

John F. Kennedy



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Period 5*

Background

nearly died of scarlet fever at age 2

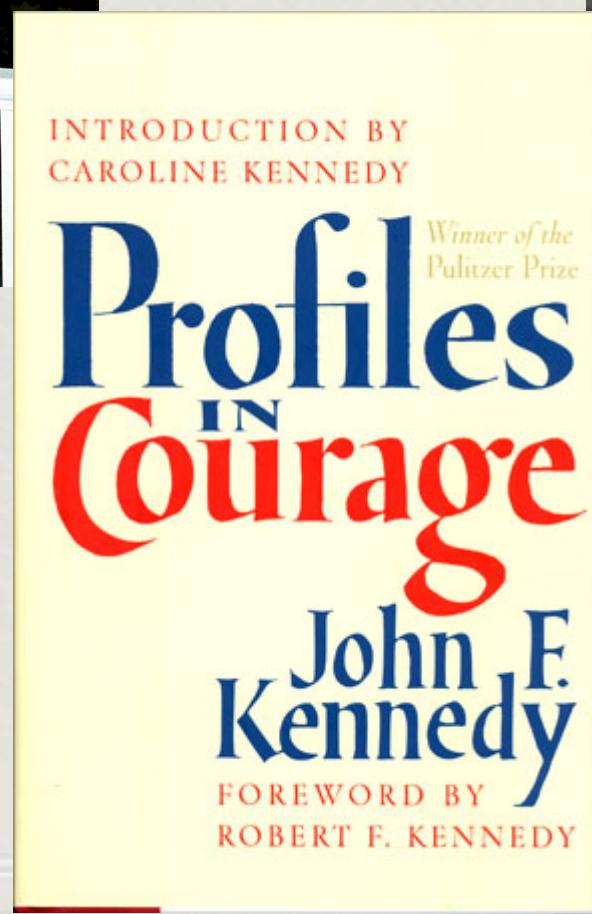
Addison's disease plagued him:
weakness, weight loss, blood problems
- tortured him for decades before it
was finally diagnosed, nearly killed him

Boston, Massachusetts on May 29, 1917 to Joseph Patrick Kennedy and Rose Fitzgerald

- ◆ Known to be a sickly, bookish child; an adolescent rebel; and a collegiate playboy
- ◆ Graduated from Harvard in 1940 choate and princeton
- ◆ Joined the U.S. Navy in 1941 and became an intelligence officer
- ◆ 1945-46: journalist covering UN conference in SFO
- ◆ After WW2, he became a Democratic Congressman from Boston
- ◆ Married Jacqueline Bouvier on September 12, 1953.
- ◆ 1955 - Profiles in Courage - Pulitzer Prize in history
- ◆ 1961 - 35th president; first Roman Catholic; first Irish American

Motor Torpedo Boat squadron given in charge of PT boat, which was sunk by Japanese destroyer - despite injuries he led survivors to safety

1963 - assassinated



Chief Legislator

- ◆ Advocated progressive taxation, anti-crime bills, the extension of social welfare, and more low-cost public housing.
- ◆ Proposed new social programs:
 - ◆ Medical care to the elderly
 - ◆ Urban Mass Transit
 - ◆ Department of Urban Affairs
 - ◆ regional development in Appalachia
 - ◆ Federal aid to education
- ◆ Republicans and conservative southern Democrats in Congress blocked his proposed legislation

Chief Legislator (cont.)

- ◆ What actually happened:
 - ◆ Attempts to cut taxes and broaden civil rights were watered down
 - Civil rights: most divisive issue of the time: activism against racism growing
 - Concentrated more on enforcing existing civil rights laws than on passing new ones
 - “Senatorial courtesy”: appoint Southern federal judges acceptable to southern Democratic senators (opposed to civil rights)
 - Invoked highest powers of executive office to send troops to southern states who refused to racially integrate their schools
 - Strategy: delay sending civil rights bill to Congress until second term, when he could split party and get backing of moderate Republicans
 - 1963 - submitted civil rights bill which would become law after his death

Chief Legislator (cont.)

