Promises and Power

Assess how 1960s reforms changed the federal role

USH.C.7.3.B "Assess the rise of liberalism in the 1960s and the lasting impact of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and the Great Society by expanding the role of the federal government in economic and social issues."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two pressures that helped liberal reform grow, and circle three examples of expanded federal action. Write 1 beside a lasting effect and 2 beside a limit of the Great Society.

What Should Washington Do?

1. In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson called for an "unconditional war on poverty." He was speaking during a decade when many Americans pressed the federal government to do more about unequal opportunities. Liberal reformers argued that national action could help people whom local institutions and private charity had not reached. The civil rights movement also exposed how discrimination limited access to jobs, schools, and voting. Johnson's War on Poverty, part of his broader Great Society agenda, treated poverty as a public problem, not simply a matter of individual choices. That view helped justify a larger federal role in daily life.

2. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 created programs that aimed to open paths out of poverty. Job Corps offered job training to young people, while community action programs gave residents of low-income areas a voice in planning local services. Head Start, launched in 1965, offered preschool education and other support to children from low-income families. Johnson also signed the 1965 laws that created Medicare, health insurance for most people age 65 and older, and Medicaid, health coverage for eligible people with limited incomes. Federal money and rules now shaped services that states, towns, charities, or families had often handled alone.

3. The new programs did not end poverty, and falling poverty rates in the 1960s had more than one cause, including economic growth. Some critics said Washington was spending too much and taking decisions away from local communities. Others argued that the programs did too little to confront racism and unequal wages. The Vietnam War also competed for federal money and attention. Yet Medicare, Medicaid, and Head Start continued beyond Johnson's presidency. Their survival shows a lasting shift: the federal government took continuing responsibility for health care and early education for groups it sought to support, even as Americans debated how far that responsibility should reach.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the civil rights movement strengthen the case for liberal reform, according to the passage?

2. Compare how community action programs and Medicare expanded the federal government's role.

3. Why would it be misleading to credit the War on Poverty alone for falling poverty rates in the 1960s?

4. How can a critic's concern about federal power be weighed against the programs' lasting impact?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a present-day museum caption of 75 to 95 words that judges whether the Great Society's lasting benefits justified a larger federal role. Use two named programs from the passage, address one criticism or limitation, and explain your judgment with your own reasoning.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two pressures that helped liberal reform grow, and circle three examples of expanded federal action. Write 1 beside a lasting effect and 2 beside a limit of the Great Society. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the civil rights movement strengthen the case for liberal reform, according to the passage?	**It exposed discrimination that limited access to jobs, schools, and voting, strengthening the argument for national action on unequal opportunities.**
2	Compare how community action programs and Medicare expanded the federal government's role.	**Federal community action programs supported residents' participation in planning local services. Medicare established federal health insurance for most people age 65 and older.**
3	Why would it be misleading to credit the War on Poverty alone for falling poverty rates in the 1960s?	**Poverty rates had more than one cause, including economic growth, so the passage does not attribute the decline to the programs alone.**
4	How can a critic's concern about federal power be weighed against the programs' lasting impact?	**Critics worried about federal spending and reduced local control, but Medicare, Medicaid, and Head Start continued to provide services beyond Johnson's presidency.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Great Society changed what Americans could expect from Washington. Medicare made health insurance available to most older adults, while Head Start gave children from low-income families early learning opportunities. Those commitments outlived Johnson, even though poverty did not disappear. Critics feared that federal spending and rules would weaken local control. Still, I think the larger federal role was justified: a family's access to health care or preschool should not depend entirely on where it lives. Keeping these programs also leaves room to debate how they should improve.

Accept either judgment in the museum caption if it uses two named programs accurately, addresses a criticism or limit, and supports its assessment. For the marking job, accept any two pressures, three federal actions, one lasting effect, and one limit supported by the passage.