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Lyndon B. Johnson: The Great Society Builder

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Lyndon B. Johnson's journey in public service began when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1937. Over the years, he steadily climbed the political ladder, eventually becoming Vice President under President John F. Kennedy. His role as Vice President was significant, and it provided him with valuable experience in national politics. When President Kennedy was tragically assassinated in 1963, Johnson assumed the presidency, and his leadership during this challenging time demonstrated his ability to handle the responsibilities of the highest office in the land.
2. Lyndon B. Johnson faced significant opposition and challenges in advancing civil rights legislation during the 1960s. While he successfully pushed for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which aimed to end racial segregation and discrimination, he encountered resistance from some Southern politicians who opposed desegregation. The Civil Rights Act faced fierce debates in Congress, and Johnson had to use his political skills to build bipartisan support for the legislation. Additionally, the struggle for civil rights led to civil rights marches and protests, and Johnson had to address the concerns of both civil rights activists and those who opposed change. Despite these challenges, Johnson's determination and political acumen played a crucial role in advancing civil rights in the United States.



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3. The Vietnam War had a profound impact on American society and the political landscape during Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency. The war divided the nation, with anti-war protests and demonstrations becoming widespread. It was a significant factor in shaping the political climate of the era, with many Americans questioning the government's decisions and the rationale for U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The war also had economic consequences, as resources were diverted to fund the conflict. Ultimately, the Vietnam War contributed to Johnson's decision not to seek re-election in 1968 and influenced subsequent presidential elections. Its effects were felt for years, both domestically and internationally.
4. The effectiveness of Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" initiative is a subject of debate. While the initiative introduced important programs like Medicare and Medicaid, poverty rates in the United States remained a persistent issue. Critics argue that the "War on Poverty" did not achieve its intended goals of eradicating poverty completely. However, proponents argue that it did make a significant impact by providing essential assistance to vulnerable populations, improving access to healthcare, and laying the groundwork for future anti-poverty efforts. The initiative's legacy is still a topic of discussion today, with ongoing efforts to address poverty and inequality in American society.

