The Modern Era

1968-1992
1968

ELECTORAL VOTE
TOTAL: 538
8.4% 46
56.1% 191
35.5% 301

POPULAR VOTE
TOTAL: 73,026,831
12.9% 9,446,167
43.2% 31,710,470
42.6% 30,898,055

Republican (Nixon)
Democratic (Humphrey)
American Independent (Wallace)
In 1968 conservative Richard Nixon became President.

One of Nixon’s greatest accomplishments was his 1972 visit to communist China.

Visit opened China to American markets and highlighted a shift in American policy towards communism.

Richard Nixon
In 1972, Nixon ran for re-election. He was paranoid that he would lose the race. Workers from his campaign were caught breaking in to the Democratic National Headquarters located in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. They were looking to steal the Democrats’ “game plan” for the election.
The Nixon administration attempted to cover-up to break in and distance themselves from the burglars.

A Congressional investigation ensued.

Nixon was found guilty of trying to cover-up the break-in after the discovery of taped interviews between him and his staff members at the White House.
Due to mounting public pressure and a threat of impeachment, Nixon chose to resign from office.

Nixon officially announced his resignation in August 1974.

This make Richard Nixon the first and so far only President to ever voluntarily leave office.

The Watergate scandal caused many Americans to lose confidence and trust in a government they viewed as corrupt and untrustworthy.

Nixon Resigns
NIXON RESIGNS
HE URGES A TIME OF 'HEALING';
FORD WILL TAKE OFFICE TODAY

'Sacrifice' Is Praised; Kissinger to Remain

The 37th President Is First to Quit Post

POLITICAL SCENE Rise and Fall
SHARPLY ALTERED Appraisal of Nixon Career
• After Nixon resigned VP Gerald Ford became President.
• Ford oversaw America during a time of severe economic recession.
• Victim of two assassination attempts.
• His reputation was further tarnished when he pardoned former President Nixon for any wrong doing in the Watergate scandal.

Gerald Ford
Two landmark decisions were handed down by the Supreme Court in the 1970’s.

In *Roe v. Wade*, the court declared constitutional a woman’s right to have an abortion.

In *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California*, the court ruled on the constitutionality of affirmative action programs in college admissions.
• In 1976 Georgia Democratic Governor Jimmy Carter beat Ford for the presidency.
• Carter’s administration was heavily influenced by international issues.
• One highlight was the Camp David Accords, a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1978.
• The Camp David Accords were the first signed peace agreement between the nations of the Middle East.
• Through much of the 20th century, the Middle Eastern country of Iran had been an ally of the United States.
• In 1979, Muslim leaders led a revolution that led to the overthrow of the Shah (king) of Iran while he was out of the country.
• Revolutionaries wanted their nation to be ran by a strong, religious leader called the Ayatollah.

Iranian Revolution
In response to President Carter’s refusal to send the Shah back to Iran, Islamic revolutionaries stormed the US embassy in the Iranian capital of Tehran.

- 52 Americans were held hostage for 444 days.
- Hostages were finally released on January 20, 1981 when Carter left office and Ronald Reagan was sworn in.
- Event only served to strengthen the anti-American sentiment in the Middle East.
Ronald Reagan, former governor of California elected President in 1980.

As a conservative, Reagan believed that the federal government should have a smaller role in American life.

Pursued an economic policy critics called “Reaganomics”; included tax breaks and budget cuts.

“Reaganomics” (sometimes referred to as supply-side economics or “trickle-down” economics).
Trickle-Down Economics
During Reagan’s second term, a scandal involving the sale of weapons tarnished his administration.

In an attempt to free 7 American hostages from Iran, Reagan’s administration offered to sell Iran weapons for the hostage’s release.

This money would in turn be used to fund the rebellion of anti-Communist fighters (called “Contras”) in the Latin American country of Nicaragua.

Both the sale of arms to Iran and the funding of the Nicaraguan Contras violated acts of Congress.

Iran-Contra Scandal
• One highlight of Reagan’s presidency is the fall of the communist Soviet Union.
• Reagan is credited with pursuing a foreign policy of pressuring Soviet leaders to grant more individual freedoms to its citizens.
• Reagan, while decreasing domestic spending, increased military spending.
• Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev (right) instituted the policies of glasnost and perestroika that led to economic changes in the communist nation.

Collapse of the Soviet Union
• Reagan famously encouraged Soviet leader Gorbachev to end Soviet control of its satellite nations.

• “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

• October 1989 – Berlin Wall torn down

• Reunification of communist East Germany and capitalist West Germany

Fall of the Berlin Wall
• On Christmas Day in 1991, Gorbachev resigns as leader of the Soviet Union.
• The Soviet Union is dissolved into 15 individual republics including Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan.
• The collapse signified the over 50 year standoff between the US and the Soviet Union known as the Cold War.

Cold War Comes to an End
Remembered mostly for guiding the US through the Persian Gulf War (the 1st Iraqi War).
August 1990 – Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi army invade neighboring Kuwait
US sends in troops to turn back the approaching Iraqi Army and liberate Kuwait.

George H. W. Bush