- ◆ Department of Urban Affairs rejected
- ◆ Managed minimum wage, but major medical program for elderly shot down
- ◆ Education bill foundered on question of aid to parochial schools - had to oppose such aid to maintain credibility with electorate
 - Higher Education Act of 1963 - more college aid, ten to twenty new graduate centers, classrooms, technical institutes, and new community colleges
- ◆ 1963 - “War on Poverty” : create measures that dealt with 1/5 of nation with incomes below the poverty line
 - hoped to win support of southern Congressmen
 - hoped to increase the Democratic electorate in the southern and border states and prevent a Republican challenge to the party allegiance of white voters.

Chief Legislator (cont.)

- ◆ Changing attitudes toward religion:
 - ◆ First Roman Catholic President
 - ◆ Advancement of Jews into high government positions (cabinet and federal courts)
 - ◆ Supporters: liberal Jewish intellectuals and Roman Catholics
- ◆ American space effort to put American space team on moon within the decade (1961)
- ◆ Vetoed 21 bills: 12 regular and 9 pocket vetoes; none of them were overturned

B+



Commander-in-Chief

- ◆ Many young men joined the army = sense of duty
- ◆ Supported South Vietnamese government of Ngo Dinh Diem - supplied troops and advisors
 - ◆ Domino theory: if communism was not halted in Vietnam, it would spread throughout the world
 - ◆ more peasants grew hostile towards South Vietnam for religious and practical reasons
- ◆ April 14, 1961 - sent American troops into Cuba to overthrow government of Fidel Castro - Bay of Pigs invasion - total failure
- ◆ September 1962 - Soviet Union was building surface-to-air missile launch sites
 - ◆ Executive Committee of the National Security Council: impose naval blockade and air-force attack if Cuba did not cooperate
 - ◆ Kruschev gave orders for dismantling of missiles
 - ◆ known as Cuban Missile Crisis - people supported Kennedy's reaction

C



Cuban Missile Crisis

Bay of Pigs



Chief Executive

- ◆ He smoothly ran the White House in an organized manner
- ◆ The Cabinet of President John F. Kennedy consisted of:
 - ◆ State:Dean Rusk
 - ◆ Treasury: Douglas Dillon
 - ◆ Defense: Robert F. Kennedy
 - ◆ Interior:Stewart Lee Udall
 - ◆ Agriculture:Orville Lothrop Freeman
 - ◆ Commerce: Luther Hartwell Hodges
 - ◆ Labor:Arthur Joseph Goldberg
 - ◆ Heath,Education, and Welfare: Abraham Ribicoff

Chief Executive (cont.)

- ◆ National Security Council: small group of 14 men involving military leaders, experts on Latin America, representatives of the CIA, cabinet ministers and personal friends whose advice Kennedy valued
- ◆ Surrounded himself with liberal intellectuals and moderate conservatives who drew on technology and social planning to govern effectively
- ◆ “New Frontiersmen” : elite group of young, rich professionals that poured into Washington

A-

Head of State

- ◆ Exuded confidence, charisma, polish, and poise; style became an essential complement to substance
- ◆ Revolutionized politics as television impacted voters and long elections became the norm
- ◆ Manipulated media to present carefully constructed image of America to viewers.
- ◆ “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” - security and idealism
- ◆ Efforts to help activists against racism and stop violence were limited
- ◆ Famous Speeches (terse and vivid style):
 - ◆ 1962 - Rice University - man on moon
 - ◆ 1963 - Europe-'Ich bin ein Berliner.' (I am a Berliner)."
 - ◆ 1961 - “President and the Press” Speech - NYC speak before American Newspaper Publishers Association : cooperation in fighting Communism by applying the same standards for publishing sensitive materials in the current Cold War that they would apply in an officially declared war

Head of State (cont.)

