



# The New Frontier

## MAIN IDEA

While Kennedy had trouble getting his ideas for a New Frontier passed, several goals were achieved.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Kennedy's space program continues to generate scientific and engineering advances that benefit Americans.

## Terms & Names

- New Frontier
- mandate
- Peace Corps

- Alliance for Progress
- Warren Commission

## One American's Story

On May 5, 1961, American astronaut Alan Shepard climbed into *Freedom 7*, a tiny capsule on top of a huge rocket booster. The capsule left the earth's atmosphere in a ball of fire and returned the same way, and Shepard became the first American to travel into space. Years later, he recalled his emotions when a naval crew fished him out of the Atlantic.

### A PERSONAL VOICE ALAN SHEPARD

"Until the moment I stepped out of the flight deck . . . I hadn't realized the intensity of the emotions and feelings that so many people had for me, for the other astronauts, and for the whole manned space program. . . . I was very close to tears as I thought, it's no longer just our fight to get 'out there.' The struggle belongs to everyone in America. . . . From now on there was no turning back."

—*Moon Shot: The Inside Story of America's Race to the Moon*

The entire trip—which took only 15 minutes from liftoff to splashdown—reaffirmed the belief in American ingenuity. John F. Kennedy inspired many Americans with the same kind of belief.

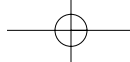


▲ Astronaut Alan Shepard (*inset*) prepares to enter the space capsule for his Mercury flight.

## The Promise of Progress

Kennedy set out to transform his broad vision of progress into what he called the **New Frontier**. "We stand today on the edge of a New Frontier," Kennedy had announced upon accepting the nomination for president. He called on Americans to be "new pioneers" and explore "uncharted areas of science and space, . . . unconquered pockets of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus."

Kennedy had difficulty turning his vision into reality, however. He offered Congress proposals to provide medical care for the aged, rebuild blighted urban areas, and aid education, but he couldn't gather enough votes. Kennedy faced the same conservative coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats that had



**ECONOMIC BACKGROUND**

**WHAT IS A RECESSION?**

A recession is, in a general sense, a moderate slowdown of the economy marked by increased unemployment and reduced personal consumption. In 1961, the nation's jobless rate climbed from just under 6 percent to nearly 7 percent. Personal consumption of several major items declined that year, as people worried about job security and spent less money.

Car sales, for example, dropped by more than \$1 billion from the previous year, while fewer people took overseas vacations. Perhaps the surest sign that the country had entered a recession was the admission by government officials of how bleak things were. "We are in a full-fledged recession," Labor Secretary Arthur Goldberg declared in February of 1961. (See *recession* on page R44 in the Economics Handbook.)

blocked Truman's Fair Deal, and he showed little skill in pushing his domestic reform measures through Congress. Since Kennedy had been elected by the slimmest of margins, he lacked a popular **mandate**—a clear indication that voters approved of his plans. As a result, he often tried to play it safe politically. Nevertheless, Kennedy did persuade Congress to enact measures to boost the economy, build the national defense, provide international aid, and fund a massive space program. **A**

**STIMULATING THE ECONOMY** One domestic problem the Kennedy team tackled was the economy. By 1960 America was in a recession. Unemployment hovered around 6 percent, one of the highest levels since World War II. During the campaign, Kennedy had criticized the Eisenhower administration for failing to stimulate growth. The American economy, he said, was lagging behind those of other Western democracies and the Soviet Union.

Kennedy's advisers pushed for the use of deficit spending, which had been the basis for Roosevelt's New Deal. They said that stimulating economic growth depended on increased government spending and lower taxes, even if it meant that the government spent more than it took in.

Accordingly, the proposals Kennedy sent to Congress in 1961 called for increased spending. The Department of Defense received a nearly 20 percent budget increase for new nuclear missiles, nuclear submarines, and an expansion of the armed services. Congress also approved a package that increased the minimum wage to \$1.25 an hour, extended unemployment insurance, and provided assistance to cities with high unemployment.

**ADDRESSING POVERTY ABROAD** One of the first campaign promises Kennedy fulfilled was the creation of the **Peace Corps**, a program of volunteer assistance to the developing nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Critics in the United States called the program "Kennedy's Kiddie Korps" because many volunteers were just out of college. Some foreign observers questioned whether

Americans could understand other cultures.

Despite these reservations, the Peace Corps became a huge success. People of all ages and backgrounds signed up to work as agricultural advisers, teachers, or health aides or to do whatever work the host country needed. By 1968, more than 35,000 volunteers had served in 60 nations around the world.

A second foreign aid program, the **Alliance for Progress**, offered economic and technical assistance to Latin American countries. Between 1961 and 1969, the United States invested almost

**MAIN IDEA**

**Identifying Problems**

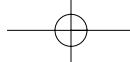
**A** Why did Kennedy have difficulty achieving many of his New Frontier goals?

