

## The Vietnam Era

### Lesson 3 The Vietnam Years at Home

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*What motivates people to act?*

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *How did the war in Vietnam lead to sharp divisions between Americans?*
2. *How was 1968 a turning point in the Vietnam War and the nation's political life?*

#### Terms to Know

**counterculture** a culture with values that differ from those of established society

**deferment** postponement of, or excuse from, military service

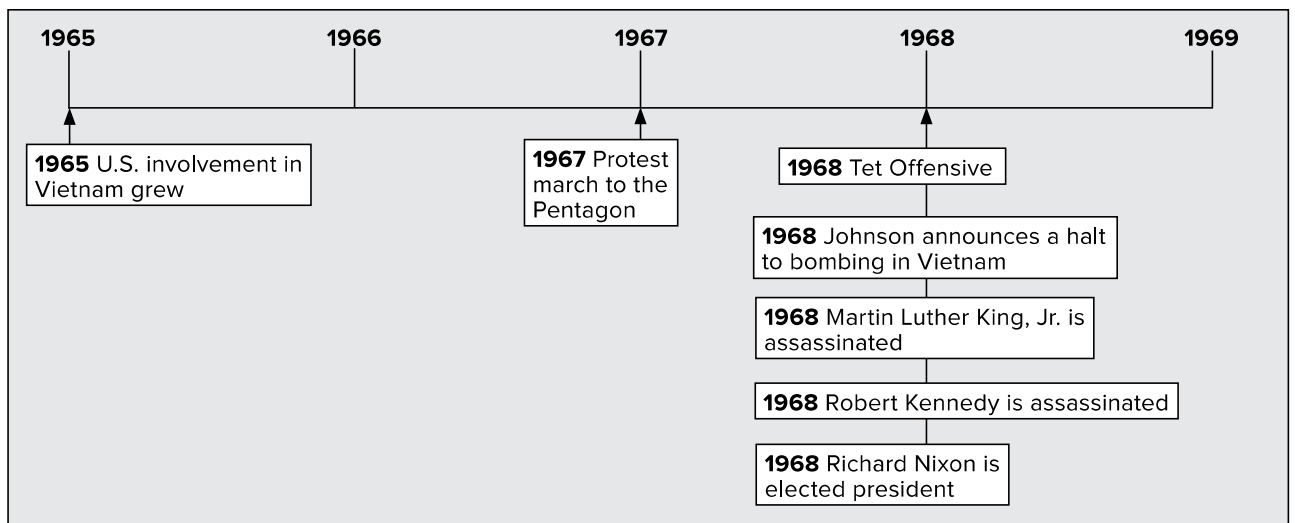
**conscientious objector** a person who refuses to serve in the armed forces or bear arms on moral or religious grounds

**credibility gap** the difference between what is said and what people believe or know to be true

#### Where in the world?



#### When did it happen?



## The Vietnam Era

### Lesson 3 The Vietnam Years at Home, *Continued*

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#### Young People Protest

As the war in Vietnam continued, the war seemed to split America. People for and against the war staged public demonstrations to express their views. They also became angry with each other. Some of those against the war called President Johnson and war supporters “killers.” Some supporting the war called opponents “traitors.” Some differences resulted from different views of age groups. Many younger people opposed the war and had different ideas than older people. This was called “the generation gap.”

More Americans protested the war when United States involvement in the war grew. Most Americans were unhappy with how President Johnson was handling the war. Some felt that the conflict in Vietnam was a civil war. A civil war is a war between groups of people in the same country. These Americans wondered why the United States was involved. Others worried that the cost of the war was using up money that America needed. All sides were unhappy about the damage caused by the war and the lives lost in the fighting.

Much opposition to the war came from the **counterculture**. People in the counterculture had different values from the established culture and rejected traditional American values. Parents worried about symbols of the counterculture such as the way young people dressed or how young men wore long hair. Some members of the counterculture did not hold traditional beliefs about work, family, or personal success.

The draft was one area people protested. Young men over age 18 could be drafted. This meant they could be forced by law to serve in the military. Some people called the draft unfair. Draft boards had the power to give people **deferments**. Deferments excused some people from the draft. College students, for example, were often given deferments. Some people thought this was unfair to young men who could not afford to go to college. Many young men from poorer families were drafted and sent to war.

Some protestors were **conscientious objectors**. They refused to fight in the war because killing was against moral or religious beliefs. Other protesters expressed their feelings by burning their draft cards.

People with different views were identified by symbols. Those who supported the war were called hawks. Those who were against the war were called doves.

#### FOLDABLES®

- Place a two-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover the heading “Young People Protest.” Write the title *Americans Disagree* on the anchor tab. Label the two tabs *For the War* and *Against the War*. Use both sides to record what you think Americans for and against the war might have felt or believed.



