

US History

An Age of Civil Disobedience

Learning Target:

I can analyze the events of the election of 1968 after the removal of LBJ from the race.

3. The Year 1968

Timeline of 1968 –

January 1968	– The Tet Offensive
March 12, 1968	– New Hampshire Primary victory for Eugene McCarthy
March 31, 1968	– Lyndon Johnson declares he will not seek re-election
April 4, 1968	– Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, TN
June 4, 1968	– Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles, CA
August 1968	– The Chicago Democratic Convention and the Chicago Riots

The New Hampshire Primary –

-A stunning victory for Senator Eugene McCarthy of New Hampshire over LBJ

Eugene McCarthy –

- Had announced his candidacy in November of 1967
- Was the peace or dove candidate
- Was being backed by many college students and anti-war radicals
- Primary goal was to end the Vietnam War immediately

The Election –

- Students from across the nation came to New Hampshire to campaign
- Slogan was “Get Clean For Gene”

The Results –

- LBJ received 49% of the votes
- McCarthy received 42% of the vote plus write in votes bring his total to 50%
- What would happen in a dove state like California
- Senator Robert F. Kennedy announced his plans to also challenge LBJ

“This was an amazing showing for an almost unknown senator against an incumbent president, especially in a conservative, hawkish state.”

Lyndon Johnson Refuses Re-election –

- LBJ shocked the nation
- Four years earlier LBJ had received the greatest majority of the popular vote ever
- Now he was calling an end to his political career

Television Address:

“I am taking the first step to deescalate the conflict in Vietnam. I have ordered our aircraft to make no attacks on North Vietnam. There is division in the American house now. Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president.” – Lyndon Johnson

The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy –

The Assassination –

- Kennedy had just won a big victory in California in the Democratic primary
- Kennedy was now clearly going to win the Democratic nomination
- While walking through the kitchen area of the LA hotel he had just delivered his victory speech RFK was shot and killed

The Assassin –

- Sirhan B. Sirhan
- A young Jordanian Arab immigrant
- Trying to make a political statement about RFK’s support of the state of Israel

The Chicago Democratic Convention & Riots –

The Students Arrive –

- Over 10,000 students had come to Chicago to protest the Democratic Party’s Vietnam policies
- Wanted Eugene McCarthy rather than vice-president Humphrey who was to receive the nomination
- The students camped out in Grant Park

The City & The Police –

- Richard Daley – The mayor who was determined to keep order
- City refused to issue protest permits during the convention
- Heavy police protection for the convention including 7500 National Guard

The Riots –

- Students intended to march from Grant Park down Michigan Blvd.
- The police had foreseen this tactic and blocked Michigan Blvd.
- The two confronted each other in front of the Hilton Hotel
- The students were not intimidated by the police and kept marching at them
- Many chanted Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh as they marched
- The police then struck with startling ferocity and put down the protest

“The police attacked with tear gas, mace, and clubs. Lines of 20 to 30 policemen moved into the crowd beating demonstrators with clubs. Demonstrators began to flee and run away. The police chased people down into Grant Park and beat them up.”

-A witness at the Hilton Hotel

It was close to actual warfare. The police had been spat on and pelted with bricks, bottles, and balloons filled with urine all week. They had been called pigs and their squad cars had been smashed. For two days bearded boys and long-haired girls had taunted them, insulted the American flag, and had ridiculed the president of the United States of America. Now the police would even the score with violence.”

-One account of the Chicago Riots

The Media –

- Television cameras their to cover the convention caught the riots & violence
- American viewers were absolutely shocked
- A deeply distressing event for the public to witness
- Many wondered how the US had evolved into such a lawless and divided country

Richard Nixon Becomes President –

Richard Nixon –

- Republican
- Appealed to the “Silent Majority” and called for “Peace with Honor”

Hubert Humphrey –

- Democrat
- Chances hurt by the Democratic convention in Chicago

George Wallace –

- Independent candidate

-Richard Nixon wins the election in November of 1968