

Lesson 47

Ford and Carter

A. A President and Vice President With No Election

¹As the Watergate scandal was unfolding, the Nixon administration was dealt another blow. ²His vice president, Spiro Agnew, pleaded “no contest” to charges of bribery and income tax evasion when he was the governor of Maryland and then vice president. ³After his trial in October 1973, Agnew resigned his office. ⁴According to the 25th Amendment, passed only six years before, in 1967, when a vacancy exists in the office of the vice president, the president shall nominate a replacement that Congress approves with a majority vote. ⁵Nixon replaced Agnew with Gerald R. Ford, a Michigan Republican who was well respected by both Republicans and Democrats while serving 25 years in the House of Representatives. ⁶When Nixon resigned ten months later in August of 1974, Ford became president and he, in turn, had to appoint a new vice president (Nelson Rockefeller). ⁷Ford and Rockefeller thereby became the only U.S. president and vice president to ever hold those offices at the same time without having been elected by American voters.

⁸After taking office, President Ford told the country “Our long, national nightmare is over.” ⁹Rather than have the nation focused on a long criminal trial of the resigned former president,



he decided to use his presidential powers to try to move beyond the scandal. ¹⁰Ford issued a presidential pardon to Nixon in September 1974, for “any and all crimes” Nixon may have committed while in office. ¹¹Many Americans who wanted Nixon to stand trial for his actions were upset with Ford’s pardon.

¹²Ford also had to deal with a struggling American economy which was feeling the pain of

rising foreign oil prices. ¹³Inflation (when prices rise quickly) was a major problem, especially for oil and gasoline. ¹⁴Frustrated Americans sat in their cars in long lines to get high-priced gas in the mid-1970s. ¹⁵The president tried to encourage the American public to lower their consumption, thus lowering demand, which would, in turn, lower inflation. ¹⁶He called this program WIN—“Whip Inflation Now.” ¹⁷He also proposed raising taxes five percent on corporations and wealthy individuals, but the controlling Democratic Party refused to pass his increase through Congress. ¹⁸Faced with an economy heading for recession, Ford then proposed a tax cut, but inflation became even worse. ¹⁹So did unemployment. ²⁰Especially hard hit were the traditional automobile manufacturing centers in the upper Midwest and the Northeast. ²¹As higher oil prices, old technologies, and foreign competition drove many businesses in those regions to close, that section of the country became known as the “Rust Belt.”

²²Ford ran for reelection, but the Nixon pardon and the poor economy doomed his success. ²³Voters were also discouraged when South Vietnam was taken over by communist forces in April of 1975. ²⁴Many felt it was time for a change in the federal government.

B. Jimmy Carter

²⁵The bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence was in 1976, and Americans celebrated 200 years of independence. ²⁶That year Jimmy Carter, a former U.S. Naval officer and the Democratic governor of Georgia, won



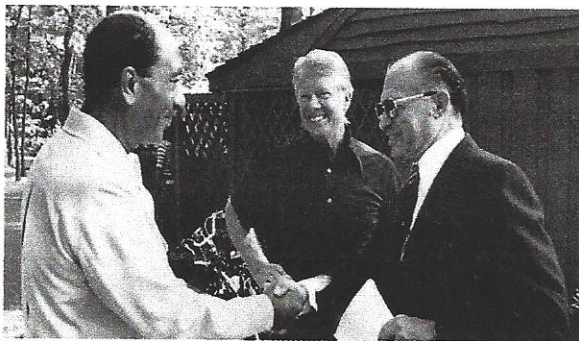
Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalyn walked from the Capitol Building to the White House on inauguration day to show he planned to be a different type of president.

the presidential election. ²⁷He campaigned as a Washington D.C. outsider and centrist (not too far right or left) who had no connection with the Watergate scandal in the nation's capital. ²⁸White Southerners, working-class Americans, and black Americans from every region were especially happy to vote for a "Washington outsider."

²⁹However, President Carter was such an "outsider" that he didn't get along with Washington, D.C. politicians from either party. ³⁰His administration made little progress over the next four years on the nation's problems. ³¹He upset Democratic liberals by budgeting less money for social programs and removing government price controls on many corporations. ³²Carter created a new cabinet position, the Department of Energy, but it did little to slow rising oil prices, resulting in high gasoline prices. ³³He upset conservative Republicans when his officials negotiated a treaty that transferred full control of the Panama Canal, a U.S. territory since 1903, back to Panama. ³⁴Republicans also showed little support for Carter's efforts to improve a nuclear arms treaty with the Soviet Union. ³⁵Both liberals and conservatives were saddened that Carter cancelled U.S. participation in the 1980 Summer Olympics scheduled for Moscow, USSR—a move the president made in protest over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

C. Middle East Mess

³⁶The biggest headache for President Carter came from the Middle East. ³⁷At first, Carter seemed to win a victory when he arranged for a



Israeli Leader Menachem Begin, President Jimmy Carter, and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat at Camp David, 1978

peace agreement called the Camp David Accords. ³⁸Camp David is a presidential retreat in Maryland. ³⁹Carter invited the leaders of Egypt and Israel—former enemies—to the retreat to work out an end to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. ⁴⁰Success came when Egypt agreed to become the first Arab

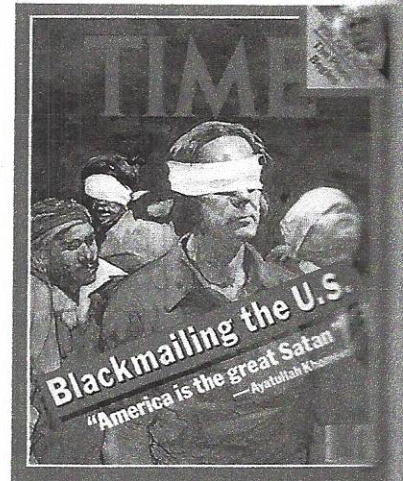
nation to officially recognize the post-WWII Jewish nation of Israel as a true country. ⁴¹In return, Israel withdrew its military from a section of disputed Arab land. ⁴²However, peace in the Middle East between Arabs and Jews fell apart within a few years.

