

America and the Great Society: the social policies of President Johnson

Task 1: Card sort

Most of the cards explain particular policies that made up Johnson's 'Great Society' initiative. Your tasks are to read each one carefully, then start to categorise them.

There are a few cards that don't explain policies - how could you categorise these separately?

Task 2: New Deal and Great Society comparison

This is your chance to revise your previous work on the New Deal. When thinking of points to add to the Venn diagram below, it may help to focus on the following:

- reasons for the programme
- groups of Americans who were helped
- examples of key policies
- notable successes
- notable failures
- main criticisms

Tip! When looking for similarities for the middle section, remember that the programmes weren't identical, so add points there if they're broadly similar rather than trying to find things that were exactly the same.

<p>a. Johnson had become President of the USA after Kennedy's assassination. One of his goals in launching the 'Great Society' initiative was to get re-elected in 1964.</p>	<p>b. In March 1964, Johnson introduced the Economic Opportunity Act in Congress. Its aim was to help disadvantaged people break their cycle of poverty by improving their skills and education, and to help them find work.</p>
<p>c. In the 1960s, two key groups of Americans did not have health insurance: the poor and the elderly. Kennedy had struggled to introduce meaningful laws to deal with this problem, but the Democrats took control of Congress shortly after Johnson became President, and they voted the necessary laws through.</p>	<p>d. A new law passed in October 1965. It ended nationality quotas for those trying to enter the USA, but prioritised reuniting families. There were still limits on the amount of immigration.</p>
<p>e. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed in 1965. It provided government funds for school districts which had a large number of students from low-income families.</p>	<p>f. Johnson already had a reputation for getting things done by the time he became President. He was respected for his previous work in Congress and the Senate.</p>

<p>g. While some campaigners felt that the Great Society still didn't go far enough to tackle the USA's socio-economic problems, many conservatives resented what they saw as government handouts and unnecessary government interference.</p>	<p>h. Two new programs helped Americans without health insurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicare paid the medical bills of qualifying elderly people • Medicaid covered the cost of healthcare for those already getting other income support from the government
<p>i. A disadvantage of so many people moving to the suburbs after the Second World War was that many inner cities fell into decline. Poor people in particular found it very hard to find decent housing. The 1965 Act granted government funding for urban renewal and development, provided the cities receiving it met minimum housing standards.</p>	<p>j. Johnson's work on the Great Society programme was limited by the Vietnam War. It cost so much money that funds originally allocated to Great Society initiatives were instead diverted to keep fighting the war. It also severely damaged Johnson's reputation; he is remembered more today for escalating the war and costing American lives than improving them.</p>
<p>k. Inspired by Roosevelt's New Deal agencies, Johnson created a Job Corps to provide training or work (on conservation projects) for 100,000 unemployed men.</p>	<p>l. The 1965 Education Act also provided money for pre-schools, school libraries, textbooks and special education services.</p>
<p>m. The National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act became law in 1965. It stated that culture was a matter for government, not just private citizens, to get involved with. The act also provided funding for museums, public TV and radio broadcasting, libraries and archives.</p>	<p>n. The 1965 Housing Act also paid a portion of the rent of disadvantaged Americans, and made home mortgages easier to obtain.</p>
<p>o. Johnson introduced Head Start, an 8-week summer camp programme aimed at supporting parents to ensure their children had equal opportunities to others. Thirty two million children aged 3 to 5 have been helped by the scheme.</p>	<p>p. Johnson encouraged state and local governments to set up work and training programs locally, as well as helping farmers to buy land and provide assistance for unemployed parents to re-enter the workforce.</p>

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Teaching notes

Here are some suggested categories for organising the cards. You may wish to give these to some/all of your students to make the task more accessible.

poverty	B, K,P
healthcare	C,H
education	E,L,O
housing	I,N
culture	M
immigration	D
background/context	A,F
criticisms	G,J