◆ Public Opinion:

- ◆ Early studies: openly admiring
- ◆ Later historians: family dealings and personal morals
- ◆ Recent works: middle ground
- ◆ One poll showed that 62% of the population were unhappy with his policies regarding Cuba
- ◆ 20 years after assassination, public opinion poll indicated best of 9 presidents since Hoover
- ◆ Kennedy “most inspired confidence in the White House,” according to 40 percent of those asked





Chief of Party

- ◆ Elected president in 1960, he campaigned on a New Frontier platform
- ◆ Won Democratic primaries in New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, Oregon, Maryland, Nebraska and West Virginia.
- ◆ He won against Nixon through the power of television; claimed that election signaled fundamental generational shift in America, celebration of freedom
- ◆ Majority of Democrats respected him as a leader; he gained congressional seats for the Democratic party
- ◆ When elections for Congress took place shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Democrats increased their majority and it was estimated that Kennedy would now have an extra twelve supporters in Congress for his policies.
- ◆ Travelled around the country to campaign on behalf of his party's candidates
- ◆ Held weekly breakfast meetings with the Vice President and other prominent Democrats in Congress

B+



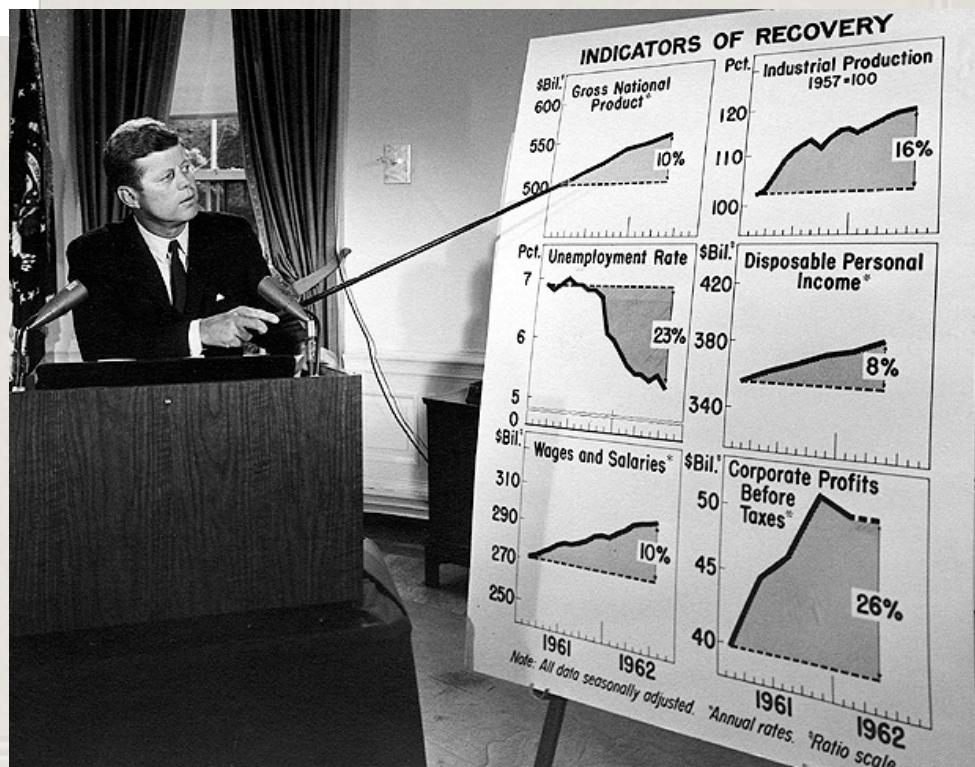
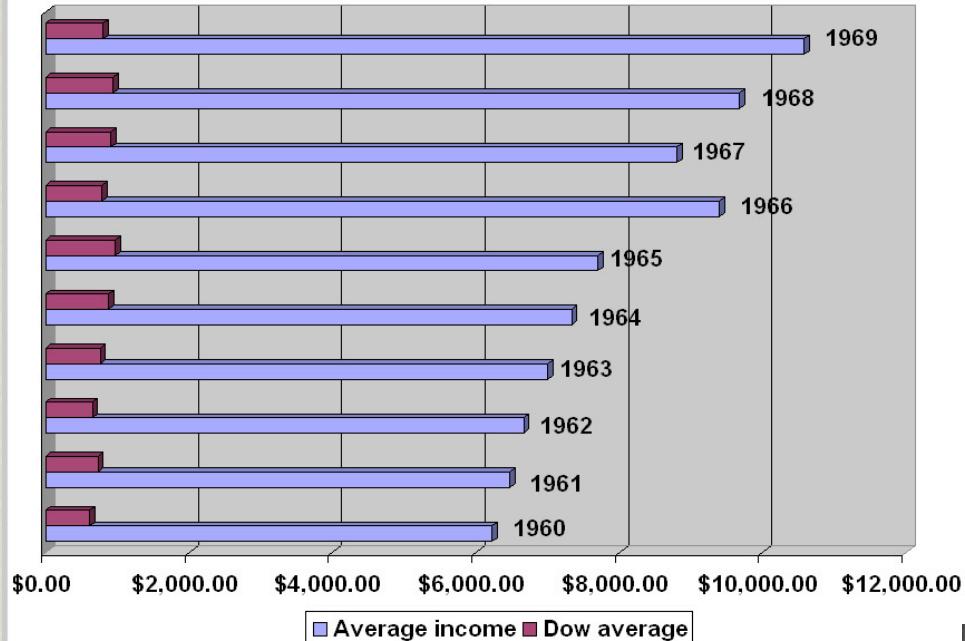
Guardian of the Economy

