1968

Richard Nixon vs Hubert Humphrey

A 20-minute lesson on the 1968 U.S. presidential election. Includes lesson plan, student worksheet, answer key, and discussion prompts.

ERA Cold War Realignment	ELECTORAL VOTES 538 total
WINNER Richard Nixon (Republican) · 301 EV	RUNNER-UP Hubert Humphrey (Democratic) · 191 EV
KEY ISSUE Vietnam War; civil unrest and riots; law and order; Nixon's 'Silent Majority'	TURNOUT 62.5%

CONTENTS

1. Cover
2. Story (with a picture)
3. Three questions
4. Teacher notes

1968

The year 1968 was very hard for the United States. Many things happened that made people sad. American soldiers were fighting in a country called Vietnam. The war was on TV every night, and many soldiers were getting hurt. People did not agree about whether the war should keep going. Some Americans had big protests in the streets.

In April of 1968, a great leader of the civil rights movement was killed. His name was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He had helped Black Americans win the right to vote and the right to use the same schools and stores as everyone else. After he was killed, cities all over America had riots. People were angry and grieving.

In June of that same year, another leader, Robert Kennedy, was also killed. Robert Kennedy was running for president. Many people had hoped he could heal the country. When he died, it felt like the country was falling apart.

In November of 1968 it was time to vote for president. There were three people running. The Democrat was Hubert Humphrey, the vice president. The Republican was Richard Nixon - look at his picture. There was also a third man, George Wallace, who had been a governor in Alabama.



Richard Nixon, the 37th U.S. president. He took office in January 1969 after winning the 1968 election.
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Let's talk about the story

1.

Who won the 1968 presidential election? Say his name out loud.

2.

Name one reason 1968 was a hard year for the United States.

3.

Who was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and why was his death so sad?

Warm-up (5 min)

Look at the man in the picture. His name is Richard Nixon. In 1968, the United States was going through a hard time. Many Americans were sad and worried. Mr. Nixon said he could bring peace and order.

Answer key

1.

Richard Nixon won. He became the 37th president of the United States. He started his job in January 1969.

Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey (Democrat) and George Wallace (third-party). He had been vice president from 1953 to 1961 under Eisenhower.

2.

Accept any: the Vietnam War was getting worse; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed in April; Robert Kennedy was killed in June; cities had riots; many Americans were protesting; soldiers were dying. Award credit for any specific 1968 event.

1968 is one of the most eventful years in American history. Even a kindergartner can grasp that many sad things happening at once made the year hard.

3.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a leader of the civil rights movement. He helped Black Americans win the right to vote and the right to be treated equally. His death was sad because he had worked hard to make America more fair, and many people loved him.

King is the central figure of the Civil Rights era. The child-level framing of his work as making America "more fair" is age-appropriate and accurate.