



Election of 1960: A Vision for the Future TEACHER GUIDE

Lesson Overview

This lesson uses primary source analysis and exploration to examine how the two main issues of the election of 1960—the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement—were interrelated in the visions offered about America’s future by the two candidates and how Kennedy made policy shifts on both issues over the course of his short presidency. It is designed for students currently studying U.S. history or government in the classroom and scaled to the 11th grade TEKS. Lessons can also be used with younger students with some modifications.

The lesson is designed to be completed in a single 45- to 60-minute class period.



Essential Question

To what extent can the election of 1960 be seen as a barometer of Americans’ views about the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War, both during the election and in the years immediately following?

Objectives

- Students will engage with primary sources to understand the attitudes of political leaders and American citizens related to the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War.
- Students will use multimodal engagement strategies to develop their historical thinking skills.
- Students will analyze, organize, and use information from a variety of primary sources and communicate that analysis through writing and discussion.

Key Vocabulary

Students will need to have an understanding of the following terms to effectively complete the lesson:

- Desegregation
- Communism



TEKS

113.41.8.B,D; 113.41.9.B–F,I
113.51.5.C,D,H,I; 113.51.9.D,E; 113.51.10.A–C

Lesson Procedure

Warm-Up

There are two possible components for the lesson warm-up: an election snapshot and a primary source document for the class to analyze together. Depending on your classroom needs, you may choose to complete one or both components. The content for both the snapshot and the warm-up document analysis are available as PDF documents and a teacher slide deck.

1. Using the election snapshot, briefly review the main ideas, issues, and players of the election of 1960.
 - a. Be sure to remind students that while the election was important for many reasons, the main thing that you'll be focusing on today is understanding the two main policy issues of the election of 1960.
2. Using the sample primary source, review with your students how to thoroughly analyze and explore primary sources.
 - a. This lesson uses a simplified version of the [National Archives and Records Administration's Document Analysis](#) strategies.
 - b. As a group, use the warm-up exercise to review the Democratic Party Platform. Remind students that it is important to use close reading skills and apply historical context that they have already learned.
 - c. After analyzing the source as a whole, answer the "Checking for Understanding" questions to ensure student comprehension.

Exploring Primary Sources

The purpose of this section is to have students explore primary sources that describe the ways in which the election of 1960 might represent Americans' hopeful vision for civil rights and the outcome of the Cold War.

There are many ways that you can choose to engage with the primary sources with your students. Depending on interest, student level, and classroom goals, you may choose to engage with any or all of the provided primary sources.

Three possible engagement models are suggested here:

Write

Using the worksheets provided, have your students work individually to read and examine the documents and then write their answers to the comprehension questions.

The most important takeaway for this engagement model is determining WHO is writing/speaking and WHAT each primary source is about.

Speak

Divide students into groups and provide one primary source to each group. After reading the source on their own, students should consider the author of the source and their perspective.

The most important takeaway for this engagement model is determining HOW the author is communicating and WHY they are saying what they are saying.

Draw

Have students, working individually or in pairs, design a creative, visual representation of the main argument of one primary source. They may choose to create a Venn diagram, a flow chart, or an identity map.

The most important takeaway for this engagement model is determining WHO is writing/speaking and HOW they are getting their point across.

Discussing Primary Sources

In this section, students will discuss their observations, analysis, and conclusions gleaned from analyzing primary sources about the central issues of the election of 1960.

Lead a discussion of the issues at hand. Students will use the key ideas learned during the warm-up and their analyses of primary sources to answer questions.

1. In what ways did the candidates' positions on foreign affairs resemble each other? In what ways did they differ?
2. What ongoing civil rights issues did candidates point to during the election cycle?
3. To what extent did Kennedy, as president, pursue the goals he laid out during his campaign? Did Kennedy's policies/stances change over the course of his presidency? If so, how?

Closure

If desired, use the final few minutes of the lesson to write or discuss, or assign as homework, the following prompt, which encourages students to compare the issues in the election of 1960 to contemporary election cycles:

Are elections more reflective of public sentiment or candidates' ideas? Explain.



Election of 1960: A Vision for the Future Election Snapshot

Essential Question

To what extent can the election of 1960 be seen as a barometer of Americans' views about the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War, both during the election and in the years immediately following?

