

Summary: Life in the 1960s

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected President. Kennedy wanted Americans to serve their country. He began the Peace Corps to send volunteers to countries that needed help.

While Kennedy was President, the United States got into the space race. The Soviet Union won the race. In 1957, a Soviet rocket sent Sputnik I into space. It was the first human-made object to circle Earth. In April 1961, a Soviet cosmonaut named Yuri Gagarin circled Earth in a space capsule. The next month, Alan Shepard became the first American to go into space. In February 1962, John Glenn circled Earth. In 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were the first humans to land on the moon.

Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. Vice President Lyndon Johnson became President. He created the Great Society programs to help Americans in need.

The Vietnam War

Vietnam was split in two. North Vietnam was Communist. South Vietnam was capitalist. North Vietnam supported communists who wanted to overthrow the South Vietnamese government. The United States sent military advisors and supplies to help South Vietnam. Then they sent soldiers to fight.

Some Americans thought the United States should fight to stop communism. Many other Americans disagreed. They thought the United States should not interfere in a civil war. They held demonstrations to protest the war.

In 1969, Richard Nixon became President. He brought some soldiers home, but U.S. planes increased bombing in North Vietnam. They began bombing Cambodia. In 1973, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States agreed to a cease-fire. The American soldiers returned home. The North Vietnamese defeated the South Vietnamese in 1975. More than 55,000 U.S. soldiers and millions of Vietnamese people died in the war.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

space race *noun*, a struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union to be the first country to send people into space

demonstration *noun*, a large gathering of people who want to tell the public and the government their opinion

cease-fire *noun*, an agreement to stop all fighting



After You Read

REVIEW Who won the race to send a person into space? Underline the sentence that tells you about the first person to circle Earth.

REVIEW Why did many people in the United States protest against the war in Vietnam? Draw a box around the sentence that tells you the answer.