

Summary: Life in the 1960s

Kennedy and Johnson

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.

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 also believed the government should help people. He started a program called the “Great Society” to help people in need. He said there should be a “war on poverty.” The welfare system was started to help give food, housing, medical care, and education to people who needed them. It also trained people for jobs.

A Changing Culture

In the 1960s, the baby boom generation became teenagers. They liked a new kind of music called rock ‘n’ roll, sung by American and British bands. In the 1950s, musicians like Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry helped create this new music. In the 1960s, teenagers listened to American groups such as the Beach Boys and the Supremes. The British band The Beatles became famous. Artists and sculptors made “Pop art” with colorful designs. Artists made fun of American’s interest in television, magazines, advertising, and buying things. The baby boom generation wanted to change the world.

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

welfare *noun*, a government program that helps people who are in need

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.