

## Objectives

- Describe the divisions within American society over the Vietnam War.
- Analyze the Tet Offensive and the American reaction to it.
- Summarize the factors that influenced the outcome of the 1968 presidential election.



## Terms and People

- **draftee** – a young man who was drafted into military service
- **SDS** – Students for a Democratic Society, founded to fight racism but which later campaigned against the Vietnam War
- **“credibility gap”** – the difference between what the Johnson administration said about the war and what journalists in Vietnam saw and reported



## Terms and People (continued)

- **Tet Offensive** – a coordinated assault, in January 1968, by the Vietcong and North Vietnamese on South Vietnamese cities and bases
- **Eugene McCarthy** – the antiwar candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 1968
- **Robert Kennedy** – New York's Democratic senator and a candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 1968





## **How did the American war effort in Vietnam lead to rising protests and social divisions back home?**

President Johnson sent more troops to Vietnam, and in the United States more people questioned the war.

The Vietnam War divided Americans more deeply than any conflict since the Civil War.



**As more troops died and no clear victory emerged, increasing numbers of Americans opposed the Vietnam War.**

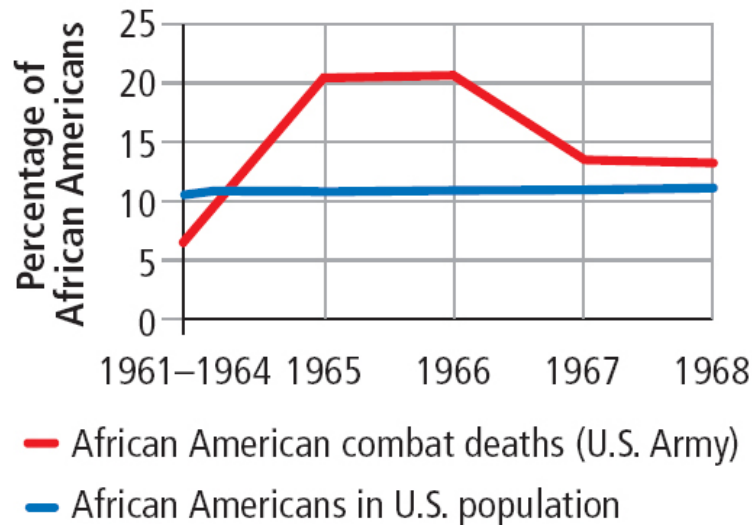
Many people opposed the policies of the draft.

- More than 1.5 million young men were drafted during the Vietnam War.
- Many argued the draft unfairly gave deferments to students.
- Most of the **draftees** came from a poor or working-class background.



## The number of African Americans fighting in Vietnam was disproportionately high.

African Americans and the Vietnam War



SOURCES: Department of Defense; *Historical Statistics of the United States*

African Americans were less likely than whites to become commissioned officers.

They were more likely to serve, and die, in combat positions.





Inequalities in the draft led to widespread resistance against the war.

In 1969, the draft was restructured to introduce a lottery system.




## **Students' opposition to the war grew.**

- Colleges and universities became centers of antiwar activism.
- Most upper middle-class students opposed the war; working-class students generally supported the war.
- **Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)** campaigned to end the war in Vietnam.





**Beyond college campuses, more and more Americans also opposed the war.**



TV news showed the war's horrors.

The difference between government reports and news stories created a **credibility gap**.



In November 1967, General Westmoreland addressed the nation's concerns about the war.

He claimed the Vietcong had weakened and could no longer mount a major attack.

**In early 1968, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese launched the Tet Offensive.**



**The Tet Offensive attacked major cities and bases in South Vietnam, including the U.S. Embassy in Saigon.**

The fighting was fierce, but American and South Vietnamese forces eventually drove back the offensive.



**After the Tet Offensive, U.S. military leaders became less certain that the war could end quickly.**

The new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, recommended that President Johnson **pursue peace, rather than victory,** in Vietnam.

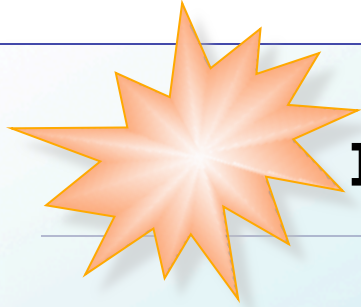


**Johnson announced he would not run for another term as president.**

Democratic Senator **Eugene McCarthy**, who **opposed the war**, made a strong showing in the New Hampshire primary.

**Robert Kennedy**, a Democratic Senator from New York, also announced his candidacy.





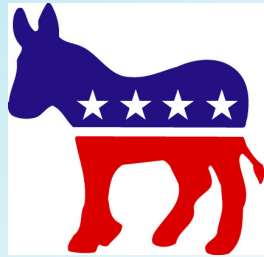
## **In 1968 violence stunned the nation.**

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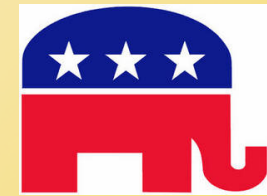
- In April, Rev. **Martin Luther King, Jr.** was **assassinated** in Memphis.
- Senator **Robert Kennedy** was **assassinated** in June, just after he'd won the California Democratic primary.
- Police used rough tactics to **break up** student protests outside the Democratic Convention in Chicago.



Eventually the Democrats chose Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's Vice President as their presidential candidate.



Republicans held a more peaceful convention, choosing Richard M. Nixon as their presidential candidate.



## Nixon won the 1968 election.

- He called for peace with honor in Vietnam.
- He appealed to the “**silent majority**” — people who were not protesting.
- He benefited because **Democrats were split** between Humphrey and George Wallace, a third-party candidate from the South.





## Section Review

### QuickTake Quiz



### Know It, Show It Quiz

