

# HISTORICAL ANALYSIS – Cause & Effect... *The Great Society*

**Objective:** Analyze the causes and effects of the Great Society.

## From the Revised Content Outline for Period 8

**Key Concept 8.2:** New movements for civil rights and liberal efforts to expand the role of government generated a range of political and cultural responses.

- III. Liberalism influenced postwar politics and court decisions, but it came under increasing attack from the left as well as from a resurgent conservative movement.
- A) Liberalism, based on anticommunism abroad and a firm belief in the efficacy of government power to achieve social goals at home, reached a high point of political influence by the mid-1960s.
  - B) Liberal ideas found expression in Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, which attempted to use federal legislation and programs to end racial discrimination, eliminate poverty, and address other social issues. A series of Supreme Court decisions expanded civil rights and individual liberties.
  - C) In the 1960s, conservatives challenged liberal laws and court decisions and perceived moral and cultural decline, seeking to limit the role of the federal government and enact more assertive foreign policies.
  - D) Some groups on the left also rejected liberal policies, arguing that political leaders did too little to transform the racial and economic status quo at home and pursued immoral policies abroad.
  - E) Public confidence and trust in government's ability to solve social and economic problems declined in the 1970s in the wake of economic challenges, political scandals, and foreign policy crises.
  - F) The 1970s saw growing clashes between conservatives and liberals over social and cultural issues, the power of the federal government, race, and movements for greater individual rights.

## Consider the following prompt:

**Explain how President Lyndon Johnson's beliefs about the federal government's role in U.S. social and economic life affected political debates and policies.**

## Directions:

1. Begin this activity by analyzing President Lyndon B. Johnson's goals in creating a "Great Society" as communicated in his 1964 speech. As you read, highlight the goals of the great society, and other evidence. Evidence includes: the eras LBJ refers to in his opening remarks. Consider why is he taking the audience back through this timeline and how this reasoning explains his causation as well as goals; the three areas LBJ focuses on building the great society... consider Why he focused on these areas; the programs created under LBJ from 1963-1969 as part of his effort to build the Great Society.

Prior to embarking on this "Great" endeavor, Johnson said to one of his advisors, "We've got to use the Kennedy program as a springboard to take on the Congress, summon the states to new heights, create a Johnson program, different in tone, fighting and aggressive," he said. "Hell, we've barely begun to solve our problems. And we can do it all." (source: The Great Society at 50, *Washington Post*, 2014)

Source: The speech below (excerpts) was delivered by President Johnson as a commencement (graduation) speech at the University of Michigan on May 22, 1964.

... my fellow Americans:

...For a century we labored to settle and to subdue a continent. For half a century we called upon unbounded invention and untiring industry to create an order of plenty for all of our people. The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use that wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization. Your imagination and your initiative and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs, or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth. For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society. (emphasis added)

The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning. The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community. It is a place where man can renew contact with nature. It is a place which honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods. But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.

So I want to talk to you today about three places where we begin to build the Great Society -- in our cities, in our countryside, and in our classrooms. Many of you will live to see the day, perhaps 50 years from now, when there will be 400 million Americans -- four-fifths of them in urban areas. In the remainder of this century urban population will double, city land will double, and we will have to build homes and highways and facilities equal to all those built since this country was first settled. So in the next 40 years we must re-build the entire urban United States.

Aristotle said: "Men come together in cities in order to live, but they remain together in order to live the good life." It is harder and harder to live the good life in American cities today. The catalog of ills is long: there is the decay of the centers and the despoiling of the suburbs. There is not enough housing for our people or transportation for our traffic. Open land is vanishing and old landmarks are violated. Worst of all expansion is eroding these precious and time honored values of community with neighbors and communion with nature. The loss of these values breeds loneliness and boredom and indifference.

...A second place where we begin to build the Great Society is in our countryside. We have always prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful. Today that beauty is in danger. The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing. A few years ago we were greatly concerned about the "Ugly American." Today we must act to prevent an ugly America. For once the battle is lost, once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.

A third place to build the Great Society is in the classrooms of America. There your children's lives will be shaped. Our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination. We are still far from that goal. Today, 8 million adult Americans, more than the entire population of Michigan, have not finished 5 years of school. Nearly 20 million have not finished 8 years of school. Nearly 54 million -- more than one quarter of all America -- have not even finished high school. Each year more than 100,000 high school graduates, with proved ability, do not enter college because they cannot afford it. And if we cannot educate today's youth, what will we do in 1970 when elementary school enrollment will be 5 million greater than 1960? And high school enrollment will rise by 5 million. And college enrollment will increase by more than 3 million. In many places, classrooms are overcrowded and curricula are outdated. Most of our qualified teachers are underpaid and many of our paid teachers are unqualified. So we must give every child a place to sit and a teacher to learn from. Poverty must not be a bar to learning, and learning must offer an escape from poverty. But more classrooms and more teachers are not enough. We must seek an educational system which grows in excellence as it grows in size. This means better training for our teachers. It means preparing youth to enjoy their hours of leisure as well as their hours of labor. It means exploring new techniques of teaching, to find new ways to stimulate the love of learning and the capacity for creation.

