *The Two Faces of Nixon*, the students work with a partner to identify Nixon's positive character traits and record them on one face. Students write Nixon's negative traits and actions on the other face.
4. Students discuss the two sides of Nixon's personality and form opinions concerning the positive or negative nature of his traits. Students link Nixon's positive and negative character traits with his accomplishments and failures as president.

Activity Three:

1. Review the events that led to the resignation of Nixon as president with the students. Include in the discussion: the Watergate break-in at the Democratic Committee headquarters, the role of the press in exposing the Watergate scandal to public scrutiny, the implication of Nixon underlings, the attempt of the Nixon administration to cover-up its involvement in the scandal, and the release of the subpoenaed tapes of key White House conversations that sealed Nixon's fate.
2. Explain the process of impeachment as outlined in the Constitution (only the House of Representatives can bring charges of misconduct; the Senate has the sole power to try the charges; in the case of the president, the chief justice resides as judge; conviction requires two-thirds vote of the members present; conviction removes president from office; criminal charges may be brought after conviction, according to law). Clarify with the students that impeachment means charges of misconduct. Charges of misconduct include treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.
3. Explain that with Nixon's criminal complicity widely accepted, the House Judiciary Committee voted articles of impeachment:

Richard M. Nixon has acted in a manner contrary to his trust as President and subversive of constitutional government....Wherefore Richard M. Nixon by such conduct warrants impeachment and trial and removal from

History Sleuth, Cont.

office.

Nixon decided to resign rather than face trial.

4. Make and show a transparency of the Student Sheet: *Nixon's Letter of Resignation*. Guide the students in analyzing the letter.

- To whom did Nixon address his letter of resignation? Why?
- Why did Secretary of State Henry Kissinger initial and write the time he received the letter?
- Why did Kissinger record the time on the letter?

Be sure students understand that a specific, recorded time for the transfer of presidential power and authority from Nixon to Vice President Gerald Ford was legally and politically essential.

5. Discuss with students the very simplicity of the letter of resignation—no explanations, reasons, or other information appears in the letter.

6. Use questions similar to the following to discuss what students think about Nixon's resignation:

- Do you think President Nixon should have resigned? Explain your opinion.
- If President Nixon had included his reasons for resigning in his letter, what do you think he would have written?
- President Nixon's resignation was a landmark event in our political history. What events in your lifetime would you describe as landmarks?
- What is the significance of Watergate to our history?
- Does an underlying distrust of the government linger in America today from the Watergate affair?
- What do you think Nixon's former chief of staff H. R. Haldeman (also implicated in the scandal) meant when he wryly observed, "Once the toothpaste is out of the tube, it's hard to get it back in."

Teacher Directions

1. With the students, review the accomplishments and failures of the Nixon presidency, such as his environmental legislation; ending the war in Vietnam; opening relations with Communist China; the first nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union; the 1974 negotiated peace between Israel, Egypt, and Syria; and his role in the Watergate cover-up that led to his



What do you
Think?

What Do You Think,
Continued.



impeachment and resignation.

2. Students, in small teams, speculate about Nixon's legacy as president.
 - For what will Nixon be remembered and why?
 - Will he be remembered for his positive accomplishment or for his tragic involvement in the Watergate scandal?
3. After the discussion, the students write individual paragraph entries for a history book on how they would have Nixon's presidency remembered.
4. Students share their responses with the class in a discussion or post the paragraphs on a class bulletin board called the Nixon Legacy.

Teacher Directions

1. Explain to the students that during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s the United States viewed the Soviet Union (Russia and the former Soviet Republics) and Communist China as a gigantic Communist bloc that threatened the world with Communist expansion and domination. With the students locate the former Soviet Union and China on a classroom map. If necessary, explain communism and how it differs from democracy and capitalism.
2. Ask the students what the phrase "divide and conquer" means? Explain that the Nixon administration used such a technique with two large Communist threats: the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union.
3. Display a transparency of the Student Sheet: *Nixon and the Communists*. Discuss the quotes from Nixon's resignation speech with the students.