- ◆ Ended period of tight fiscal policies, loosening monetary policy in order to keep interest rates low and encourage growth of the economy
- ◆ First government budget to \$100 billion+
- ◆ First budget - 1961 - country's first non-war, non-recession deficit
- ◆ efforts to fight recession due to WW2:
 - ◆ lower taxes
 - ◆ food stamps
 - ◆ protect the unemployed (Area Redevelopment bill)
 - ◆ increase the minimum wage
 - ◆ include health insurance to Social Security Program
 - ◆ focus on the business and housing sectors to stimulate the economy.
- ◆ “fine tune” economy with fiscal and monetary measures

Guardian of the Economy (cont.)

- ◆ Stock market steadily declined
- ◆ Economy prospered (previously had 2 depressions in 3 years)
 - ◆ GDP expanded 5.5% from 1961-63
 - ◆ Unemployment deceased
 - ◆ Inflation remained at 1%
 - ◆ Industrial production ↑ 15%
 - ◆ Motor vehicle sales ↑ 40%
 - ◆ Most comprehensive Housing Bill: aid to middle income families and mass transportation users
 - ◆ Comprehensive wheat and grain bill - higher farm income and lower food surpluses

A-



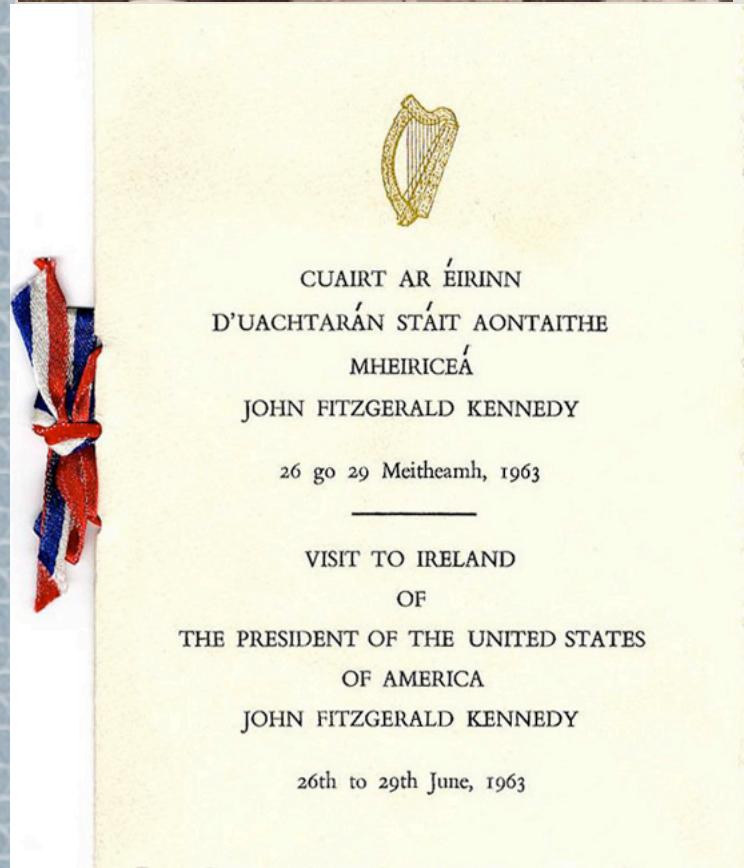
Chief Diplomat

- ◆ Believed that by showing the world what a free and democratic society had to offer, the United States could ensure the defeat of Communism.
- ◆ Strived for the well being of all countries; argued for increased financial aid to underdeveloped countries
- ◆ Pressure allies endangered by revolution to institute reforms in order to enhance their domestic popularity and viability of their governments.
- ◆ However, sending money and troops and money to Vietnam caused him problems.
- ◆ 1951 - toured Europe visiting Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Yugoslavia and West Germany and then Middle East, India, Pakistan, Indochina, Malaya and Korea.
- ◆ Peace Corps: send 10,000 young people to serve in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Kennedy argued that this “practical, inexpensive, person-to-person program will plant trust, good will and a capacity for self-help” in the underdeveloped world.

Chief Diplomat (cont.)

- ◆ Alliance for Progress: plan to improve Latin America's social and economic fortunes; improved America's standing in the region
