

“How much do you know about JFK’s presidency?” President John F. Kennedy Quiz



Image left: President John F. Kennedy, 1961. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

This year marks the 50th anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s assassination in Dallas, TX which occurred on November 22, 1963. To commemorate his life and presidency, take this short quiz and see how much you know about John F. Kennedy’s actions and choices as America’s 35th president.

Directions: Please choose the answer that best completes each statement.

- 1. John F. Kennedy used the following term to define and describe the priorities, policies, and programs of his presidency:**
 - (a) “New Freedom”
 - (b) “New Deal”
 - (c) “New Frontier”
 - (d) “Great Society”
- 2. Before his election to the presidency in 1960, John F. Kennedy had done all of the following except:**
 - (a) Authored books on *Why England Slept* and *Profiles in Courage*.
 - (b) Served as a naval officer in World War II.
 - (c) Was elected to both the United States House of Representatives and Senate.
 - (d) Served as United States Ambassador to Great Britain.
- 3. During the 1960 presidential race between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, all of the following political milestones occurred except:**
 - (a) The election of the first Roman Catholic to the presidency.
 - (b) The youngest person ever elected to the presidency.

- (c) The first televised presidential debate.
- (d) The largest winning margin ever in both the popular vote and the Electoral College.

4. The United States policy for greater economic growth and democratic reform in Latin America under President John F. Kennedy was known as as:

- (a) Alliance for Progress
- (b) Good Neighbor Policy
- (c) Dollar Diplomacy
- (d) Watchful Waiting

5. The primary purpose of President John F. Kennedy's promise and project to successfully land an American on the moon by the end of 1960s was to:

- (a) Stimulate the American economy with additional investment and job opportunities.
- (b) Enhance American prestige, prominence, and power in the space race and Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union.
- (c) Acquire greater scientific knowledge and understanding of the solar system and universe.
- (d) Establish a permanent manned space station for scientific experiments and resource exploration.

6. A fundamental and pivotal guiding principle of the Kennedy administration was:

- (a) Taxes should be raised to balance the federal budget and stimulate the nation's economy.
- (b) Tariffs should be increased to reduce foreign competition and protect American industries.
- (c) The federal government should provide economic and social assistance and opportunity to the less fortunate.
- (d) Major industries in the United States should be nationalized in the public interest.

- 7. All of President John F. Kennedy's legislative proposals were rejected by Congress except:**
- (a) An increase in the federal minimum wage to \$1.25 per hour.
 - (b) Public health insurance for elderly Americans through the Social Security system (Medicare).
 - (c) A civil rights law to enable the federal government to combat racial discrimination and segregation.
 - (d) Establishment of a Department of Housing and Urban Affairs in the President's Cabinet.
- 8. President John F. Kennedy ordered several hundred federal marshals and several thousand federal troops to enable the desegregation of:**
- (a) Bus and railway stations in Birmingham, Alabama.
 - (b) The University of Mississippi.
 - (c) Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.
 - (d) Lunch counters in department stores in Greensboro and Raleigh, North Carolina.
- 9. In the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961), President John F. Kennedy supported the overthrow of the communist government in:**
- (a) Cuba
 - (b) Dominican Republic
 - (c) Guatemala
 - (d) Haiti
- 10. When the United States discovered in 1962 that the Soviet Union was building underground nuclear missile launch sites in Cuba, President John F. Kennedy responded by ordering:**
- (a) Surgical American air strikes against the Soviet missile sites in Cuba.
 - (b) The installation of American nuclear weapons in Turkey near the border of the Soviet Union.
 - (c) A naval blockade and quarantine of Cuba until the Soviet missiles were removed from the island.
 - (d) An invasion of Cuba by American military forces.

11. All of the following were subsequent outcomes of the Cuban missile crisis except:

- (a) The United States ended its naval blockade and quarantine as well as promised not to invade Cuba.
- (b) The Soviet Union agreed to remove its nuclear missiles from Cuba.
- (c) Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev was removed from political power, and the Soviet Union embarked on a program of military expansion.
- (d) The United States abandoned its naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

12. All of the following were humanitarian programs initiated by President Kennedy's administration except:

- (a) Peace Corps
- (b) War on Poverty
- (c) Special Olympics
- (d) Alliance for Progress

13. "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty."