Key Ideas

- The election of 1960 focused on two main issues: civil rights and foreign affairs.
 - Escalating tensions related to desegregation were addressed by both candidates.
 - Anticommunism remained a guiding principle behind nearly all U.S. foreign policy, but the specifics of each candidate's platform varied.
- Candidates' image and character were also on the ballot. Pitting a seasoned politician against a well-connected newcomer, the election resulted in a youthful, articulate John F. Kennedy winning the presidency, giving many Americans a sense of optimism.
- During his presidency, Kennedy's idealism did have limits, as he worked to prove he was tough on communism and to avoid alienating conservative white voters. Up to the time of his assassination on November 22, 1963, he faced consistent challenges from political opponents and frustrated civil rights leaders.

Candidates and Outcome

John F. Kennedy
(Democrat)

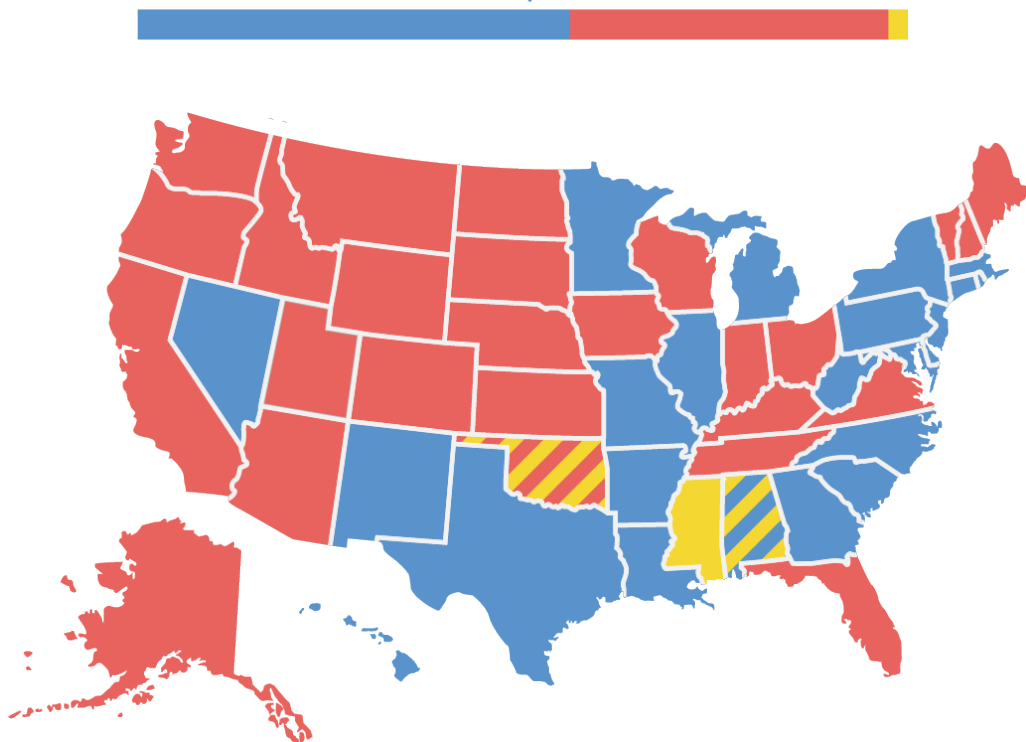
Richard Nixon
(Republican)

Harry F. Byrd
(Not a Candidate)

Kennedy 303

Nixon 219

Byrd 15





Election of 1960: A Vision for the Future Primary Sources and Questions

Warm-Up

Democratic Party Platform [excerpt], 1960
Democratic Party
[The American Presidency Project](#)

Primary Sources

Convention Speech Accepting Republican Nomination for President [excerpt], 1960
Richard M. Nixon

Largely pledging to continue the policies of the Eisenhower administration, Nixon distinguishes himself by noting areas where he would improve, particularly in strengthening the nation's defenses against communism. Unlike his opponent John F. Kennedy, Nixon barely makes mention of civil rights in his speech.

[The American Presidency Project](#)

Inaugural Address [excerpt], 1961
John F. Kennedy

Having won the popular vote by one of the narrowest margins in history, John F. Kennedy worked tirelessly with his speechwriter to create an inaugural address that would inspire confidence in his administration and work to bolster international relationships.

[The Miller Center](#)

"I'll Bury You" [visual source], 1961
Bill Mauldin, *Boston Globe*, September 3, 1961

Created only five months after the Bay of Pigs incident, this cartoon depicts John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, the leaders of the two Cold War superpowers.

