



YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

US History and Government
Regents Review

Watergate

Significance of Watergate

Although Nixon was never charged with any specific crimes, President Ford pardoned him. Ford hoped to end what he called “our long national nightmare.” Many of Nixon’s advisers, however, were found guilty of crimes and sentenced to prison. The incident showed, as Ford put it, that “the Constitution works.” The system of checks and balances had stopped Nixon from placing the presidency above the law.

- **Where** Watergate Towers, an apartment complex in Washington, D.C.
- **When** June 17, 1972
- **Who** The Committee to Reelect the President, acting with the knowledge of several high-level Nixon advisers
- **Why** To secure information to undermine the Democratic campaign against Nixon

The Cover-Up

Police captured the “burglars,” who carried evidence linking them to the White House. Nixon did not know about the plan until after it happened. However, he then ordered a cover-up, which was a crime under federal law.

THE INVESTIGATION Reporters from the *Washington Post* probed into the case, now known as the **Watergate affair**, but their reports did not hinder Nixon’s reelection. Then in 1973, the Senate set up a committee to look into “illegal, improper, or unethical activities” in the 1972 election. For more than a year, the Senate committee came closer and closer to implicating the President.

RESIGNATION OF AGNEW While the Watergate hearings were under way, the Justice Department charged Vice President Spiro Agnew with income tax evasion. Agnew resigned, and Nixon appointed Gerald R. Ford, the minority leader in the House of Representatives, as Vice President.

THE TAPES In mid-1973, the Senate committee learned that the White House had kept tape recordings of key conversations between Nixon and his top aides. Nixon refused to turn over the tapes. During the summer, the committee opened the hearings to television. The televised proceedings had the appeal of a soap opera as millions of Americans watched.

NIXON RESIGNATION The situation ended when the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to surrender the tapes in its ruling in *United States v. Richard Nixon*. Based on evidence in the tapes, the House Judiciary Committee began voting on articles of impeachment against the President. To avoid impeachment, Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974, becoming the first President to do so. On noon of that day, Gerald Ford took the oath of office.

Gerald Ford became the first nonelected President. To fill the office of Vice President, Ford named Nelson Rockefeller, the former governor of New York. From 1974 until 1977, the United States had both a President and Vice President who had not been elected to their offices but had been appointed. Such a situation had not occurred before and has not occurred since.

Name: _____

- 1) The *main* significance of the Watergate affair was that it
 - 1) was the first time a President had disagreed with Congress
 - 2) proved that Presidential powers are unlimited
 - 3) led to the impeachment and conviction of President Richard Nixon
 - 4) showed that the laws of the United States are superior to the actions of a President
- 2) Credit Mobilier, Teapot Dome, and Watergate are *all* examples of
 - 1) efforts that failed to regulate government spending
 - 2) foreign policies designed to contain the spread of communism
 - 3) congressional attempts to limit Presidential power
 - 4) scandals that damaged the reputations of various Presidents
- 3) The outcome of the Watergate scandal reinforced the principle that
 - 1) national security takes precedence over freedom of the press
 - 2) impeached government officials are immune from criminal prosecution
 - 3) the law applies equally to all citizens, including government officials
 - 4) the power of executive privilege is greater than the rule of law
- 4) The resolution of the Watergate Affair was significant because it reinforced the idea that
 - 1) the chief executive has nearly unlimited powers
 - 2) the United States has a government based on laws, not on individuals
 - 3) the Supreme Court is reluctant to make decisions about matters involving the Presidency
 - 4) Congress is not effective in dealing with a constitutional crisis

- 5) The Presidency of Gerald Ford was different from all previous Presidencies because he was the first President who
 - 1) won the office by running on a third-party ticket
 - 2) ran for office as a nonpartisan candidate
 - 3) resigned from the office of the President
 - 4) was not elected to either the Presidency or the Vice-Presidency

Questions 6 and 7 refer to the following:



- 6) The cartoon suggests that President Richard Nixon was
 - 1) using executive privilege to refuse to answer questions from the press
 - 2) destroying the Presidential image by pretending to be a Superman
 - 3) attempting to establish law and order
 - 4) covering up illegal actions within his administration
- 7) Actions like the one suggested by the cartoon eventually resulted in
 - 1) a court order forcing President Nixon to testify against himself
 - 2) the indictment of President Nixon's Vice President
 - 3) the first Presidential resignation
 - 4) President Nixon's conviction on impeachment charges

- 8) Watergate was the first national political scandal that led to the
- 1) resignation of a President
 - 2) impeachment of a President
 - 3) involvement of a major political party
 - 4) conviction of a President on criminal charges

- 9) Which principle was most weakened as a result of the Watergate controversy?
- 1) States rights
 - 2) judicial review
 - 3) congressional immunity
 - 4) executive privilege