–John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961

Based on this quotation, the goal of President John F. Kennedy's foreign policy was:

- (a) Overseas territorial expansion
- (b) Isolationism
- (c) Appeasement
- (d) Containment of communism

14. The primary objective of the Peace Corps, established by President John F. Kennedy, is to:

- (a) Provide job opportunities for educated young Americans to teach literacy in the nation's cities.
- (b) Create student exchange programs between the United States and other nations to enhance multicultural understanding.
- (c) Prevent the spread of communism into Western Europe through diplomacy and programs of economic assistance and sanctions.

(d) Utilize the skills and talents of young American volunteers to improve literacy, health care, and agricultural production in developing nations.

15. Although the decade of the 1960s was an era of significant technological advancement and social progress, it was also a period of great turmoil, unrest, and at times tragedy, as evidenced by the following events except:

(a) The assassination of President John F. Kennedy, presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy, and civil rights leaders Medgar Evers, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X.

(b) Widespread racial tensions, demonstrations, and riots in many American cities and anti-Vietnam War protests on college campuses.

(c) Congressional hearings, chaired by Senator Joseph McCarthy, alleging extensive communist influence and conspiracy in federal government agencies and national media.

(d) Increased drug usage by American youth and rising levels of poverty and unemployment in many urban areas.

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President John F. Kennedy Quiz

Answer Key and Historical Explanations

1. (C) “New Frontier”

Upon his nomination for president at the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, California, on July 13, 1960, John F. Kennedy stated: “We stand today on the edge of a New Frontier—the frontier of the 1960s—a frontier of unknown opportunities and perils—a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats.”



President John F. Kennedy giving his inaugural address, January 20, 1961 (Army Signal Corps photograph, courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum)

In this speech he challenged the American people to fulfill their potential for greatness through committed determination and sacrifice.

Subsequently, in his Inaugural Address on January 20, 1961, Kennedy declared “that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” To Kennedy, the “New Frontier” of the 1960s meant challenges and opportunities for the nation in the areas of science, technology, and social relationships (especially civil rights).

2. (D) Served as United States Ambassador to Great Britain.

John F. Kennedy graduated from Harvard University with an undergraduate degree in political science. He authored two books, *Why England Slept*, which

analyzed and assessed Great Britain's appeasement of Nazi Germany, and *Profiles in Courage*, which described the courageous decisions and deeds of American Senators. Kennedy also was elected to the House of Representatives in 1946 and to the United States Senate in 1952. He never served as United States Ambassador to Great Britain. His father, Joseph Kennedy, served in that post during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

3. (D) The largest winning margin ever in both the popular vote and the Electoral College.



Televised debate between John Kennedy and Richard Nixon, 1960. (National Park Service)

The presidential election of 1960 was one of the closest in United States history, with Democratic candidate John F. Kennedy defeating the Republican Richard M. Nixon by slightly more than 100,000 popular votes.

The Electoral College vote was also close, with 303 for Kennedy and 219 for Nixon. John F. Kennedy was the first Roman Catholic and the youngest person elected president at age 43.

The presidential election of 1960 introduced a new campaign phenomenon with a series of four television debates which were viewed by eighty million Americans, many of whom saw Kennedy as more appealing, relaxed, vital, and youthful than Nixon, who appeared to many viewers as paler, more tense, and more tired than his opponent. These debates highlighted the importance of appearance and image in the television age.

4. (A) Alliance for Progress

President John F. Kennedy created a program of economic assistance, growth, and democratic reform in Latin America (except Cuba). This program was

called Alliance for Progress, and allocated twenty billion dollars in economic assistance over a ten-year period to improve living conditions and job development opportunities as well as to reduce poverty in Latin America. However, in many instances this economic assistance failed to reach the masses of poor people and was diverted to the autocratic political governments and ruling classes in many Latin American nations. Ultimately, Congress permitted the program to expire. The “Good Neighbor Policy” was the foreign policy initiative of President Franklin D. Roosevelt toward Latin America. “Dollar Diplomacy” was a program of diplomatic and military assistance to support American business interests in the Caribbean by President William H. Taft in the early twentieth century. Taft also encouraged American banks to increase their loans to several Caribbean countries and committed American military forces, whenever necessary, to protect American investments and property in the Caribbean. Taft’s successor, President Woodrow Wilson, adopted the approach of “Watchful Waiting” and continued Taft’s commitment to intervene in the Caribbean whenever there was the perceived need to restore peace, order, and protect American business interests.

