

# The 1960's

John F. Kennedy (JFK)



“The Torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans”



- As the 1950's came to an end and the 60's began, America elected a new and different kind of president.
- Instead of an older, protestant, male as our country has always had, Americans elected a young, catholic, named John F. Kennedy

# 1960 Presidential Election

- Between Eisenhower's VP, ***Richard Nixon*** and a young Senator from MA, ***John F. Kennedy***
- The first ever televised debate – with the hot studio lights, Nixon appeared tired, sweaty, and nervous
- Kennedy, in contrast, looked polished and relaxed



# A Generational Shift

- JFK won because he represented a new energy and enthusiasm for America
- Became the youngest President ever elected at 43



# JFK

- Intelligent
- Handsome
- Athletic
- Witty
- A war hero
- A “regular guy”



# A New Hope



- With the ever-looming threat of communism and nuclear war, Kennedy brought **optimism** to an America who seemed to be losing the Cold War

# A Popular First Family

- New administration was energetic and full of optimism
- Jacqueline Kennedy, the First Lady (President's wife), charmed the country with her grace
- Their young children ran around the White House and filled it with life
- The Kennedy's and their friends loved to play touch football on the lawn or take long hikes



# Inaugural Address



- In his inspiring Inaugural address, Kennedy challenged Americans with his infamous line “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country”
- He wanted Americans to change the way that they viewed their government and look within to see what they could do to help make the country great



# Camelot



- Kennedy White House was referred to as Camelot because JFK, his beautiful wife, Jackie, and their young children brought **a sense of youth, *magic and idealism* to the Presidency** (like legendary kingdom of King Arthur)
- A country whose power was used for the good of the people



# The New Frontier

- Name used to describe Kennedy's proposals to improve the economy, give aid to the poor, and breathe new life into the space program



# The Space Race

- A Cold War competition to see **who had the best technology between the US and Soviets** and **who could put the first man in space**
- Ultimately was about who was more powerful



# Sputnik

- A small **satellite** (only 184 pounds) **put into orbit by the Soviets**
- Sent shockwaves throughout America because it showed that our archenemy, **the Soviets, were technologically superior to us**
- It also now meant that the Soviets had the ability to arm a rocket with a nuclear weapon that could destroy America



# 1<sup>st</sup> Man in Space

- **Soviets put first man in space, *Yuri Gargarin*, in 1961 a month before us (Alan Shepard)**
- Encouraged Kennedy to **challenge the nation to land a man on the moon** before the decade is out
- Led to increased funding for **NASA**
- (National Aeronautics and Space Agency)



# Fidel Castro



- Fidel Castro had come to power in 1959 after overthrowing the US-backed dictator Batista
- Many poor Cubans supported this because he vowed to improve their lives
- Castro took over many US companies operating in Cuba
- When the US broke off diplomatic relations, Castro developed ties with the Soviet Union

# Communism on our Doorstep?

- This frightened America because it meant we had a communist nation right next door & we feared revolutions could occur in other poor Latin American nations





# Bay of Pigs

- Even before Kennedy came to power a plan had been in place to use the CIA to train Cuban opponents of Castro in nearby Guatemala
- When training was complete the Cubans would invade Cuba with American backup
- On April 17, 1961, just a few months after his inauguration, Kennedy faced his first serious foreign crisis when this **attempt was made to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro**



# A Total Disaster

- The secret leaked out and Castro was able to stop the US-backed troops from coming ashore
- the anticipated support of the Cuban people also never happened
- Rather than escalate the conflict with the use of massive US forces, Kennedy chose to accept defeat
- 1,200 soldiers were captured – **humiliating to the US**



# Bay of Pigs Invasion



# Effects of Bay of Pigs

- The United States lost a great deal of prestige in the disastrous attack
- Invasion was clumsy and incompetent
- Our support of an effort to overthrow a legitimate government was exposed to the world
- Latin American countries angered and felt threatened
- European leaders **questioned the new President's leadership**



# Testing Kennedy

- After our failure at the Bay of Pigs Kennedy needed to **respond even more firmly** to future Communist threats
- Kennedy feared that the Soviet leader, Krushchev, had a larger plan to take over Europe when he **insisted that the US withdraw from Berlin** by the end of the year
- In their first meeting (in 1961), Kennedy felt bullied by him



# Kennedy's Response

- Kennedy was not going to be pushed around by Khrushchev so he ...
- Increased our military spending
- doubled the number of men being drafted into armed services
- and built fallout shelters across the country to show that America wouldn't be pushed around

# Berlin Wall

- The Soviets responded to this by building the **Berlin Wall** (in August 1961)
- This wall would become a symbol of the cold war over the next 40 years
- Kennedy went on TV and told Americans that West Berlin was “the great testing place of Western courage and will” and that “we do not want to fight – but we have fought before”



# Your Wall Doesn't Scare Me!

- To show his support for West Germany after the wall was erected, JFK traveled to West Berlin in an act of defiance toward the Soviets





# “Ich bin ein Berliner”

- Standing near the Berlin Wall in June 1963, Kennedy spoke to a cheering crowd of West Berliners that the United States “will risk its cities to defend yours because we need your freedom to protect ours”
- Concluded his speech to the German people with his now famous line, “Ich bin ein Berliner”. I am a Berliner.