[Library of Congress](#)

Telegram to John F. Kennedy, 1961
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s plea for President Kennedy to issue a "second emancipation proclamation" came at the end of Kennedy's first year in office, indicating the impatience that civil rights leaders felt because of Kennedy's lack of action.

[John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum](#)

"Report to the American People on Civil Rights" [excerpt] [video source], 1963
John F. Kennedy

John F. Kennedy addressed the American public following threats of violence by white segregationists against Black students on the University of Alabama campus, which were related to desegregation.

[John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum](#)



Warm-Up: Excerpt from the Democratic Party Platform Democratic National Convention July 11, 1960

In 1796, in America's first contested national election, our Party, under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson, campaigned on the principles of "The Rights of Man."

...

In 1960, "The Rights of Man" are still the issue. It is our continuing responsibility to provide an effective instrument of political action for every American who seeks to strengthen these rights—everywhere here in America, and everywhere in our 20th Century world.

The common danger of mankind is war and the threat of war. Today, three billion human beings live in fear that some rash act or blunder may plunge us all into a nuclear holocaust which will leave only ruined cities, blasted homes, and a poisoned earth and sky.

Our objective, however, is not the right to coexist in armed camps on the same planet with totalitarian ideologies; it is the creation of an enduring peace in which the universal values of human dignity, truth, and justice under law are finally secured for all men everywhere on earth.

If America is to work effectively for such a peace, we must first restore our national strength—military, political, economic, and moral.

...

Civil Rights

We shall also seek to create an affirmative new atmosphere in which to deal with racial divisions and inequalities which threaten both the integrity of our democratic faith and the proposition on which our nation was founded—that all men are created equal. It is our faith in human dignity that distinguishes our open free society from the closed totalitarian society of the Communists. . . .

In every city and state in greater or lesser degree there is discrimination based on color, race, religion, or national origin.

If discrimination in voting, education, the administration of justice or segregated lunch counters are the issues in one area, discrimination in housing and employment may be pressing questions elsewhere.

The peaceful demonstrations for first-class citizenship which have recently taken place in many parts of this country are a signal to all of us to make good at long last the guarantees of our Constitution.

The time has come to assure equal access for all Americans to all areas of community life, including voting booths, schoolrooms, jobs, housing, and public facilities.

...

We will support whatever action is necessary to eliminate literacy tests and the payment of poll taxes as requirements for voting.

A new Democratic Administration will also use its full powers—legal and moral—to ensure the beginning of good-faith compliance with the Constitutional requirement that racial discrimination be ended in public education.

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Warm-Up Exercise: Understanding Perspective Excerpt from the Democratic Party Platform

Analyzing a Source: Use the chart below (which is based on the National Archives and Records Administration analysis model) to examine the primary source. Remember that every document is created by a person with a specific point of view that is based on their background, beliefs, and experiences. These questions help you to understand that point of view, or perspective

Meet the source. What type of source is it? What do you notice first? How would you describe it to someone who hasn't read it?	
Observe its parts. Who created it? Who is the intended audience? When was it created? Where was it created?	
Try to make sense of it. What is it talking about? Why did the maker create it? What was happening at the time in history when this source was created?	
Use it as historical evidence. What did you find out that you might not learn anywhere else? What evidence does the creator present that you should "fact check"? What questions do you have that this source doesn't answer?	

Checking for Understanding: After reviewing the source using the chart above, answer these questions as a class.

- The Democratic Party platform references Thomas Jefferson as the founder of the Democratic Party and lauds his commitment to the "Rights of Man." What historical evidence might support the statement that Jefferson was dedicated to the "principles of the Rights of Man"? What historical evidence might contradict this statement?
- How does the Democratic Party platform link the causes of national defense and civil rights?
- According to the Democratic Party platform, what will be the goal of the executive branch of government? How will the federal government accomplish this goal?
- In what ways might this platform plank provide a sense of hope to many Americans? Why might it cause some to vote against John F. Kennedy?



**Excerpt from Acceptance Speech, Republican National Convention
Richard M. Nixon
July 28, 1960**

Context: Largely pledging to continue the policies of the Eisenhower administration, Nixon distinguishes himself by noting areas where he would improve, particularly in strengthening the nation's defenses against communism. Unlike his opponent John F. Kennedy, Nixon barely makes mention of civil rights in his speech.