5. (B) Enhance American prestige, prominence, and power in the space race and Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union’s initial lead in the space race, with one of its astronauts first orbiting Earth in April, 1961, deeply concerned the United States. During the Cold War the two superpowers competed for dominance in an economic, political, and scientific rivalry known as the Cold War. In May 1961, President John F. Kennedy declared, “This nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to Earth.”

With the support of Congress and the American people, twenty-five billion dollars was allocated to launch a program that, if successful, would enhance American prestige, prominence, and power in its Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union. In July 1969, the American spacecraft *Apollo 11* successfully transported three American astronauts from Earth to the moon.

Neil Armstrong stepped onto the surface of the moon and declared, "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." The inscription on the plaque left on the moon by the American astronauts simply stated, "We came in peace."



"Men Walk on Moon," by John Noble Wilford, *New York Times*, full text available online at *New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0720.html#article.

6. (C) The federal government should provide economic and social assistance and opportunity to the less fortunate.

During the presidency of John F. Kennedy, tariffs were reduced by the Trade Expansion Act (1962), the minimum wage was raised to \$1.25 per hour, and federal funds were approved for urban renewal, financial assistance, and educational training for impoverished families with passage of the Area Development Act (1961) and the Manpower Development and Training Act (1962). President Kennedy also submitted proposed legislation to Congress for tax reductions, federal aid to elementary and secondary education, medical care for the aged under the Social Security program, and civil rights protection for African Americans against racial discrimination, segregation, and denial of voting rights, especially in the south. These latter proposals were subsequently enacted by Congress during the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson.

7. (A) An increase in the federal minimum wage to \$1.25 per hour.

During the Kennedy administration, Congress approved an increase in the minimum wage to \$1.25 per hour. However, a coalition of congressional Republicans and conservative southern Democrats steadfastly and successfully

opposed Kennedy's reform proposals for Medicare health insurance for the elderly, the establishment of a Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, federal aid to elementary and secondary education, and civil rights legislation to enable the Federal government to protect voting rights and combat racial discrimination and segregation toward African Americans, especially in southern states. As stated above, these latter proposals were subsequently enacted by Congress during the presidential administration of Lyndon B. Johnson.

8. (B) The University of Mississippi.



Durham, North Carolina, 1941. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

In 1962, an African American student named James Meredith attempted to enroll at the all-white University of Mississippi, but he was denied admission by both the university and the governor of Mississippi. After repeated refusals and continued threats by white crowds at the university, President Kennedy ordered several hundred federal marshals and several thousand federal troops to integrate the university and protect Meredith's civil rights. Meredith became the first African American to attend classes and ultimately graduate from the University of Mississippi. Subsequently, other all-white southern colleges and universities began admitting African American students.

9. (A) Cuba

Soon after, John F. Kennedy became president, he and his advisors met with a group of Cuban exiles (residing in Florida and Guatemala) who had received assistance and training from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to attempt to overthrow the communist dictator of Cuba, Fidel Castro, who had recently seized American-owned businesses and properties in Cuba. Castro had received support from the Soviet Union, and the United States believed that Castro's communist government (ninety miles from American shores) was a threat to national security. President Kennedy hoped that these Cuban exiles could overthrow Castro without air and military support from the United States. In April 1961, nearly 1,500 Cuban exiles invaded the southern coast of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Within three days they were decisively defeated by a large, well-armed, pro-Castro Cuban force of 14,000 soldiers. The Bay of Pigs invasion was a complete failure, both in its planning and execution, and a great embarrassment for President Kennedy, who took responsibility for its outcome.

10. (C) A naval blockade and quarantine of Cuba until the Soviet missiles were removed from the island.

In October 1962, United States military reconnaissance airplanes photographed the construction and presence of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. These photographs showed the installation of launching pads with missiles containing nuclear warheads that could reach as far north as Canada and as far south as Peru. President Kennedy decided against a military air strike and a direct invasion of Cuba. Instead, he ordered a naval blockade and quarantine of Cuba to intercept Soviet ships and prevent the delivery of missiles and related military materials. Kennedy also demanded that Soviet ships turn back and that the missiles already in Cuba be removed.

