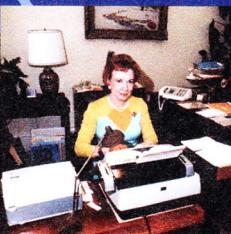


## networks

**There's More Online!**

- BIOGRAPHY** John Dean
- BIOGRAPHY** Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein
- CHART/GRAF** Watergate's Key Figures
- IMAGE** Watergate Political Cartoon
- PRIMARY SOURCE** Excerpts from *United States v. Nixon*
- VIDEO** The Watergate Scandal
- INTERACTIVE SELF-CHECK QUIZ**



## Reading HELPDESK



### Academic Vocabulary

- **incident**
- **challenger**

### Content Vocabulary

- **executive privilege**
- **special prosecutor**

### TAKING NOTES:

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

**Outlining** Use the headings in this lesson to create an outline similar to the one below by recording information about the Watergate scandal.

#### The Watergate Scandal

- I. The Roots of Watergate
  - A.
  - B.
- II.
  - A.
  - B.

## LESSON 2

# The Watergate Scandal

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS** • How do you think the Nixon administration affected people's attitudes toward government? • How does society change the shape of itself over time?

## IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Despite a successful first term, Richard Nixon and his supporters worried about reelection. The tactics they resorted to led to the Watergate scandal, one of the nation's great constitutional crises.

### The Roots of Watergate

**GUIDING QUESTION** Why did Nixon's advisers order a break-in at the Democratic Party's headquarters?

The Watergate scandal led to the only time in the nation's history when the president of the United States was forced to resign from office. It began on the morning of June 17, 1972, when a young *Washington Post* reporter named Bob Woodward was assigned to cover a seemingly insignificant but bizarre **incident**. Early that morning, five men had broken into the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters in the city's Watergate apartment office complex. Woodward attended the arraignment. He was asked to go to see if there was a story worth reporting.

As Woodward sat near the back of the courtroom listening to the bail proceedings for the five defendants, the judge asked each man his occupation. One of the men, James McCord, answered that he was retired from government service. "Where in government?" asked the judge. "CIA," McCord whispered. Woodward sprang to attention. Why was a former CIA agent involved in what seemed to be just a burglary? Over the next two years, Woodward and another reporter, Carl Bernstein, investigated this question. They uncovered a scandal that helped trigger a constitutional crisis and eventually forced Nixon to resign.

### Mounting a Reelection Fight

The Watergate scandal directly involved the Nixon administration's efforts to cover up its involvement in the break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters. It also included other illegal actions. Many scholars believe the roots of the scandal, however, lay in Nixon's character and the atmosphere of the White House.

Richard Nixon had fought hard to become president, battling back from numerous political defeats. Along the way, he had grown defensive, secretive, and often resentful of his critics. He became president amid race riots, war protests, and other turmoil. He became so consumed with his opponents that he made an “enemies list” of people whom he considered a threat to his presidency.

**incident** single occurrence of a happening or situation

**challenger** one who enters a competition

As the 1972 presidential election approached, Nixon’s reelection prospects seemed promising, but not certain. He had just finished triumphant trips to China and the Soviet Union. Former governor George Wallace had dropped out of the race after an assassin’s bullet paralyzed him. And many considered Democratic **challenger** Senator George McGovern too liberal. But the Vietnam War still raged, and staffers remembered the close 1968 election. Determined to win, they began spying on opposition rallies and spreading rumors about opponents.

Trying to help the president, Nixon’s advisers ordered five men to break into the Democratic Party’s headquarters at the Watergate complex and steal sensitive campaign information. They were also to place wiretaps on the office telephones. While the burglars worked, a security guard spotted a piece of tape holding a door lock. The guard removed the tape, but when he passed the door later, he saw that it had been replaced. He quickly called police, who arrived shortly and arrested the men.