"We have unlocked the doors that for a quarter of a century stood between the United States and the People's Republic of China. We must now ensure that the one quarter of the world's people who live in the People's Republic of China will be and remain not our enemies, but our friends."

"We have opened new relation with the Soviet Union. We must continue to develop and expand that new relationship so that the two strongest nations of the world live together in cooperation, rather than confrontation."

4. Ask the students to hypothesize:
 - What might be the effect of making friendly diplomatic gestures to two large allied powers viewed as enemies?
5. Help the students construct a playground analogy or other personal analogy to illustrate the divide and conquer diplomacy.
6. Help the students understand that the Nixon administration used friendly

Moving Toward Freedom,
Continued.



Connections

diplomacy to the Communist Chinese to create distrust and a split in Soviet-Chinese relations.

7. Discuss the present status of the former Soviet Union. If possible, students locate information on the Internet about the fall of Communist power in the Soviet Union.
8. Ask the students to speculate:
 - How did Nixon's policy move the Soviet Union toward freedom?
 - What might be the long-term effects of this policy?

Teacher Directions

Art — Students create a Nixon Presidential Campaign poster for his second term.

Language Arts — Students as Nixon speechwriters compose the text of a paragraph speech for Nixon's resignation broadcast. As speechwriters, the students decide what Nixon should emphasize about the accomplishments of his presidency.

Science/Library — The early seventies witnessed a number of practical scientific and technological innovations. Students research the first inexpensive pocket calculator, the CAT scan, lasers, holograms, digital watches, and commercial video games.

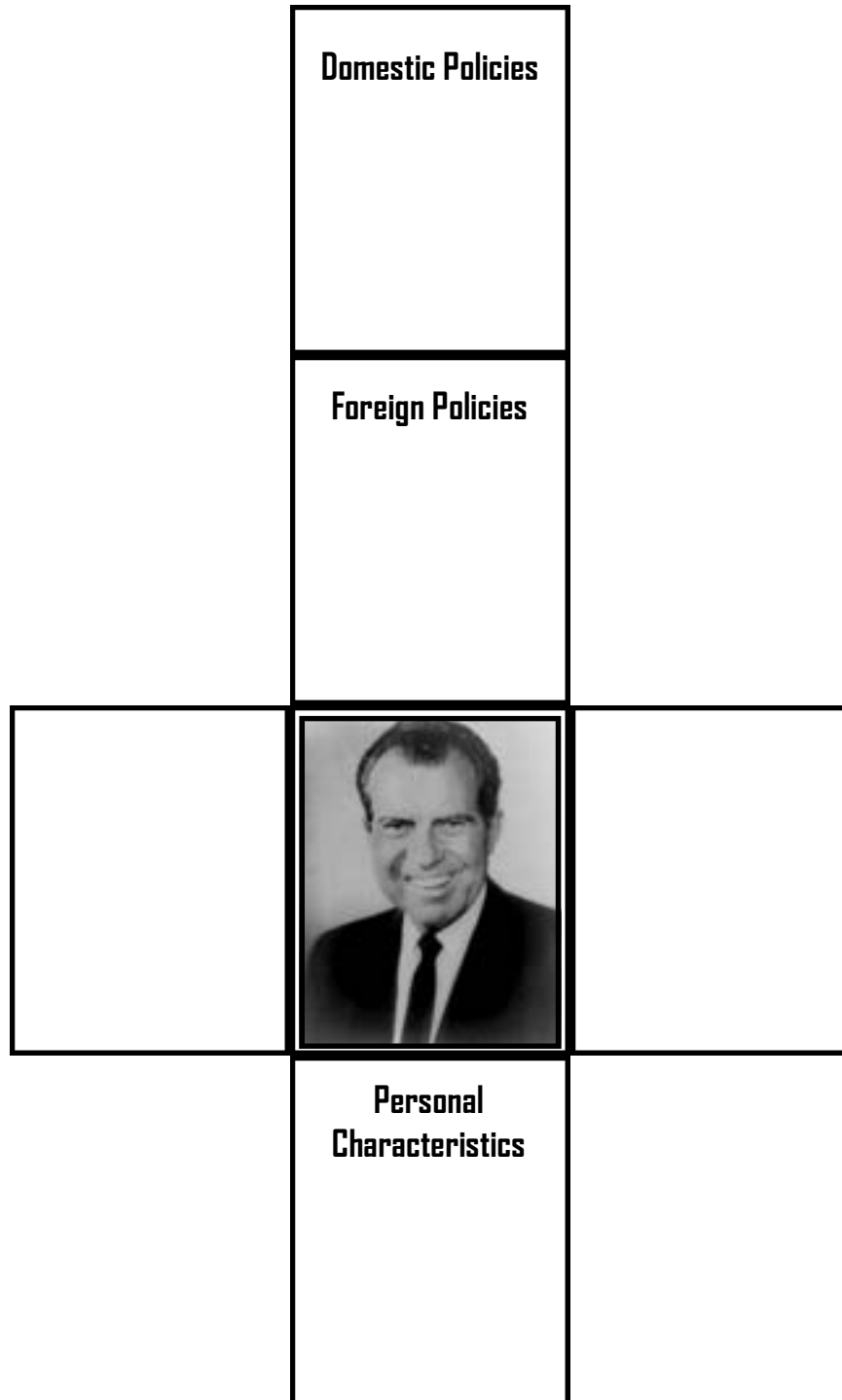
Physical Education/Music — Students listen to the popular music of the seventies and try some disco dancing.