**Background**

See *deficit spending* on page R39 in the Economics Handbook.

**A Peace Corps** ▶ volunteer gives a ride to a Nigerian girl.





**MAIN IDEA**

**Analyzing Motives**

**B** Why did Kennedy want to invest in foreign aid?

\$12 billion in Latin America, in part to deter these countries from picking up Fidel Castro's revolutionary ideas. While the money brought some development to the region, it didn't bring fundamental reforms. **B**

**RACE TO THE MOON** On April 12, 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri A. Gagarin became the first human in space. Kennedy saw this as a challenge and decided that America would surpass the Soviets by sending a man to the moon.

In less than a month the United States had duplicated the Soviet feat. Later that year, a communications satellite called Telstar relayed live television pictures across the Atlantic Ocean from Maine to Europe. Meanwhile, America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) had begun to construct new launch facilities at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and a mission control center in Houston, Texas. America's pride and prestige were restored. Speaking before a crowd at Houston's Rice University, Kennedy expressed the spirit of "the space race."

**A PERSONAL VOICE** PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

**"We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too."**

—Address on the Nation's Space Effort, September 12, 1962

Seven years later, on July 20, 1969, the U.S. would achieve its goal. An excited nation watched with bated breath as U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the moon.

As a result of the space program, universities expanded their science programs. The huge federal funding for research and development gave rise to new industries and new technologies, many of which could be used in business and industry and also in new consumer goods. Space- and defense-related industries sprang up in the Southern and Western states, which grew rapidly. **C**

**MAIN IDEA**

**Analyzing Effects**

**C** What effect did the space program have on other areas of American life?

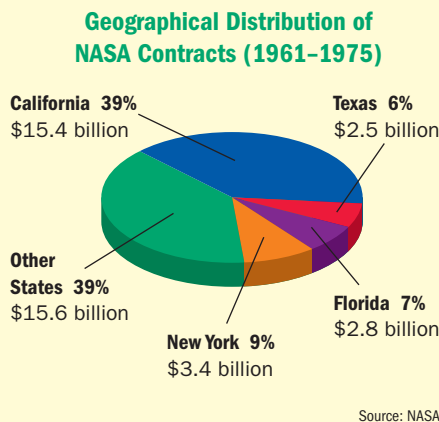
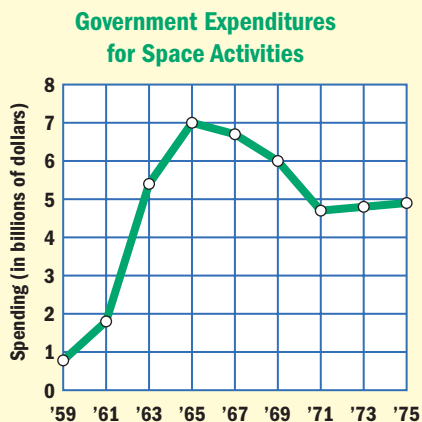
**HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT**

**JOHNSON AND MISSION CONTROL**

President Kennedy appointed Vice President Johnson as chairman of the National Aeronautics and Space Council shortly after they assumed office in 1961. The chairman's duties were vague, but Johnson spelled them out: "He is to advise the president of what this nation's space policy ought to be." And Johnson's advice was to land a man on the moon.

A new home for the moon program's Manned Spacecraft Center was created. Some NASA administrators had wanted to consolidate the center and the launch site in Florida. However, when Johnson's friends at Humble Oil donated land to Rice University, which sold 600 acres to NASA and donated the rest, the debate was over. Houston became the center of the new space program.

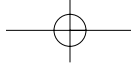
**U.S. Space Race Expenditures, 1959–1975**



Source: NASA

**SKILLBUILDER** Interpreting Graphs and Charts

1. In which year did the federal government spend the most money on the space race?
2. What state benefited the most?



**ADDRESSING DOMESTIC PROBLEMS** While progress was being made on the new frontiers of space exploration and international aid, many Americans suffered at home. In 1962, the problem of poverty in America was brought to national attention in Michael Harrington's book *The Other America*. Harrington profiled the 50 million people in America who scraped by each year on less than \$1,000 per person. The number of poor shocked many Americans.

While Harrington awakened the nation to the nightmare of poverty, the fight against segregation took hold. Throughout the South, demonstrators raised their voices in what would become some of the most controversial civil rights battles of the 1960s. (See Chapter 29.) Kennedy had not pushed aggressively for legislation on the issues of poverty and civil rights, although he effected changes by executive action. However, now he felt that it was time to live up to a campaign promise.

In 1963, Kennedy began to focus more closely on the issues at home. He called for a "national assault on the causes of poverty." He also ordered Robert Kennedy's Justice Department to investigate racial injustices in the South. Finally, he presented Congress with a sweeping civil rights bill and a proposal to cut taxes by over \$10 billion. **D**

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Making Inferences

**D** In what directions did President Kennedy seem to be taking his administration in 1963?

## Tragedy in Dallas

In the fall of 1963, public opinion polls showed that Kennedy was losing popularity because of his advocacy of civil rights. Yet most still supported their beloved president. No one could foresee the terrible national tragedy just ahead.