. . .

One hundred years ago, in this city, Abraham Lincoln was nominated for President of the United States. The problems which will confront our next President will be even greater than those that confronted him. The question then was freedom for the slaves and survival of the Nation. The question now is freedom for all mankind and the survival of civilization, and the choice you make—you—each of you listening to me makes—this November can affect the answer to that question.

....

We are in a race tonight, my fellow Americans, in a race for survival, in which our lives, our fortunes, our liberties are at stake. We are ahead now, but the only way to stay ahead in a race is to move ahead; and the next President will make decisions which will determine whether we win or whether we lose this race.

What must he do? These things, I believe: he must resolve, first and above all, that the United States must never settle for second best in anything. . .

. . .

The Communists proclaim over and over again that their aim is the victory of communism throughout the world. It is not enough for us to reply that our aim is to contain communism, to defend the free world against communism, to hold the line against communism. The only answer to a strategy of victory for the Communist world is a strategy of victory for the free world.

But let the victory we seek be not victory over any other nation or any other people. Let it be the victory of freedom over tyranny, of plenty over hunger, of health over disease, in every country of the world.

. . .

In essence, what I am saying tonight is that our answer to the threat of the Communist revolution is renewed devotion to the great ideals of the American Revolution, ideals that caught the imagination of the world one hundred and eighty years ago and that still live in the minds and hearts of people everywhere.

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for Excerpt from Acceptance Speech

1. What parallel did Nixon draw between the issues Abraham Lincoln faced and those that the nation was now facing?
2. Why do you think Nixon referred to the Cold War as a race?
3. What did Nixon say was the only answer for victory over communism?
4. What ideals of the American Revolution do you think Nixon was referencing in the final paragraph of this excerpt?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for Excerpt from Acceptance Speech

1. What parallel did Nixon draw between the issues Abraham Lincoln faced and those that the nation was now facing?

Nixon drew a parallel between Lincoln's freeing enslaved people and his administration's pledging to free the world from communism.

2. Why do you think Nixon referred to the Cold War as a race?

For Nixon, the Cold War was something to be won. It was not enough to contain communism; democracy had to win worldwide.

3. What did Nixon say was the only answer for victory over communism?

Nixon argued that communism had a goal of taking over the world, so the only way to "contain" communism was to rid the world of it.

4. What ideals of the American Revolution do you think Nixon was referencing in the final paragraph of this excerpt?

Student must make a claim and support it with evidence from the text. Answers should pertain to liberty as a revolutionary tenet and what people might be willing to do to protect it.



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

Context: Having won the popular vote by one of the narrowest margins in history, John F. Kennedy worked tirelessly with his speechwriter to create an inaugural address that would inspire confidence in his administration and work to bolster international relationships.



...

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient, beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course—both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

So let us begin anew—remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

...

Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms—and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations.

Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.

Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah—to "undo the heavy burdens . . . (and) let the oppressed go free."

And if a beach-head of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for Excerpt from Inaugural Address

1. What was Kennedy referring to when he warned adversaries to pursue peace “before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity...”?
2. Kennedy’s speech focused on a few specific themes. Identify two of these themes and cite where and how he addressed them in his speech.
3. According to Kennedy, why should both groups formulate “serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms”?
4. How does this excerpt reflect Kennedy’s optimistic outlook on the possibility of easing the tensions of the Cold War?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for Excerpt from Inaugural Address

1. What was Kennedy referring to when he warned adversaries to pursue peace “before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity...”?

The atomic bomb could potentially destroy the earth. He warned that nations should find a way to make peace before destroying each other.

2. Kennedy’s speech focused on a few specific themes. Identify two of these themes and cite where and how he addressed them in his speech.

Possible themes to discuss: balancing military strength with diplomacy, civility and compromise, duty and power, the good and bad of scientific discovery, cooperation.

3. According to Kennedy, why should both groups formulate “serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms”?

Kennedy believed there should be international oversight over weapons that had the potential to destroy the planet.

4. How does this excerpt reflect Kennedy’s optimistic outlook on the possibility of easing the tensions of the Cold War?

Kennedy talked about negatives as challenges to overcome, focusing on solutions and the future rather than dwelling on problems in the past or present.