#### Defining

- What did conscientious objectors believe about fighting?

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#### Explaining

- Why did some Americans think draft deferments were unfair?

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**The Vietnam Era**

**Lesson 3** The Vietnam Years at Home, *Continued*

 **Marking the text**

4. What was the Tet Offensive? Underline the answer in the text. Why was it important?

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 **Critical Thinking**

5. Why was McCarthy's strong showing in a Democratic primary so important?

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 **Reading Check**

6. What actions did Johnson take to limit American involvement in the war?

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**1968—Year of Crisis**

In early 1968, North Vietnam began a series of major attacks on U.S. and South Vietnamese forces. They began on the Vietnamese New Year which is called Tet. The attacks were called the Tet Offensive. They were a turning point in the Vietnam War.

Communists attacked U.S. military bases and cities in South Vietnam. Vietcong troops raided the United States embassy in South Vietnam's capital of Saigon. They attacked the city of Hue (hyoo • AY) which is the ancient capital of Vietnam.

In the end, the Tet Offensive was a disaster for Communist forces. After a month of fighting, American and South Vietnamese forces had caused heavy enemy losses. But the Tet Offensive surprised and upset the American people. The Johnson administration had led them to believe that the North Vietnamese and Vietcong were close to defeat. This created a **credibility gap**. People did not trust what the administration said about the war.

After the Tet Offensive, more Americans protested the war, and more people were angry with President Johnson. They wanted him to pull American soldiers out of Vietnam. Johnson also faced opposition from his own party. Two Democratic candidates for president were against the war. One was Eugene McCarthy, a senator from Minnesota. Another was Robert Kennedy, President John F. Kennedy's brother. McCarthy surprised everyone by making a strong showing in an early primary.

Johnson had to think about what to do. He decided he would not send more troops to Vietnam, even though the commander there asked for them. Johnson went on TV and told America that he was ordering U.S. troops to stop bombing cities in North Vietnam. He hoped this would be a step towards peace. Then he surprised the country by saying he would not run for president in the next election.

Tragedy struck twice in 1968. In April, a gunman shot and killed Martin Luther King, Jr., the leader of the civil rights movement. People all over America were angry and upset by his death. Riots broke out in many cities. Army troops had to restore order in some areas.

The second tragedy happened on the day of the Democratic primary in California. Vice President Hubert Humphrey decided to run for president, too. But he did not enter primary elections. In California, the choice was between Eugene McCarthy and Robert

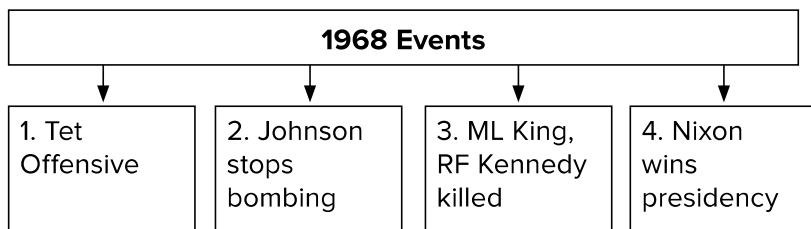
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### Lesson 3 The Vietnam Years at Home, *Continued*

Kennedy. The winner was Kennedy. Right after Kennedy gave his victory speech, a gunman shot and killed him.

Many antiwar demonstrators came to protest outside of the Democratic convention in Chicago. They were angry that the Democrats were nominating Humphrey. Humphrey supported Johnson's Vietnam policy. The protesters clashed with police. Many were beaten and arrested. This violence was shown on television. Humphrey won the nomination, but the convention was a disaster for the Democrats.

Humphrey ran against two candidates in the 1968 election. George Wallace of Alabama represented a third party. He promised a return to law and order. He also opposed busing to integrate schools. The Republican candidate, Richard Nixon, said the he represented the "silent majority." They were the people who wanted law and order and did not protest or demonstrate. He also promised "peace with honor" in Vietnam, but did not say how that would happen. Nixon won but got only 43.4% of the popular vote. Combined with Wallace, 57% of the people had voted for candidates who had promised to restore law and order.



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#### Check for Understanding

**How did the war in Vietnam "split" America?**

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**How was 1968 a turning point in the Vietnam War?**

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#### Explaining

7. Why was the Democratic convention in Chicago a disaster for Democrats?

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#### FOLDABLES®

8. Use a two-tab Foldable and cut the tabs in half to make four tabs. Place it along the dotted line to cover the Check for Understanding. Write the title *1968* on the anchor tab. Label the four tabs *Tet Offensive*, *Assassinations*, *Bombing Stops*, and *"Peace with Honor."* On both sides of the tabs, write what you remember about the importance of each. Use the Foldable to help answer Check for Understanding.