

Kennedy Administration

1. What is meant by the expression, the “Kennedy Mystique”? What factors contributed to the Kennedy Mystique?

	Accomplishments	Failures
Domestic Policy		
Foreign Policy		

GRADE _____

The Kennedy Mystique and Domestic Policy

During his short Presidency, Kennedy brought to the white house charm, youth and a strong sense of optimism that reflected the mood of the country in 1961.

Television played an important role in creating what has been called the “Kennedy Mystique.” During the Presidential debates in 1960, Kennedy clearly came out ahead in style – demonstrating his energy and poise, even though, in hindsight, his opponent Richard Nixon appears to have given better responses. Kennedy’s televised inauguration furthered Kennedy’s reputation as an energetic optimist who called the country to action with his plea, “ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country. “ In early 1962, Kennedy called on the country to commit to landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth by the end of the decade. In a televised speech at Rice University, he said, "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." The incredible feat was accomplished in the summer of 1969.

Kennedy brought dash to the White House. His beautiful and refined wife, Jackie, outshined previous first ladies. Jack and Jackie seated artists and writers next to diplomats and businessmen at white house dinners. Kennedy’s staff and large family played touch football, not gold. People began to talk about Kennedy’s “charisma,” his ability to lead by sheer force of personality. Kennedy was a celebrity president and perhaps the closest thing the United States as had to royalty. As a result, the press referred to the Kennedy White House as “Camelot,” comparing the President to King Arthur and his court.

In Domestic Policy, Kennedy’s optimism was reflected in his agenda known as the “New Frontier.” He called for federal support for healthcare, aid to education, urban renewal and civil rights. Despite the lofty goals, he had few achievements, as his proposals languished in Congress during his 1000 day presidency. Later, many of his proposals would be passed by his successor, Lyndon Johnson.

Perhaps Kennedy’s greatest legislative achievement was the creation of the Peace Corps. The purpose of the Corps has been to show America’s best face to the world by encouraging Americans to volunteer to personally help people in underdeveloped nations, using their skills to help develop educational, agricultural and medical facilities.

Kennedy and the Cold War

A. Flexible Response -

1. recognized the inflexibility of Dulles' Massive Retaliation
2. expand spending on conventional forces to deal with small regional conflicts
eg. Vietnam

B. Increasing Tensions with the Soviet Union

1. Berlin Crisis (1961)

- Khrushchev demanded that Western powers leave Berlin before the end of 1961 and threatened to cut off Berlin from West Germany
- Began building a wall around west Berlin to prevent Easterners from fleeing to the city.
- Kennedy deployed 1500 reinforcements and visited the city himself giving his famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech.

2. Problems with Cuba

a. Bay of Pigs Invasion

- CIA operation that trained Cuban exiles and returned them to Cuba to overthrow Castro - a complete disaster and humiliation for Kennedy

b. Cuban Missile Crisis

- U2 spy plane photos revealed that Soviets were bringing missiles into Cuba and building launch sites
- Kennedy ordered a "quarantine" of Cuba to prevent Soviet ships from reaching Cuba
- Crisis resolved when Kennedy agreed to not invade Cuba and to pull American missiles out of Turkey (second part of agreement not publicly known until 25 years after the Crisis)

3. Arms Race and the Space Race

- a. Build up of nuclear weapons and delivery systems to "close the missile gap"
- b. pledged to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade

C. Reducing cold war tensions

- **Nuclear test ban treaty** - banned atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons

D. **Alliance For Progress** - U.S. pledged \$80 billion in economic aid to Latin America to promote economic development - a Marshall Plan for Latin America

E. **Peace Corps** - "volunteers" sent to developing countries to improve education, healthcare, sanitation, etc.

F. Vietnam

1. Initially supported corrupt and brutal South Vietnamese leader Diem. Later supported a military coup that led to his overthrow.
2. Increased number of troops (advisors) to train South Vietnamese army to 16,000