“I’ll Bury You”
Bill Mauldin, *Boston Globe*
September 3, 1961

Context: Created only five months after the Bay of Pigs incident, this cartoon depicts John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, the leaders of the two Cold War superpowers.



Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for "I'll Bury You"

1. What can you infer about the relationship between the two figures depicted in the cartoon?
2. The sign in the background reads "Danger Quick-Sand." What does that mean in the context of the image?
3. Considering the image, what might you conclude about the artist's views on U.S. foreign policy? Explain.
4. This cartoon was published about six months into Kennedy's presidency. How does it represent the viewpoints he expressed during the election campaign?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for “I’ll Bury You”

1. What can you infer about the relationship between the two figures depicted in the cartoon?

The two figures do not want to give in to each other. They have a tense relationship.

2. The sign in the background reads “Danger Quick-Sand.” What does that mean in the context of the image?

This indicates that the two figures may be ignoring other dangers that might take them by surprise because of their focus on the competition between themselves.

3. Considering the image, what might you conclude about the artist’s views on U.S. foreign policy? Explain.

The artist does not seem to have a favorable view of the effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy. Student must explain what about the image helps them to reach that conclusion.

4. This cartoon was published about six months into Kennedy’s presidency. How does it represent the viewpoints he expressed during the election campaign?

The cartoon represents Kennedy’s demonstration that strength would be necessary in the Cold War. However, it goes against some of what he said in his inaugural address about compromise and cooperation.



**Telegram to President John F. Kennedy
Martin Luther King Jr.
December 13, 1961**

Context: Martin Luther King Jr.'s plea for President Kennedy to issue a "second emancipation proclamation" came at the end of Kennedy's first year in office, indicating the impatience that civil rights leaders felt because of Kennedy's lack of action.



The White House
Washington

WA 036 NL PD
Atlanta GA 17

The President
The White House

We urge you issue at once by executive order a second emancipation proclamation to free all negroes from second class citizenship. For until the government of this nation stands as forthrightly in defense of democratic principles and practices here at home and presses as encreasingly [*sic*] for equal rights of all Americans as it does in aiding foreign nations with arms, ammunition and the materials of war for establishment of defense of human rights beyond our shores, then an [*sic*] only then, can we justify the claim to world leadership in the fight against communism and tyranny. We urge you further to use every means available to release at once the hundreds of persons now in jail in Albany Georgia for simply seeking to exercise constitutional rights and to stand up for freedom

Dr Martin Luther King Jr Pres SCLC Dr W G Anderson Pres Albany Non-Violent movement Ralph D Abernathy Sec of Treas SCLC.



The White House
Washington

*Original to
Mr. W. F. Sullivan*

WA036 NL PD

1961 DEC 13 AM 5 34

ATLANTA GA 17

THE PRESIDENT

THE WHITE HOUSE

WE URGE YOU ISSUE AT ONCE BY EXECUTIVE ORDER A SECOND EMANCIPATION
PROCLAMATION TO FREE ALL NEGROES FROM SECOND CLASS CITIZENSHIP.
FOR UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS NATION STANDS AS FORTHRIGHTLY IN
DEFENSE OF DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES HERE AT HOME AND
PRESSES AS ENCEASINGLY FOR EQUAL RIGHTS OF ALL AMERICANS AS IT
DOES IN AIDING FOREIGN NATIONS WITH ARMS, AMMUNITION AND THE

RECEIVED
DEC 19 1961
CENTRAL FILE

MATERIALS OF WAR FOR ESTABLISHMENT DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS
BEYOND OUR SHORES, THEN AN ONLY THEN, CAN WE JUSTIFY THE CLAIM
TO WORLD LEADERSHIP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNISM AND TYRANNY.
WE URGE YOU FURTHER TO USE EVERY MEANS AVAILABLE TO RELEASE AT ONCE
THE HUNDREDS OF PERSONS NOW IN JAIL IN ALBANY GEORGIA FOR SIMPLY
SEEKING TO EXERCISE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND TO STAND UP FOR FREEDOM
DR MARTIN LUTHER KING JR PRES SCLC DR W G ANDERSON PRES ALBANY
NON-VIOLENT MOVEMENT RALPH D ABERNATHY SEC OF TREAS SCLC.

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for Telegram to President John F. Kennedy

1. What was the tone of Martin Luther King Jr.'s telegram to President Kennedy? Do you think he was satisfied with Kennedy's performance thus far?
2. Why do you think King connected the issue of domestic policy regarding civil rights to the U.S.'s foreign policy stance on promoting democracy around the world?
3. What specific action did King ask Kennedy to take?
4. What did King's plea suggest about Kennedy's progress on addressing civil rights issues?