⁴³The U.S. relationship with Iran also fell apart. ⁴⁴After WWII, the United States had supported Shah Mohammed Pahlavi as Iran's leader. ⁴⁵The shah had been a strong anti-Soviet force in the Middle East. ⁴⁶He had also sold oil to the United States even when neighboring Muslim countries stopped selling U.S. oil because of the U.S.'s support for Israel. ⁴⁷The shah's close relationship with the United States and his harsh treatment of his own Iranian people led to his removal in early 1979 by a group of Muslims led by Ayatollah Khomeini. ⁴⁸The shah fled his country and asked the United States to take him in.

⁴⁹President Carter allowed the shah to receive cancer treatment in the United States in November. ⁵⁰Khomeini and his supporters were angered by this move. ⁵¹Iranian militant groups publicly burned American flags and attacked the U.S. embassy in Iran's capital, capturing 66

American workers. ⁵²For the next year and a half, Carter tried to negotiate the release of the U.S. hostages. ⁵³When that didn't work, the president ordered a U.S. military strike to rescue them. ⁵⁴But Americans were further embarrassed when the rescue attempt failed miserably; the military helicopters crashed, killing eight U.S. airmen.

⁵⁵Jimmy Carter was nominated by the Democratic Party to run for reelection in 1980 but lost by one of the largest electoral margins in U.S. history to the Republican candidate—Ronald Reagan. ⁵⁶That meant that no president had completed two terms in office since Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s. ⁵⁷In a bittersweet (both painful and pleasant) move, Iranian authorities released the American hostages the very day that Carter left office—January 21, 1981.



Fun Fact Feature

Jimmy Carter was a farmer in Georgia before becoming president. Can you name the crop he grew? He kept a jar with this product on his White House desk.

What did President Nixon have to appoint a new president in 1973?

What was unusual about Gerald Ford and Nelson Rockefeller as president and vice president?

- a. They were not of the same political party.
- b. They were not elected for those offices by voters.
- c. They were the first to be voted in from the Independent Party.
- d. They were related to one another.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

What did President Gerald Ford do about the Watergate scandal when he took office?

- a. He pardoned Nixon.
- b. He ordered the Attorney General to prosecute Nixon.
- c. He proposed a program called "WIN."
- d. He did nothing.

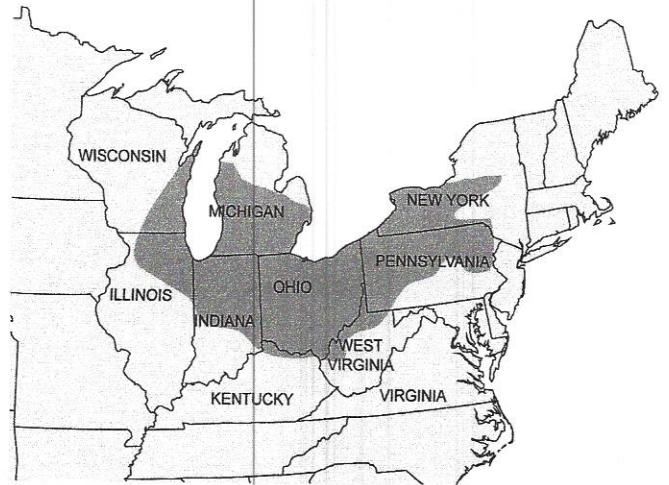
Which sentence best supports the answer?

What new cabinet position did President Carter create while in office?

5. Jimmy Carter was elected in the same year as:
- a. the Watergate scandal.
 - b. the Iran hostage crisis.
 - c. Nixon's pardon.
 - d. America's bicentennial.

Which sentences best support the answer?

6. What does the map below, drawn in the 1970s, probably represent?



- a. the region of lowest inflation
- b. the Rust Belt
- c. where Jimmy Carter won the most votes for president
- d. the Watergate scandal

Which sentences best support the answer?

7. The Iranian hostage crisis erupted when which fallen leader entered the United States upon the invitation of President Carter?
- a. Spiro Agnew
 - b. Ayatollah Khomeini
 - c. the leader of the Soviet Union
 - d. Shah Mohammed Pahlavi

Which sentences best support the answer?

8. The Camp David Accords were an attempt by the Carter administration to bring peace to:
- a. Afghanistan.
 - b. the Cold War between the U.S. and the USSR.
 - c. the Middle East.
 - d. Maryland.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

9. The Carter administration negotiated a treaty that gave back what American territory?
- a. Iran
 - b. Puerto Rico
 - c. Panama Canal
 - d. Israel

Which sentence best supports the answer?

Written Response Question

10. This lesson states that as of 1980, "No president had completed two terms in office since Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s." Look back on previous lessons in this book. List the five presidents since Eisenhower and describe in complete sentences why each did not finish a second term.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

- e. _____

Fun Fact Finale

Jimmy Carter struggled early in his farming career—he and his wife once lived in public housing—but eventually became a prosperous peanut farmer. A peanut statue now stands near his home town of Plains, Georgia.