- ◆ Limiting Nuclear Testing: Great Britain and Soviet Union to limit testing
 - ◆ Reduction of hazardous nuclear “fallout”
 - ◆ Signaled the success of Kennedy's efforts to engage the Soviet Union in constructive negotiations and reduce Cold War tensions

B



Final Overview

- ◆ Chief Legislator: B+ : Despite the opposition from Congress, he helped support education, fight poverty, and help the unemployed. However, he could have done more to counter the violence associated with civil rights.
- ◆ Commander-in-Chief: C: JFK caused many problems in Vietnam by worsening the situation and embroiled American troops in the endless conflict; his rash Bay of Pigs invasion also served to tarnish his reputation. However, his reaction to the Cuban Missile Crisis was more thorough and reputable.
- ◆ Chief Executive: A-: He ran the White House smoothly and surrounded himself with liberal minded intellectuals who were able to advise him appropriately.
- ◆ Head of State: A: His vivid speaking style, vigor, and charisma won the hearts of many Americans. He successfully manipulated the media and television to portray a positive image of himself as well.
- ◆ Chief of Party: B+: He campaigned effectively on his liberal New Frontier platform and won election by a narrow margin. Despite significant opposition from a Republican Congress, he managed to gain seats for his party in Congress.
- ◆ Guardian of the Economy: A-: He led the nation out of a recession and stimulated the economy by boosting the agricultural and industrial sectors.
- ◆ Chief Diplomat: B: His Alliance for Progress, Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and Peace Corps helped reduce Cold War tensions and improved America's standing in the world. However, his failures in Cuba and Vietnam caused problems.
- ◆ **OVERALL GRADE: B :** *Overall Kennedy was a captivating leader, speaker, and guardian of the economy. Although he pursued practical legislation, he was blocked by Congress; his rash and ineffective decisions regarding Cuba and Vietnam, as well as his unexpected assassination have also made his presidency a controversial topic.*

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