

# John F. Kennedy and the Cold War

## High School United States History

Time Frame: 2-3 class periods

### Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC):

#### *United States History*

- 5.4.1.d Analyze the impact of Cold War events in Cuba, including the Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961) and Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) and the expansion of the Cold War into the Western Hemisphere.
- 5.4.1.e Examine the causes and escalation of United States involvement in the Vietnam War, including the domino theory and Tonkin Gulf Resolution
- 5.4.1.f Analyze the competition and the consequences of the space and arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, including the impact of Sputnik

#### *Government*

- 2.1.B.1.d Evaluate how international issues and interests, such as terrorism, regionalism and human rights affect federal government policy
- 2.1.B.1.f Evaluate the role of United States government in promoting the spread of democracy

### **Objective:**

Students will be able to analyze the opportunity cost of decisions made by President John F. Kennedy regarding Cold War events.

### **Vocabulary:**

Cold War  
Opportunity Cost

### **Materials**

Student:

- Student Resource Sheet #1, "Admit Slip"
- Student Resource Sheet #2, "John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address"
- Student Resource Sheet #3, "Bay of Pigs Invasion"
- Student Resource Sheet #4, "Cold War Decision Making"
- Student Resource Sheet #5, "Kennedy's Cold War Decisions"

### **Lesson Development:**

*Prior to this class, students should have completed Student Resource Sheet #1, "Admit Slip."*

1. **Motivation:** Have students work in small groups to discuss their response to Student Resource Sheet #1, "Admit Slip." Have student volunteers share their reactions. Discuss.
2. Ask students to predict Kennedy's stance on United States/Soviet Union Relations.

3. Distribute Student Resource Sheet #2, “John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address.” Students should read the remainder of Kennedy’s Inaugural Address. After reading, they should write a group hypothesis of how they think Kennedy would react towards the Soviet Union and the Communist threat. Discuss.
4. Tell students that they will be examining several key events in the presidency of John F. Kennedy. Distribute Student Resource Sheet #3, “Bay of Pigs Invasion.” Have students read the background of the situation. As a class, complete the “President Kennedy’s Decision” section of the worksheet.

*Note to teacher: You may need to review the concept of opportunity cost with students.*

*Opportunity Cost- The foregone benefit of the next best alternative when an economic decision is made*

5. Have students discuss whether they think Kennedy made the right decision or not. Read the “Results of Kennedy’s Choice” section of Student Resource Sheet #3. Discuss.
6. Break the class into 5 groups. Tell students that they will be examining several other decisions that Kennedy made during his presidency. Assign one of the following topics to each group:
  - Laos Crisis
  - Berlin Crisis
  - Cuban Missile Crisis
  - Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
  - Involvement in the Vietnam War
7. Each group will research their assigned topic and complete the Student Resource Sheet #4, “Cold War Decision Making.”
8. Have groups present their topic to the class. As each group presents, students should complete Student Resource Sheet #5, “Kennedy’s Cold War Decisions.”
9. **Assessment:** Refer students back to Kennedy’s Inaugural Speech. Have them respond to the following prompt.

“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty. This much we pledge--and more...”

John F. Kennedy  
Inaugural Address, 1961

President Kennedy has been called a “Cold War Warrior.” Write an essay that accepts or rejects this statement. Be sure to use examples to support your opinion.

## Admit Slip

“The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe--the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans--born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage--and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty. This much we pledge--and more...”

John F. Kennedy  
*Inaugural Address, 1961*

### Respond to the following prompt:

Write a paragraph about your reactions to this quote. You may wish to think about the following:

- What was the purpose of this speech?
- Who was the intended audience(s) of this speech?
- What do you think the audiences' reactions to this speech were?
- How did this quote make YOU feel?

Student Resource Sheet #2

**John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address**  
January 20, 1961

*"The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe--the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.*

*We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans--born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage--and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.*

*Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.*

*This much we pledge--and more...*

To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United, there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures. Divided, there is little we can do--for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.

To those new States whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom--and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

To those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required--not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge--to convert our good words into good deeds--in a new alliance for progress--to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this Hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.

To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support--to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective--to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak--and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run.

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed. But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course--both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

So let us begin anew--remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.

Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms--and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations.

Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors.

Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths, and encourage the arts and commerce.

Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah--to "undo the heavy burdens ... and to let the oppressed go free."

