

THE CENTURY: STARTING OVER

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In the aftermath of the turmoil of the 1960s and the disillusionment of Watergate, Americans turned to Jimmy Carter in an attempt to return to small-town values. But Carter's inability to deal with the overwhelming social, economic and political problems paved the way for a new conservatism led by Ronald Reagan, and the jubilation of the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration gave way to the despair and embarrassment of the Iranian Hostage Crisis. This episode examines the mid and late 1970s and some of the major events of the era such as the energy crisis, racial unrest, the rise of the "Me Generation," unemployment and inflation, and the problems with Iran.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In 1976, America celebrated its 200th birthday. Why was the Bicentennial celebration so important to America? Why was it so necessary?
2. Why was America's prestige, nationally and internationally, at an all-time low?
3. The 1970s is known as the "me" decade. What prompted the individuality and self-absorption that earned the decade this title?
4. In 1976, Georgia governor and peanut farmer Jimmy Carter became president of the United States. What was the appeal of this unlikely presidential candidate?
5. The 1970s were a time of political apathy. What caused this political apathy and malaise? Why had the American voters lost confidence in their government and leaders?

6. America in the 1970s experienced a severe energy crisis. Discuss how this crisis affected the American economy and society.
7. In 1978, Dan White, a disgruntled city employee in San Francisco, murdered mayor George Moscone and openly gay city supervisor Harvey Milk. How did these murders help to advance the Gay Liberation Movement?
8. How did the disco scene of the 1970s reflect the political and social apathy of the era?
9. Iranian students held Americans hostage for over 400 days in the late 1970s. Why was Iran so anti-United States?
10. Ronald Reagan won the presidency in 1980 and became one of America's most popular presidents. What was the appeal of this former actor?