### The Cover-Up Begins

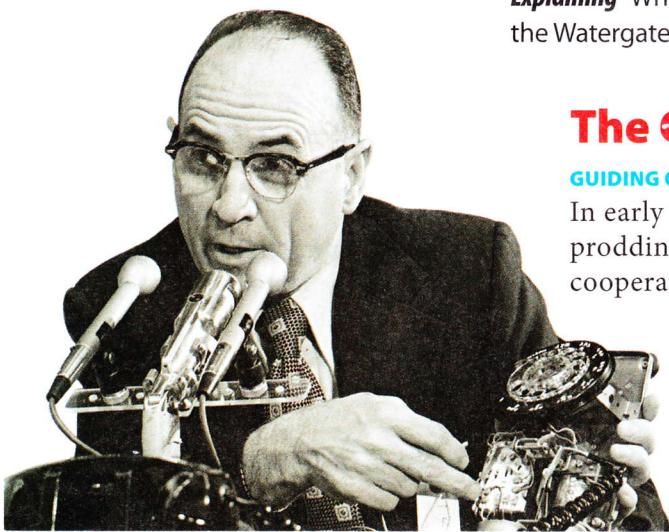
After the break-in, the media discovered that one burglar, James McCord, was not only an ex-CIA officer but also a member of the Committee for the Re-election of the President (CRP). Reports surfaced that the burglars had been paid from a secret CRP fund controlled by the White House.

Nixon may not have ordered the break-in, but he did order a cover-up. White House officials destroyed incriminating documents and gave investigators false testimony. With Nixon’s consent, administration officials asked the CIA to stop the FBI from investigating the source of money paid to the burglars. The CIA told the FBI that the investigation threatened national security. FBI deputy director W. Mark Felt then secretly leaked information about Watergate to the *Washington Post*.

Meanwhile, Nixon’s press secretary dismissed the incident, and the president told the American public, “The White House has had no involvement whatever in this particular incident.” It worked. Most Americans believed Nixon. Despite efforts by the media to keep the story alive, few people paid much attention during the 1972 presidential campaign. Nixon won reelection by one of the largest margins in history.

#### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Explaining** What effect did the CIA have on the FBI’s investigation of the burglars in the Watergate break-in?



### The Cover-Up Unravels

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How much power can a president wield to ensure national security?*

In early 1973, the Watergate burglars went on trial. Under relentless prodding from federal judge John J. Sirica, McCord agreed to cooperate with the grand jury investigation and to testify before the newly created Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities. The chairman of the committee was Democratic senator Sam J. Ervin from North Carolina.

## A Summer of Shocking Testimony

McCord's testimony opened a floodgate of confessions. Presidential counsel John Dean, who had testified in June 1973, confessed that former attorney general John Mitchell had ordered the Watergate break-in and that Nixon had taken part in the cover-up.

The Nixon administration strongly denied the charges. Dean had no evidence, and the Senate committee spent weeks trying to determine who was telling the truth. The answer appeared on July 16. White House aide Alexander Butterfield testified that Nixon had ordered a taping system installed in the White House to record all conversations to help him write his memoirs after leaving office. The tapes would tell the committee what Nixon knew and when he knew it—if the president released them.

### The Case of the Tapes

At first, Nixon refused to hand over the tapes, pleading **executive privilege**, the principle that White House conversations should remain confidential to protect national security. **Special Prosecutor** Archibald Cox took Nixon to court in October 1973 to make him give up the tapes. Nixon ordered Attorney General Elliot Richardson to fire Cox, but Richardson refused and resigned. Nixon then ordered Richardson's deputy to fire Cox, but he, too, resigned. Nixon's solicitor general, Robert Bork, finally fired Cox, but the incident badly damaged Nixon's reputation.

The fall of 1973 proved disastrous for other reasons as well. Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned in disgrace after investigators found that he had taken

#### executive privilege

principle stating that communications of the executive branch should remain confidential to protect national security

#### special prosecutor

a lawyer from outside the government



## ANALYZING SUPREME COURT CASES



### UNITED STATES v. NIXON, 1974

#### Background to the Case

In 1974 Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski issued a subpoena to gain access to audio tape recordings President Nixon had made of conversations. Jaworski believed that the tapes would prove the active involvement of the president in the Watergate cover-up. Nixon filed a motion to prevent the subpoena, claiming executive privilege. The case went to district court, but that court withheld judgment pending the decision of the Supreme Court.