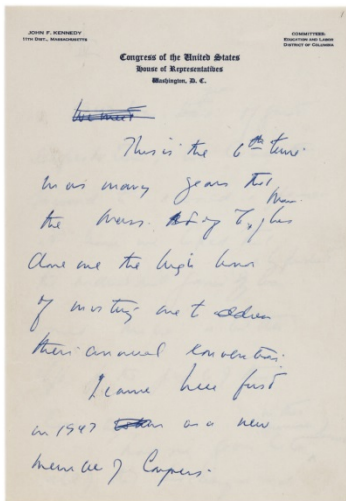
11. (D) The United States abandoned its naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In resolution of this confrontation, President Kennedy accepted the offer of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to turn the Soviet ships around and remove the existing nuclear missiles from the island in return for an American promise to end its naval blockade as well as not to invade Cuba in the future. As a result of this agreement, Khrushchev was later removed from political power by the Russian Communist Party leadership, and the Soviet Union embarked on a program of military expansion. The United States continued to maintain its naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

12. (B) War on Poverty

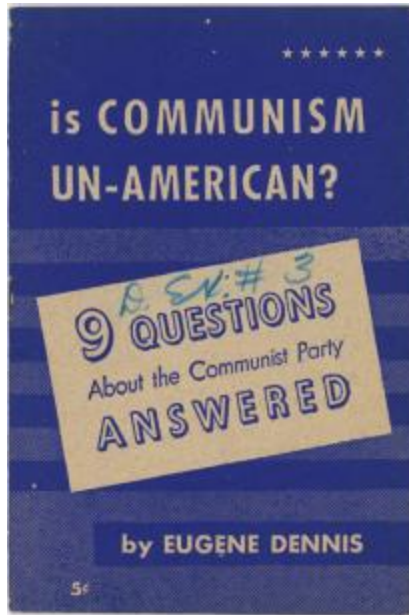
The War on Poverty was initiated by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of his Great Society program. The following programs were initiated during the Kennedy administration: the Peace Corps, the Special Olympics, and the Alliance for Progress.

13. (D) Containment of communism



John F. Kennedy, Notes for an address on the containment of Communism, ca. August 12, 1952. (Gilder Lehrman Collection)

The major foreign policy of the Kennedy presidential administration during the Cold War era focused on the containment of communism from spreading to Western Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, Vietnam, and Southeast Asia. During Kennedy's presidency, he confronted specific threats of communist expansion—in Germany at the Berlin Wall, in Laos and Vietnam in Southeast Asia, and with the erection of missiles with nuclear warheads on the island of Cuba. Danger of communist expansion also existed in other parts of Latin America, Western Europe, and Africa.



Cover of *Is Communism Un-American: 9 Questions about the Communist Party Answered*, by Eugene Dennis (New York, New Century Publishers, 1947). (National Archives)

Isolationism and neutrality were initially established by President George Washington and evolved and influenced US foreign policy through the nineteenth century. The US pursued overseas expansion in the late 1890s and in the early twentieth century before World War I. Appeasement was adopted by Great Britain and France toward Nazi Germany at the Munich Conference in 1938, with Great Britain yielding to Adolf Hitler's demand to annex the Sudetenland.

14. (D) Utilize the skills and talents of young American volunteers to improve literacy, health care, and agricultural production in developing nations.

President John F. Kennedy created the Peace Corps as “an organization which will recruit and train American volunteers, sending them abroad to work with the people of other nations.” The Peace Corps reflected the theme of President Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, in which he stated, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” Members of the Peace Corps go abroad to improve literacy, health care, and agricultural production in developing nations.

15. (C) Congressional hearings, chaired by Senator Joseph McCarthy, alleging extensive communist influence and conspiracy in federal government agencies and national media.

While the decade of the 1960s was an era of significant technological advancement and social progress, it was also a period of great turmoil, unrest, and at times tragedy. The decade saw outer space exploration, important

medical discoveries, and the advancement of social movements for equality and civil rights for women, African Americans, and other minority groups.



Photograph of a female demonstrator offering a flower to a military police officer, October 21, 1967. (National Archives and Records Administration)



*Honor King: End Racism!
broadside, April 8, 1968.
(Gilder Lehrman Collection)*

On the tragic side were assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy, and three significant civil rights leaders, Medgar Evers, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X. Additionally, there were widespread racial tensions, demonstrations, and riots in many American cities and anti-Vietnam War protests on college campuses, as well as increased drug usage among American youth and rising levels of poverty and unemployment in many urban areas. The congressional hearings, chaired by Senator Joseph McCarthy, alleging extensive communist influence and conspiracy in the federal government agencies and the nation's media, occurred during the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s.