

THE CENTURY: AMERICA'S TIME POISONED DREAMS

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The first few years of the 1960s promised a greater, stronger and more unified America than ever. America, as the undisputed leader of the free world, straddled the globe like Colossus. But within a few years the optimism of the first years of the decade would vanish, only to be replaced by the uncertainty of a new and unfamiliar world, and the national mourning of a fallen leader. This episode covers the years 1960-1963, and examines the events of the era such as the lunch counter sit-ins at Greensboro, North Carolina, the Kennedy years, the Cuban Missile Crisis and America's increasing involvement in Vietnam. The episode ends with the assassination of Kennedy and the loss of American innocence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina, young African-American students demonstrated against segregation by sitting at luncheon counters that only served white patrons. Why were some white Americans, especially in the South, so opposed to integration?
2. How could young African-Americans be "freed" by being arrested and put in jail?
3. The early 1960s were unique in that it was truly a youth culture. Discuss some ways in which this is evident.
4. What is a "cold warrior?" How were both John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon cold warriors?
5. John F. Kennedy was one of America's most popular presidents. Why was JFK so popular? What was his special appeal?

6. Discuss the role of television in the 1960 presidential election. How does television influence the political scene today?
7. *Psycho* was one of the most popular movies of the early 1960s and remains a cult classic to this day. Why was this movie so popular?
8. Why did the Soviet Union erect the Berlin Wall?
9. Who were the Freedom Riders? What were their objectives? How are they true American heroes?
10. What is the “domino theory?” How did this theory influence American foreign policy in the 1960s?
11. Discuss the power of song in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.
12. How did JFK’s death affect America? What was the impact of this national loss?
13. Why was JFK’s assassination the day America “lost its innocence?”