Trust Under Pressure

Nixon's election and the consequences of Watergate

USH.C.7.3.F "Describe the election of Richard Nixon, including his appeal to "the silent majority" and the effects of the Watergate Scandal (e.g., public distrust of government, investigative role of the media, Pentagon Papers..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Nixon's appeal to voters, circle ways government conduct came to light, and number three effects of Watergate on leadership or public trust.

From Appeal to Distrust

1 In 1968, protests against the Vietnam War and clashes over civil rights filled television screens. Republican Richard Nixon won the presidency by promising "law and order" and a plan to end the war. He appealed to voters who felt their views were drowned out by loud protests. In a 1969 speech, Nixon called these Americans the "silent majority" and asked them to support his Vietnam policy. His message connected public unrest to his claim that he could restore stability.

2 Before Nixon's 1972 reelection, burglars linked to his campaign broke into Democratic Party offices at the Watergate complex. Nixon's administration tried to hide its connections to the break-in. Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein followed leads, while courts and Congress pursued evidence. In 1973, Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned in a separate corruption case. Under the 25th Amendment's vice-presidential vacancy procedure, Nixon nominated Gerald Ford, and Congress confirmed him. This was the amendment's first use to fill a vice-presidential vacancy.

3 The Pentagon Papers, published by newspapers in 1971, showed that earlier administrations had misled the public about the Vietnam War. Although separate from the Watergate break-in, their publication raised questions about official honesty and showed the power of a free press. In 1974, recordings exposed Nixon's efforts to obstruct the Watergate investigation. Facing likely impeachment, he resigned, and Ford became president. Ford then pardoned Nixon for any federal crimes he might have committed as president. The pardon, alongside Watergate, deepened many Americans' distrust of government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Nixon's 1969 "silent majority" message build on his 1968 appeal?

2. How did newspapers help bring government conduct to light in the Pentagon Papers and Watergate cases?

3. How did Ford first become vice president, then president?

4. Why might Ford's pardon have deepened distrust after Watergate?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label that contrasts Nixon's appeal to voters with public trust after Watergate. Explain how two later events changed views of government.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Nixon's appeal to voters, circle ways government conduct came to light, and number three effects of Watergate on leadership or public trust. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Nixon's 1969 "silent majority" message build on his 1968 appeal?	**Both appealed to voters troubled by public unrest who wanted stability.**
2	How did newspapers help bring government conduct to light in the Pentagon Papers and Watergate cases?	**Newspapers published the Pentagon Papers, and Washington Post reporters followed leads about Watergate.**
3	How did Ford first become vice president, then president?	**Nixon nominated Ford under the 25th Amendment's vacancy procedure after Agnew resigned, and Congress confirmed him. Ford became president when Nixon resigned.**
4	Why might Ford's pardon have deepened distrust after Watergate?	**The pardon meant Nixon would not face federal prosecution for possible crimes committed as president, even after recordings exposed his efforts to obstruct the investigation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Nixon won voters who wanted stability amid protests, a group he later called the "silent majority." The Pentagon Papers then raised doubts about government honesty during the Vietnam War. Reporters investigated Watergate, and recordings exposed Nixon's efforts to obstruct the investigation. After Nixon resigned, Ford pardoned him, deepening distrust about whether leaders would face consequences.

Accept other supported connections between Nixon's appeal and later distrust. The Pentagon Papers were separate from the Watergate break-in, and Agnew's resignation was a separate corruption case.