Physical Education — Students read about some of the many outstanding sports stars of the seventies such as Roberto Clemente, Bobby Orr, and Billie Jean King.

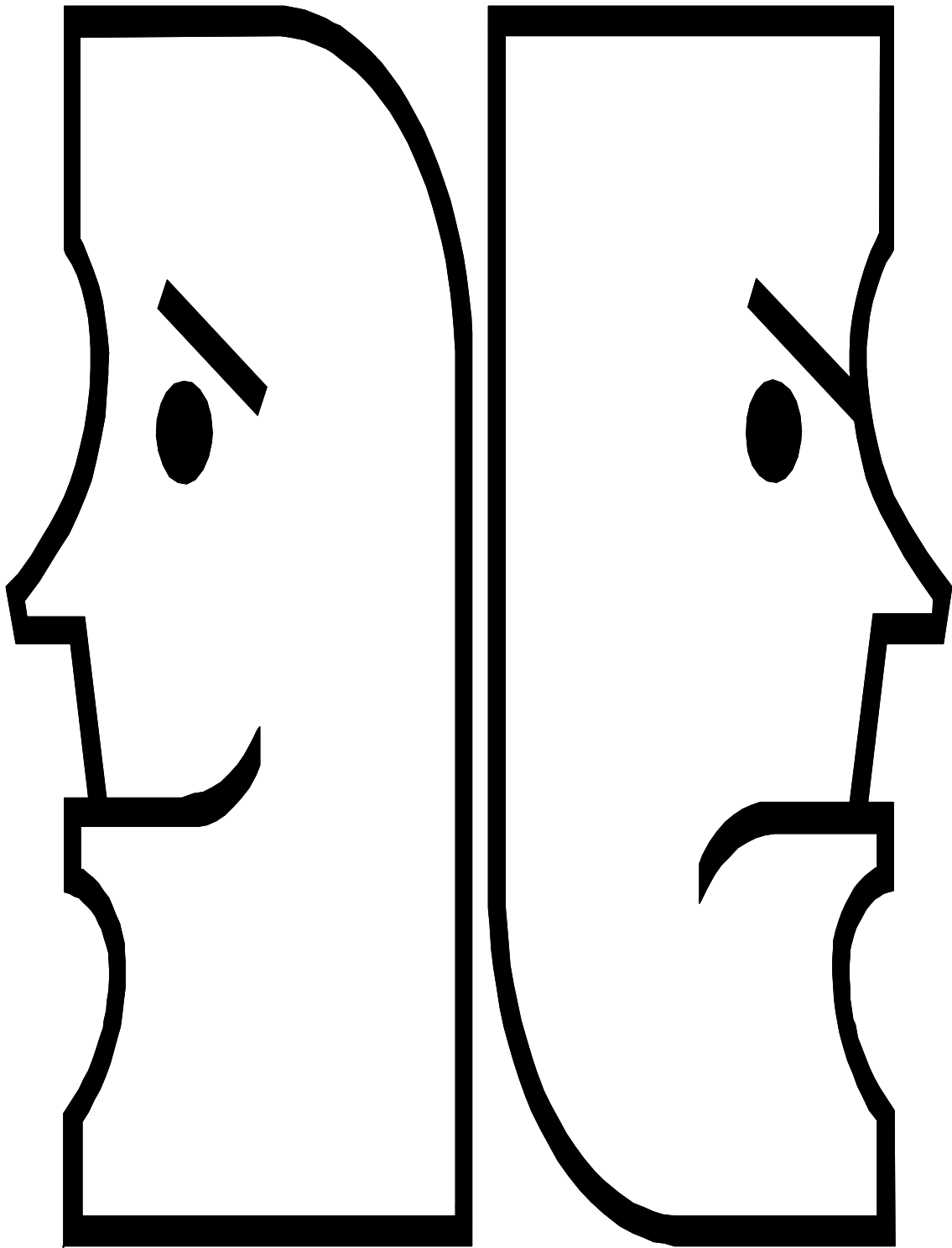
Music — Students listen to the music of the seventies—glam rock, punk music, and reggae. Students discuss rock music today and how those earlier influences can be heard in some of the music of current stars.

Local History/Library — Students interview individuals who remember the Watergate scandal. Students record these oral histories and present the tapes to the school library.

President Nixon History Cube



The Two Faces of Nixon



Nixon's Letter of Resignation

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 9, 1974

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I hereby resign the Office of President of the
