

SSUSH22 – Analyze U.S. international and domestic policies including their influences on technological advancements and social change during the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations.

b. Connect major domestic issues to their social effects including the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, the emergence of the National Organization for Women, Nixon’s resignation due to the Watergate scandal, and his pardon by Ford.

Domestic policy in the United States during the 1970s addressed issues including pollution and women’s rights. The executive branch was also embroiled in the Watergate scandal that resulted in the resignation of President Nixon. The abuse of power exposed during the investigation led to significant mistrust of the government by the American public. The modern environmental movement gained momentum during the 1970s as a result of two events. The earlier publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson grabbed the attention of Americans who became concerned about pollutants and the harm they were doing to the environment. Rachel Carson was an ecologist and naturalist. She wrote on nature for the United States government during the Great Depression. Concerned over the effects of the widespread use of synthetic pesticides during World War II, she wrote *Silent Spring*. Her simple examples helped readers to understand how all life was interrelated. Her study prompted local communities to monitor the effects of spraying or dusting for harmful insects. Her work was also instrumental in founding the modern environmental and subsequent government actions to protect the environment.

The second event, which prompted greater public awareness of the nation and world’s environmental issues, was the creation of Earth Day in 1970. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, who wanted to start an environmental movement similar to the on-going anti-war movement, created the Earth Day movement. Twenty million Americans took to parks, streets, and auditoriums across the United States to rally for a healthy, sustainable environment on April 22, 1970. The massive support for environmentalism brought on by the publication of *Silent Spring* and the development of Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts. The EPA was the executive branch agency responsible for monitoring the environment, pollutants emitted by industrial facilities, and enforcing the laws passed by Congress to protect the environment.

Another issue that gained attention during the modern era was the Women’s Movement. Although women acquired suffrage in 1920, there was still disparity between men and women in terms of economic and social equality. The passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 included Title VII, which forbade the discrimination of women and formed the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce the provisions of Title VII. However, when the EEOC allowed continued gender-segregated job postings, Betty Friedan (feminist author) and Dr. Pauli Murray (Yale University law professor) decided to organize a women’s rights movement similar to the other civil rights movements. The new effort was devoted strictly to women’s causes. Friedan and Murray, along with 300 other men and women, created the National Organization of Women (NOW) in October 1966.

According to NOW’s 1966 Statement of Purpose, the organization’s goal was “to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.” The following year, NOW set as its national goals the promotion of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), the repeal of all abortion laws, and the creation of publicly funded child care. Further goals included the ending of sexual discrimination in the areas of hiring, promotion, and wages.

The United States experienced significant change during the 1960s and 1970s related to domestic and foreign policy. Another issue facing Americans was the declining level of trust they had for their government. The skepticism began with the Vietnam War and the government’s messages of imminent victory that did not mesh with the images and reporting on the nightly television news. Another key contributor to the public’s mistrust of the government was the Watergate scandal that led to President Nixon’s resignation in 1974.

Richard Nixon was reelected to a second term as president in 1972. Over the course of the next few years information began to slowly come to light that illegal activity was emanating from the highest levels of government. The Nixon re-election campaign took illegal campaign contributions from corporations who had in turn sought special favors from the President. An even bigger scandal emerged when evidence came out that Richard Nixon authorized (or at least knew about) the burglary of the offices of the Democratic National Headquarters in the Washington D.C. Watergate Complex. The burglars were trying to find out Democratic campaign strategies and to leave eavesdropping equipment in the office. The Nixon White House tried to cover-up its involvement and obstructed the Congressional investigation. When Nixon’s level of involvement in the situation became apparent through investigative news reporting, the House of Representatives began to draw up articles of impeachment against the President. Based upon the opinions of both the House and Senate, Congressional Republican leaders informed the President that he would be convicted during an

impeachment trial. As a result, Nixon resigned from office on August 9, 1974 to avoid being the first President removed from office.

Upon Nixon's resignation, his Vice President was sworn in as the new President to finish out the term. Gerald Ford was the new President. He was a well-respected thirteen term Congressman from Michigan and had replaced Spiro Agnew as Vice President when Agnew had been forced to resign over tax evasion charges.

The on-going issues surrounding the Watergate scandal maintained their hold on the government once Ford became President. Rather than continue to drag out the criminal portion of Watergate, Ford pardoned former President Nixon of any federal criminal wrong-doing. Despite harsh criticism of his action, Ford believed that it was time to put what he described as the national nightmare behind the country and focus on the issues at hand.

The Watergate scandal had a number of implications. Most significantly, there was increased cynicism and distrust of the government, which led to fewer Americans voting in elections and fewer candidates seeking office. The two-party system was also weakened, as the reputation of the Republican Party was damaged. The Democratic nominee for President in 1976, Jimmy Carter, campaigned as an outsider who would bring integrity and transparency to the office. He won a convincing victory. A few positive outcomes came from the Watergate crisis. The media was credited with doggedly working to expose the problems of the President. The Constitutional protection afforded to the media allowed the press to do their job as gatherers and disseminators of information, even as it was revealed that threats and intimidation were leveled at them. Another positive outcome was that the crisis demonstrated the effectiveness of the United States' democratic system, especially the success of checks and balances.

Define

Environmental Protection Agency

National Organization for Women

Watergate scandal

1. What issues did the book Silent Spring bring attention to?
2. What is the EPA responsible for?
3. What was NOW's Purpose?
4. Why was Nixon forced to resign?
5. What did Ford do that was unpopular?