

RESOURCE LIBRARY

ACTIVITY : 1 HR 30 MINS

Glued to the Screen

Students analyze American news coverage of important political events of the early 1960s.

GRADES

9 - 12+

SUBJECTS*Social Studies, U.S. History, World History***CONTENTS**

5 Links, 2 PDFs, 1 Resource

OVERVIEW

Students analyze American news coverage of important political events of the early 1960s.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/glued-screen/>

Program

KILLING
KENNEDY

DIRECTIONS

1. Discuss news consumption today.

Ask students, *What sources do you use to access the news and to find information about current events?* Allow students to share responses. Push students to discuss the following news sources: Twitter, online media and news sites, television news, and radio. After student sharing, ask: *Why do you use these sources?*

2. Discuss sources available to access the news in the early 1960s.

Explain to students that they are going to examine how the public reacted to news about important political events during the early 1960s, and about whether their reactions were influenced by how they received the news.

Ask: How did people get their news in the 1960s? Discuss responses before explaining that, during this time, Americans were increasingly getting their news from television, rather than radio. In 1950, only 9 percent of U.S. households had a television, but by 1965, 92.6 percent of Americans owned a television. Even as Americans transitioned to TV news, older forms of media persisted. Newspaper circulation reached an all-time high in 1964, and 29 percent of all advertising dollars were spent on print advertising. With the introduction of car radios in the 1930s, most Americans could also listen to news radio in the car as television news dominated inside the home. Americans in the 1960s had more news options than ever before.

Guide students through a brainstorm about similarities and differences between newspapers, radio, and television. Draw a Three-Circle Venn diagram on the board, and label each circle as either “Newspaper,” “Radio,” or “Television.” Record information from the student discussion in this diagram, modeling how to fill out a Three-Circle Venn diagram. Explain that students will be filling out their own Three-Circle Venn diagrams later in the activity. During the brainstorm, prompt students to think about the limitations and sensory characteristics of each media type.

Ask: Is one form of news media better than another? What are the benefits of reading a newspaper versus listening to the radio? Of listening to the radio versus watching television? Discuss responses, highlighting that each form of media has different strengths. No form is inherently the best. Point out that different types of media provide different resources and possible perspectives on events to their readers, viewers, and listeners.

3. Examine the role of media during the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon presidential debate.

Explain to students that they will analyze the role of media on one political event, the election of 1960. Later, they will analyze another event—both in groups and then on their own—using a Three-Circle Venn diagram.

Ask students: *What does it mean to be “presidential”?* Discuss student responses. Make sure students mention appearance and mannerisms.

Tell students that, in 1960, the presidential debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon was the first debate ever to be seen live on television. It was also broadcast over the radio and covered in newspapers.

Show a clip from the First Kennedy-Nixon debate, twice. First, play the video clip from 16:48 minutes to 20:04 minutes without projecting the video, and tell students to close their eyes and listen as if they were hearing a radio broadcast of the debate. Ask students: *Based on listening to the clip, which candidate sounded more presidential in the debate?* Discuss student responses and have them cite evidence to support their responses.

Play the same clip a second time, but this time project the video to allow students to see the candidates as they debate. Ask students: *Based on watching the clip, which candidate looked and sounded more presidential in the debate?* Discuss student responses and have them cite evidence to support their responses.

Inform students that polling data after the debate indicated radio listeners believed Nixon won, but television viewers believed Kennedy won. Have students read the “Nixon, Kennedy Clash in TV Debate on Spending, Farms, and Social Issues” article from the New York Times, written at the time of the debate. After, discuss: *Does the perspective of the article reflect (support) the audio or video perspective of who won?* Have students cite evidence to support their responses.

Distribute the 3-Circle Venn diagram, and have students label each circle as either “Newspaper,” “Radio,” or “Television.” Ask students to take notes in their diagrams during the following class discussion. Ask students:

- *Why do you think television viewers preferred Kennedy to Nixon?*
- *Why do you think radio listeners preferred Nixon to Kennedy?*
- *Who would newspaper readers pick as the winner? Why?*
- *What does the 1960 presidential election debate tell us about the impact of radio and television on American politics at that time?*

4. Students review and analyze the news media’s response to the Kennedy assassination in 1963.

Divide students into small groups and provide each group with a new Three-Circle Venn diagram, again labeling each circle as “Newspaper,” “Radio,” or “Television.” Explain that each group will work together to analyze the media coverage during another important political event of the early 1960s—the assassination of President Kennedy. Discuss student knowledge of the event, if any, before assuring that they know the following:

On November 22, 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. The assassination took place during a motorcade that many news organizations were covering as a part of the president’s visit to Texas. Americans were informed of this tragic event through their televisions. Walter Cronkite, a CBS news anchor, delivered the CBS special bulletin. The event was also heavily covered by newspapers and radio.

Have students watch the CBS video clip “Cronkite Remembers JFK,” in which the anchor discusses delivering the news that day in 1963. Pause the video at 1:31 minutes. As in step 3, have students watch the video twice—the first time with their eyes closed, as if they were listening to the radio, and the second time with their eyes open, as if they were watching the broadcast live.

Next, have students read the “Kennedy is Killed by Sniper as he Rides in Car in Dallas; Johnson Sworn in on Plane” news story from the New York Times. In their groups, have students discuss the sources they just reviewed and determine what the similarities and differences are between the reports. One student in the group should act as the recorder, documenting the group discussion in the Three-Circle Venn diagram. Prompt students to include how much information was conveyed, the tone of the news, the date and timing of each source, the perspective of the reporter, if any, and any other additional information.