United States.

Sincerely,



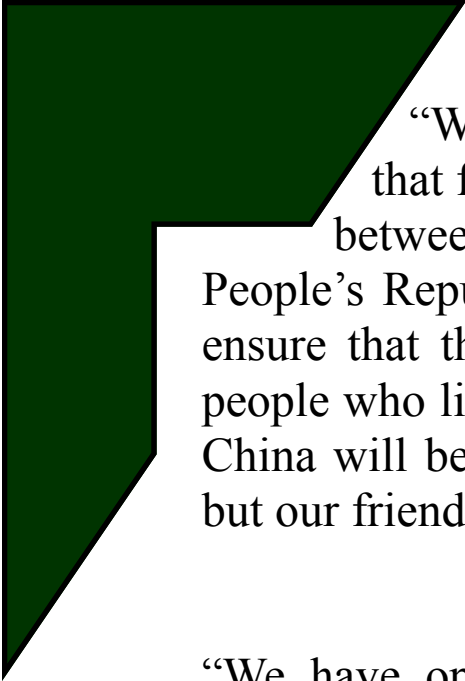
The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
The Secretary of State
Washington, D. C. 20520

11:35 AM

HK

Nixon and the Communists

Quotes from Nixon's resignation speech:



“We have unlocked the doors that for a quarter of a century stood between the United States and the People's Republic of China. We must now ensure that the one quarter of the world's people who live in the People's Republic of China will be and remain not our enemies, but our friends.”

“We have opened new relations with the Soviet Union. We must continue to develop and expand that new relationship so that the two strongest nations of the world live together in cooperation, rather than confrontation.”