#### How the Court Ruled

In a unanimous 8-to-0 decision (Justice Rehnquist did not take part), the Supreme Court found that executive privilege did not protect Nixon's tape recordings. The ruling stated that while the president has a right to protect military secrets and other sensitive material and has a right to some confidentiality, the needs of a criminal trial must take precedence. In the Court's opinion Chief Justice Warren Burger wrote, "We conclude that when the ground for asserting privilege as to subpoenaed materials sought for use in a criminal trial is based only on the generalized interest in confidentiality, it cannot prevail over the fundamental demands of due process of law in the fair administration of criminal justice...."



*The Senate committee overseeing the Watergate investigation, chaired by Senator Sam Ervin (fourth from left at the table), wanted access to Nixon's White House tape recordings.*

#### DBQ Analyzing Historical Documents

- 1 Identifying Central Ideas** What was the purpose or central issue of the case?
- 2 Defending** Do you agree with the Supreme Court's decision in this case? Explain.



Rose Mary Woods was Nixon's personal secretary. She claimed that an 18½ minute gap in the Watergate tapes was the result of an accidental erasure.

#### ► CRITICAL THINKING

**Drawing Conclusions** Why might Woods's explanation of the gap in the tapes have been doubted?

bribes while governor of Maryland and while serving in office in Washington. Gerald Ford, Republican leader of the House of Representatives, became the new vice president.

### Nixon Resigns

Nixon tried to quell outrage by appointing a new special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, who also proved determined to obtain the tapes. In July the Supreme Court ruled that Nixon had to surrender them. He complied. Days later, the House Judiciary Committee voted to impeach Nixon, or officially charge him with misconduct. Charges included obstructing justice, misusing federal agencies to violate the rights of citizens, and defying the authority of Congress. Then new evidence emerged: a tape revealed that Nixon had ordered the CIA to stop the FBI probe into the Watergate burglary on June 23, 1972. Impeachment and conviction were inevitable. On August 9, 1974, Nixon resigned in disgrace.

Vice President Gerald Ford took office as president of the United States after Nixon's resignation. He urged Americans to put the scandal behind them, saying, "Our long national nightmare is over." On September 8, 1974, Ford announced a full pardon for Nixon. Ford's pardon of Nixon drew public criticism and diminished his popularity.

### The Impact of Watergate

The constitutional crisis led to new laws intended to limit the power of the executive branch. The Federal Campaign Act Amendments of 1974 limited campaign contributions and set up an independent agency to enforce strict election laws. The Ethics in Government Act required financial disclosure by high government officials throughout all branches of government. The FBI Domestic Security Investigation Guidelines Act restricted the FBI's political intelligence-gathering activities. Congress also laid out a means to appoint an independent counsel to investigate and prosecute wrongdoing by high government officials.

Many Americans developed a distrust of public officials. Others, such as Bob Woodward, believed the affair proved that no one is above the law: "Watergate was probably a good thing for the country. . . . The problem with kings, and prime ministers, and presidents, is that they think . . . that they have some special rights. . . . We have our laws and believe them, and they apply to everyone, [which] is a very good thing."

#### ✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Assessing** What role did the Nixon tapes play in discovering the truth about the Watergate scandal?

## LESSON 2 REVIEW

### Reviewing Vocabulary

**1. Defining** What is executive privilege?

**2. Stating** What do special prosecutors do?

### Using Your Notes

**3. Sequencing** Use your notes to write a description of the major events of the Watergate scandal in order.

### Answering the Guiding Questions

**4. Explaining** Why did Nixon's advisers order a break-in at the Democratic Party's headquarters?

**5. Analyzing Ethical Issues** How much power can a president wield to ensure national security?

### Writing Activity

**6. ARGUMENT** Shortly after taking office, President Ford granted Nixon a full pardon for any crimes he may have been involved in or committed. Use the Internet to find two or more reactions to this action and identify the author and time period when the reaction was written. Evaluate the validity, reliability, and bias of the reactions and write a paragraph comparing which is the best source to understand Ford's actions.