5. Discuss how different types of media covered news events in the early 1960s.

After groups have completed their diagrams, ask: *How did different types of media cover the news of the assassination? How was this coverage similar to or different from the news coverage of the 1960 presidential debate?*

6. Analyze how media impacted American and global reactions to the Kennedy assassination.

Ask: *What effect did news of the debate and the assassination have on the public, and did different types of media have different effects on people?*

Explain that, to answer this question, students will analyze five first-hand accounts of people describing their reactions to the Kennedy assassination. Have students record their findings in a Five-Column Chart, labeling each column as a different first hand account.

Before reading, establish criteria students should use in their analysis of the first-hand accounts. Ask students: *If our goal is to learn how news media affected the way people around the world felt about the JFK assassination, what information do we need to take away from each account we read?*

Ensure all students have access to a computer and allow them to begin to work in their groups to analyze the five accounts from the BBC: On This Day: 1963: 'Stunned into silence' by JFK's death website. While students are working as a group to conduct their analysis, each student should individually record his or her findings in a notebook or on a chart.

7. Conduct a concluding discussion.

After groups have finished their analysis, have each group share their findings. Ask:

- *Based on the accounts, from which form of media—television, radio, or newspaper—did most people learn about the Kennedy assassination?*
- *Did people who learned about the assassination the same way have similar reactions? Why or why not?*
- *What differences and similarities exist between American reactions and the reactions of people from other countries?*
- *Based on the information in the accounts, did people who felt a personal connection to JFK react more strongly to his assassination?*
- *How did different types of media contribute to feelings of personal connection?*

Modification

Another alternative to the BBC website is [AARP's Tumblr blog](#).

Tip

Divide students into groups before beginning the activity to ensure speedy transitions.

Modification

Instead of using the BBC website, allow students to interview a friend or family member who was alive at the time of JFK's assassination. For interview questions, see the Other Notes in the Preparation section.

Tip

In Step 2, model how to fill out a 3-Circle Venn diagram during the brainstorm by projecting it or drawing it on the board.

Tip

Use a document camera to ensure accurate note-taking when using a Venn diagram.

Informal Assessment

Have students respond to the following essay prompt: *How did different types of media influence public reactions and opinions of events in the early 1960s?* Review the provided Essay Grading Rubric with students so that they know what is expected of them, and ask them to cite specific examples from the 1960 presidential debate and/or 1963 Kennedy assassination in their essays. Collect student responses and review using the provided rubric.

Extending the Learning

Divide students into small groups and ensure each group has computer access. Direct students to the [6th Floor Museum: Covering Chaos](#) website. Ask students to read the timeline of media coverage from 12:30 to 1 p.m. following the assassination. Once students have finished reading, ask a volunteer to identify when the Walter Cronkite report of the CBS special bulletin occurred. After, ask: *What other forms of media are represented in this timeline? When did their reports occur compared to when Walter Cronkite's television broadcast occurred?*

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

- U.S. History
- World History

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- describe American news sources in the 1960s
- analyze the role of media in American society in the 1960s by watching selections from the Kennedy-Nixon debate
- analyze the impact of media on global reactions to the Kennedy assassination by reading first-hand accounts
- articulate how different types of media may influence public reactions and opinions

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Cooperative learning
- Discovery learning
- Discussions
- Reading

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Communication and Collaboration
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

- 21st Century Themes
 - Civic Literacy
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Applying
 - Understanding

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- Theme 1:

Culture

- Theme 2:

Time, Continuity, and Change

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY

- World History Era 9 (5-12) Standard 1:

How post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up

ISTE STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS (ISTE STANDARDS*S)

- Standard 2:

Communication and Collaboration

- Standard 4:

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

Preparation

What You'll Need

MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Computers
- Pencils

- Pens

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per small group, Projector, Speakers
- Plug-Ins: Flash

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

OTHER NOTES

Have students ask a friend or family member the following questions:

- Where were you when you learned JFK was assassinated? How did you learn about it?
- How did you feel when you heard that he had been killed?
- What was the reaction to JFK's assassination in your community?
- Did you or your family continue to watch television following the assassination? Why or why not?

After students conduct interviews, allow them to share their interviews with the class. Then, resume Step 4 of the activity.

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Due to recent expansions in media technology, including wire services and television, images from Dallas soon streamed into millions of American living rooms. Kennedy's assassination altered the media landscape in the United States as one of the first events to receive non-stop media

coverage over multiple days. Americans were glued to their television sets, unable to stop watching the events unfold in Dallas—from the announcement of Kennedy’s death, to Lee Harvey Oswald’s arrest and death, captured live, to the state funeral of President Kennedy.

Prior Knowledge

["Understanding of the history of radio and TV, as well as understanding of media and communications."]

Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
assassinate	<i>verb</i>	to murder someone of political importance.
Cold War	<i>noun</i>	(1947-1991) conflict between the Soviet Union (and its allies) and the United States (and its allies). The two sides never confronted each other directly.
media	<i>noun</i>	means of mass communication, such as television or the Internet. Singular: medium.

For Further Exploration

Websites

- [6th Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza: Covering Chaos](#)
- [Newseum: JFK Exhibit](#)

PARTNER





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