

Summary: Life in the 1960s

The Kennedy Years

John F. Kennedy was the youngest President ever elected in the United States. He believed people, including young people, could make the world better. He started a program called the New Frontier to make life in the United States better. He also started the Peace Corps to help people in other countries.

The United States and the Soviet Union were in a space race to see which country could send people into space. In 1957, the Soviet Union sent *Sputnik I* around the earth. *Sputnik I* was the first object made by people ever to circle the earth.

In 1961, the Soviets sent the first person, Yuri Gagarin, into space to orbit the earth. The United States hurried to do the same. A month after Gagarin, Alan Shepard was the first American in space. John Glenn was the first American to go around the earth in 1962. Americans Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin went to the moon in 1969.

A Changing Nation

President Kennedy never saw the moon landing because he was assassinated in 1963. Americans were shocked and sad. Vice President Lyndon Johnson became President. He started a program called the Great Society to help people in need. He said there should be a “war on poverty.” The Great Society program provided food, housing, medical care, and education to people who needed them. It also trained people for jobs.

Robert F. Kennedy, the brother of President Kennedy, ran for President in 1968. He too was assassinated, leaving the nation stunned.

In the 1960s, the baby boom generation became teenagers. They wanted to change American culture as well as politics. Rock ‘n’ roll was the most popular music of young people. The Beatles became the world’s most famous band. Artists such as Andy Warhol made “pop art” with designs of every objects, comic strips, and advertisements.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

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

generation *noun*, a group of people born and living at about the same time



After You Read

REVIEW Who was the first person to orbit the earth? Circle the name of the person.

REVIEW What kind of music was most popular with teenagers during the 1960s? Circle the words that tells what kind of music was most popular in the 1960s.