These are three of the central issues of the Great Society. While our Government has many programs directed at those issues, I do not pretend that we have the full answer to those problems. But I do promise this: We are going to assemble the best thought and the broadest knowledge from all over the world to find those answers for America...

...So, will you join in the battle to give every citizen the full equality which God enjoins and the law requires, whatever his belief, or race, or the color of his skin?

...Those who came to this land sought to build more than just a new country. They sought a new world. So I have come here today to your campus to say that you can make their vision our reality. So let us from this moment begin our work so that in the future men will look back and say: It was then, after a long and weary way, that man turned the exploits of his genius to the full enrichment of his life. Thank you. Good-bye.

## Explaining Causation... *The Great Society*

(prompt: Explain how President Lyndon Johnson's beliefs about the federal government's role in U.S. social and economic life affected political debates and policies.)

### Directions Continued:

Analyze the documents and apply them to an argument relevant to the prompt and your thesis *USING YOUR THREE STEP STRATEGY*. Remember your purpose: analyzing documents, *explaining causation, and defending an argument*.

#### Document 1

Source: Abraham Ribicoff, secretary of health, education, and welfare, testifying before the House of Representatives, July 1961.

With life spans lengthened, with medical science breaking into undreamed realms of discovery, the nation's aged now face another aspect of insecurity: how to meet the mounting costs of health care.

#### Document 2

Source: Stokely Carmichael, "What We Want," *New York Review of Books*, September 22, 1966.

On May 3, five new county "freedom organizations" convened and nominated candidates for the offices of sheriff, tax assessor, members of the school boards. Their ballot symbol is the black panther: a bold beautiful animal, representing the strength and dignity of Black demands today. A man needs a black panther on his side when he and his family must endure—as hundreds of Alabamians have endured—loss of job, eviction, starvation, and sometimes death for political activity. He may also need a gun, and SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] reaffirms the right of Black men everywhere to defend themselves when threatened or attacked.

As for initiating the use of violence, we hope that such programs as ours will make that unnecessary; but it is not for us to tell Black communities whether they can or cannot use any particular form of action to resolve their problems. Responsibility for the use of violence by Black men, whether in self-defense or initiated by them, lies with the White community.

*... The Great Society***Document 3**

Source: NOW Statement of Purpose, October 29, 1966.

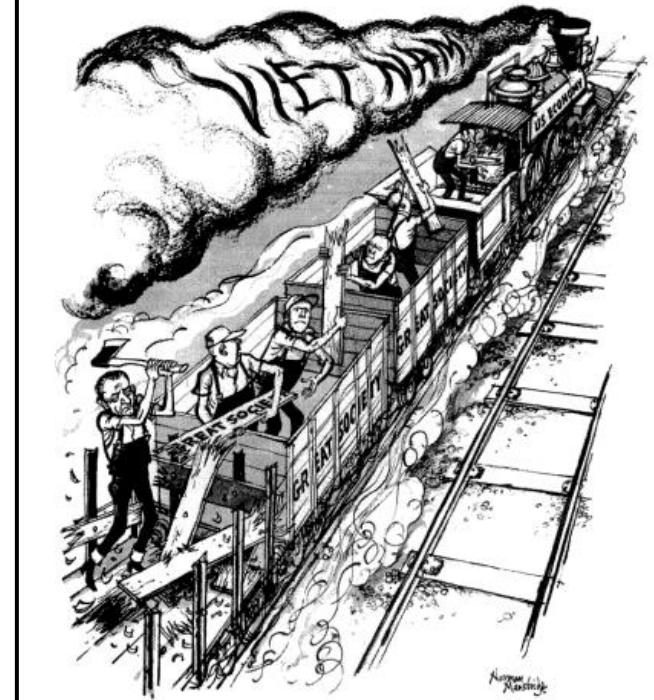
We, men and women who hereby constitute ourselves as the National Organization for Women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the worldwide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders.

The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men . . .

There is no civil rights movement to speak for women, as there has been for Negroes and victims of discrimination. The National Organization for Women must therefore begin to speak.

**Document 4**

Source: *Punch*, 1967



**The Train Robbery**

... *The Great Society*

Directions Continued: Address the items below in complete sentences.

3. Write a complete thesis using the formula. *ATFP and give value!*

4. Write three or four sentences contextualizing the topic. Remember to include a piece of evidence NOT found in the documents.

5. What piece of outside evidence will you use in this essay? In several complete sentences explain how this piece of evidence supports your thesis. **CLOSE THE LOOP!**