ANSWER KEY

Questions for Telegram to President John F. Kennedy

1. What is the tone of Martin Luther King Jr.'s telegram to President Kennedy? Do you think he is satisfied with Kennedy's performance thus far?

King was polite but urgent in his tone. He did not appear satisfied that Kennedy had done enough for civil rights.

2. Why do you think King connected the issue of domestic policy regarding civil rights to the U.S.'s foreign policy stance on promoting democracy around the world?

Student must make a claim and support it with evidence from the text and from what they have learned in the classroom. Answers could discuss the moral argument made about democracy vs. communism, the Democratic Party's platform linking the morality of the fight for civil rights to the fight against communism, or the possible hypocrisy of standing up for freedom internationally but not ensuring freedom at home.

3. What specific action did King ask Kennedy to take?

King urged Kennedy to release the people currently imprisoned in Albany, Georgia, who were arrested in the fight for civil rights.

4. What did King's plea suggest about Kennedy's progress on addressing civil rights issues?

It suggests that Kennedy had not fulfilled his campaign promises on the issue of civil rights.



**Excerpt from “Report to the American People on Civil Rights”
John F. Kennedy
June 11, 1963**

Context: John F. Kennedy addressed the American public following threats of violence by white segregationists against Black students on the University of Alabama campus, which were related to desegregation.



This afternoon, following a series of threats and defiant statements, the presence of Alabama National Guardsmen was required on the University of Alabama to carry out the final and unequivocal order of the United States District Court of the Northern District of Alabama. That order called for the admission of two clearly qualified young Alabama residents who happened to have been born Negro.

. . .

I hope that every American, regardless of where he lives, will stop and examine his conscience about this and other related incidents. . . .

Today we are committed to a worldwide struggle to promote and protect the rights of all who wish to be free. And when Americans are sent to Viet-nam or West Berlin, we do not ask for whites only. It ought to be possible, therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops.

. . .

It ought to be possible, in short, for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to his race or his color. In short, every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated, as one would wish his children to be treated. But this is not the case.

. . .

This is not a sectional issue. Difficulties over segregation and discrimination exist in every city, in every State of the Union, producing in many cities a rising tide of discontent that threatens the public safety. Nor is this a partisan issue. In a time of domestic crisis men of good will and generosity should be able to unite regardless of party or politics. This is not even a legal or legislative issue alone. . . .

We are confronted with primarily a moral issue. . . .

The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant that is open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public schools available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who will represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with the counsels of patience and delay?

. . .

We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it . . . but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is the land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have

no second-class citizens except for Negroes; that we have no class or caste system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes? . . . Now the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise.

Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Questions for Excerpt from “Report to the American People on Civil Rights”

1. What event led to President Kennedy’s speech and who was he addressing?
2. According to Kennedy, why were civil rights *not* a sectional issue?
3. What was Kennedy alluding to when he described the “rising tide of discontent”?
4. Several times in this short speech, Kennedy referenced the “worldwide struggle” in which the United States was engaged. What argument did Kennedy make in connecting U.S. domestic policy related to civil rights with foreign affairs? Do you think this is a valid argument? Explain.

ANSWER KEY

Questions for “Report to the American People on Civil Rights”

1. What event led to President Kennedy’s speech and who was he addressing?

Violent threats on the University of Alabama campus led to Kennedy’s speech. He is addressing the American people but is particularly focused on white Americans.

2. According to Kennedy, why were civil rights *not* a sectional issue?

Civil rights were not a sectional issue because there were problems with equality throughout the nation.

3. What was Kennedy alluding to when he described the “rising tide of discontent”?

Kennedy was referencing the growing tension between those who favored and those who opposed the goals of the Civil Rights Movement.

4. Several times in this short speech, Kennedy referenced the “worldwide struggle” in which the United States was engaged. What argument did Kennedy make in connecting U.S. domestic policy related to civil rights with foreign affairs? Do you think this is a valid argument? Explain.

Kennedy argued that the U.S. could not be the authority on freedom if all of its own people were not free. He further pointed out that military service protecting the nation from communism was not segregated and neither should anything else be.

Student must make a claim and support it with evidence.