Learning Objectives: To identify the causes, what happened, and effects of the Watergate Scandal on America

Nixon meets Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai – February 1972
Nixon meets Leonid Brezhnev in USSR, General Secretary of the Communist Party which leads to SALT 1 and ‘peaceful coexistence’ – May 1972
Nixon re-establishes US relations with Egypt – June 1974
Re-election of the President

In 1972, the Republican President Richard Nixon stood for re-election. He had been president since 1969.

The Committee to Re-elect the President (CRP or CREEP) was set up to raise funds for his re-election campaign.

However some of this money was being used by John Mitchell, the Attorney General to pay for spying and sabotage on the Democrats.
Re-election of the President

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- Nixon’s aides broke into buildings and **bugged them** or **stole material** that might compromise the government or help to **smear** the Democrats.

- This was a hotly contested election. Many people disliked Nixon because of his **invasion of Cambodia** and sending troops into **Kent State University** in 1970.
The Break-in

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- On 17th June 1972, five burglars were caught in the offices of the National Democratic Committee in the Watergate office building in Washington DC.
- From the start, two Washington Post reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein were suspicious.
- They found out that one of the burglars was on CREEP’s payroll.
The Suspect List

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Research all the people involved in the Watergate Scandal and create a suspect list as a family tree - record the names and details of all the key individuals and what they did.
The Break-in

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• The day after the Post mentioned this, Nixon and his chief of staff, Bob Haldeman, secretly discussed forcing the FBI to drop the burglary investigation.

• Publicly, a White House spokesman refused to comment on ‘a third-rate burglary.’ Nixon thought from the start that he could cover up how far he was involved.
The Watergate Tapes

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- From 1971, well before the break-in, Nixon had been secretly taping conversations and phone calls in his office.

- It was these tapes, once their existence became known, that allowed investigators to sort out, to an extent, how far the President and his aides were involved in setting up the burglary and trying to cover it up.
No one knew the extent of the scandal to start with. Most media reported on the election campaigns. Most newspapers didn’t believe the President could be involved.

Only Woodward and Bernstein carried on investigating, and helped by a secret FBI source, ‘Deep Throat’ they went on digging.

They had not found enough evidence by November so Nixon was re-elected with 60% of the vote.
Why was it a scandal?

• What did the president know, and when did he know it? This was the question that occupied everyone’s mind.

• The main problem was the way Nixon had **lied**, people could **not trust** the president.

• People thought their president would be **honorable**. This undermined trust in politics.
Why was it a scandal?

- Nixon’s initial denial of involvement in the cover-up was **undermined by the evidence** that the tapes were altered before they were handed over.
- This was enough for the Senate to **impeach** Nixon.
- When the 23\(^{rd}\) June tape was released (on which he discussed stopping the FBI investigation), it **proved he had been involved** from the start.
Why was it a scandal?

• His TV speeches denying involvement had thus been a lie.
• This tape was the ‘smoking gun’ that implicated Nixon in the crime that left him with no alternative but to resign.

In April 1973, Nixon went on TV and told the nation that ‘there can be no whitewash at the White House’. He then appointed a special prosecutor to investigate the Watergate affair. The man chose for this was Archibald Cox.’

Source B: From a modern textbook
The Impact of Watergate

- He **resigned** the Presidency! He also faced trial however on 8\(^{\text{th}}\) September 1974 the new president, Gerald Ford granted him a **full pardon**.
- He said he was doing this for the sake of the country.
- Nixon later claimed, ‘the way I tried to deal with Watergate was the wrong way’.
- He is remembered by many only for Watergate, not **his foreign policy successes** in dealing with China/USSR.
The Effects on US Politics

**Short Term**
- Many White House officials were tried and over 30 went to prison.
- In federal elections, the Republicans lost 48 seats in House of Representatives and 8 seats in the Senate.
- The Democratic President, Jimmy Carter was likeable and honest but not good at international relations.

**Long Term**
- American politicians felt that their reputation worldwide had been damaged.
- American people became more cynical about their politicians and less willing to trust what they said.
- The media was less deferential to the government. It was quicker to hunt down, and ‘expose’ without full evidence political scandals.
Research the following laws enacted after the Scandal, recording key details about each law and its impact on US government and society:

- The War Powers Act 1973
- The Election Campaign Act 1974
- The Privacy Act 1974
- The Congressional Budget Control Act 1974
- The Bill Amending the Freedom of Information Act 1974
- The National Emergencies Act 1976
- The Ethics in Government Act 1978
"On 17th June 1972, five members of CREEP were arrested for breaking into the offices of the Democratic Party in the Watergate Building in Washington D.C. President Nixon regularly denied all knowledge of the break-in. However, taped conversations in the White House revealed otherwise."