And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved. All this will not be finished in the first 100 days. Nor will it be finished in the first 1,000 days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again--not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are--but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation"--a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.

Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility--I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it--and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own."

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/kennedy.htm>

## Bay of Pigs Invasion

### Background

Ever since the Spanish American War, the United States was a dominant force in the Cuban economy. American owned business controlled Cuba's oil industry, 90% of its mines and approximately 50% of its railroads, cattle, and sugar industries. American organized crime syndicates controlled much of Havana's hotel and nightlife business. In addition, the United States supplied Cuba with three-fourths of its imports. Cuba's dictator, Fulgencio Batista, happily accepted all of this investment. Many of Batista's detractors resented United States involvement and thought that he was "selling out" to the Americans.

In the early 1950's, a peasant based revolutionary movement, led by Fidel Castro, became powerful in the rural areas surrounding Havana. On January 1, 1959, Castro and his followers entered Havana and seized control of the government. On January 2, 1959, the government announced that 50-60% of casino profits would be directed to welfare programs. Castro became the Prime Minister of Cuba in February and executed more than 500 of Batista's allies. He also suspended elections and named himself "President for Life", jailing or executing anyone who opposed him. In May the government seized large estates (many of which were American owned) and turned into state farms. These actions worried the Eisenhower administration. It feared that Castro would be seen as a model for other Latin American countries. As a deterrent, the U.S. cut back the quota by which Cuba could export sugar to America at a favored price.



This did not stop Castro; in fact he seized American oil refineries in June without compensating the owners. U.S. response was swift- the balance of Cuba's sugar quota was eliminated. Castro immediately nationalized all 36 American owned sugar mills and other property, all of which was valued at over \$750 million. In October, the Eisenhower administration imposed an embargo on virtually all exports to Cuba. President Eisenhower also secretly ordered CIA chief Allen Dulles to fund, train, and equip a military force of Cuban exiles with the intent of liberating Cuba from Castro. This training was done at secret bases in Guatemala.



By the time John F. Kennedy took office, the situation between the United States and Cuba had reached the breaking point. Cuba and the U.S.S.R had released a joint statement in which they expressed socialist solidarity. As a result of this statement, Eisenhower cut off diplomatic relations with Cuba.

President Kennedy was faced with a difficult decision- proceed with the planned invasion of Cuba or not to proceed with the invasion.

**President Kennedy's Choice:**

Choices	Proceed with the Invasion of Cuba	Don't Proceed with the Invasion of Cuba
<b>Benefits to the United States</b>		
<b>Choice Made- Check One Box</b>		
<b>Opportunity Cost</b>		

Given the choices and the costs and benefits of each alternative **as they were considered at the time**, do you think Kennedy made the right choice? Why or why not?



### **Results of the Kennedy's Choice:**

On April 17, 1961 approximately 1400 CIA trained Cuban exiles landed at Cuba's Bay of Pigs. They had believed that the local population would aid them in their trip across the island to Havana. Local support never emerged. Their problems were compounded by the fact that they ran out of supplies. President Kennedy, wishing to keep United States involvement a secret, refused to provide air support or supplies to the exiles.

Castro's air superiority and well-trained forces had no difficulty repelling this weak invasion. Without supplies or air cover, the invading forces fell within 72 hours. In the end, 200 rebel soldiers were killed and 1,197 others were captured.

As a result of this failed invasion, the United States suffered diplomatic and political embarrassment in the world community. In addition, Castro was pushed further into the Soviet sphere and he committed himself fully to the Communist ideology.

**Cold War Decision Making**

**TOPIC** \_\_\_\_\_

**Background:**

**President Kennedy's Choice:**

<b>Choices</b>		
<b>Benefits to the United States</b>		
<b>Choice Made- Check One Box</b>		
<b>Opportunity Cost</b>		

Given the choices and the costs and benefits of each alternative **as they were considered at the time**, do you think Kennedy made the right choice? Why or why not?

**Results of Kennedy's Choice:**

Student Resource Sheet #5

**Kennedy's Cold War Decisions**

	<b>Background</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>Bay of Pigs</b>			
<b>Laos Crisis</b>			
<b>Berlin Crisis</b>			
<b>Cuban Missile Crisis</b>			
<b>Nuclear Test Ban Treaty</b>			
<b>Involvement in the Vietnam War</b>			