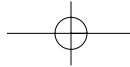
**FOUR DAYS IN NOVEMBER** On the sunny morning of November 22, 1963, *Air Force One*, the presidential aircraft, landed in Dallas, Texas. President and Mrs. Kennedy had come to Texas to mend political fences with members of the state's Democratic Party. Kennedy had expected a cool reception from the conservative state, but he basked instead in warm waves of applause from crowds that lined the streets of downtown Dallas.

Jacqueline and her husband sat in the back seat of an open-air limousine. In front of them sat Texas Governor John Connally and his wife, Nellie. As the car approached a state building known as the Texas School Book Depository, Nellie Connally turned to Kennedy and said, "You can't say that Dallas isn't friendly to you today." A few seconds later, rifle shots rang out, and Kennedy was shot in the head. His car raced to a nearby hospital, where doctors frantically tried to revive him, but it was too late. President Kennedy was dead.

As the tragic news spread through America's schools, offices, and homes, people reacted with disbelief. Questions were on everyone's lips: Who had killed the president, and why? What would happen next?

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During the next four days, television became “the window of the world.” A photograph of a somber Lyndon Johnson taking the oath of office aboard the presidential airplane was broadcast. Soon, audiences watched as Dallas police charged Lee Harvey Oswald with the murder. His palm print had been found on the rifle used to kill John F. Kennedy.

The 24-year-old Marine had a suspicious past. After receiving a dishonorable discharge, Oswald had briefly lived in the Soviet Union, and he supported Castro. On Sunday, November 24, as millions watched live television coverage of Oswald being transferred between jails, a nightclub owner named Jack Ruby broke through the crowd and shot and killed Oswald.

The next day, all work stopped for Kennedy’s funeral as America mourned its fallen leader. The assassination and televised funeral became a historic event. Americans who were alive then can still recall what they were doing when they first heard about the shooting of their president.

**Vocabulary**

**conspiracy:** an agreement by two or more persons to take illegal political action

**MAIN IDEA**

**Contrasting**

**E** How did the Warren Commission’s findings differ from other theories?

**UNANSWERED QUESTIONS** The bizarre chain of events made some people wonder if Oswald was part of a conspiracy. In 1963, the **Warren Commission** investigated and concluded that Oswald had shot the president while acting on his own. Later, in 1979, a reinvestigation concluded that Oswald was part of a conspiracy. Investigators also said that two persons may have fired at the president. Numerous other people have made investigations. Their explanations have ranged from a plot by anti-Castro Cubans, to a Communist-sponsored attack, to a conspiracy by the CIA. **E**

What Americans did learn from the Kennedy assassination was that their system of government is remarkably sturdy. A crisis that would have crippled a dictatorship did not prevent a smooth transition to the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. In a speech to Congress, Johnson expressed his hope that “from the brutal loss of our leader we will derive not weakness but strength.” Not long after, Johnson drove through Congress the most ambitious domestic legislative package since the New Deal.

**NOW & THEN**

**KENNEDY’S ASSASSINATION**

From the beginning, people have questioned the Warren Commission report. Amateur investigators have led to increasing public pressure on the government to tell all it knows about the assassination.

In response, Congress passed the JFK Records Act in 1992, which created a panel to review government and private files and decide which should be part of the public record.

Since the law was enacted, newly declassified information has added some weight to a body of evidence that JFK was shot from the front (the Warren Commission had concluded that a single bullet struck the president from behind) and that Oswald, thus, could not have acted alone. While such evidence challenges the Warren Commission’s report, no information has yet surfaced that conclusively disproves its findings.

**2 ASSESSMENT**

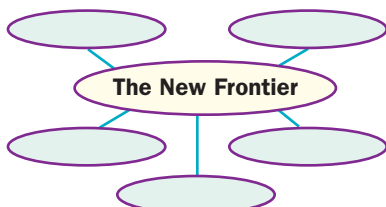
**1. TERMS & NAMES** For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- New Frontier
- Peace Corps
- Warren Commission
- mandate
- Alliance for Progress

**MAIN IDEA**

**2. TAKING NOTES**

Re-create the web shown and fill it in with programs of the New Frontier.



Which do you think was most successful? Why?

**CRITICAL THINKING**

**3. ANALYZING MOTIVES**

Why do you think Congress was so enthusiastic about allocating funds for the space program but rejected spending in education, social services, and other pressing needs?

**4. MAKING INFERENCES**

Why do you think Kennedy lost popularity for supporting civil rights?

**5. EVALUATING LEADERSHIP**

Do you think President Kennedy was a successful leader? Explain your viewpoint. **Think About:**

- the reasons for his popularity
- the goals he expressed
- his foreign policy
- his legislative record