

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **President Lyndon Johnson**

It was an unlikely prediction. Lyndon Johnson's grandfather said when Johnson was born on August 27, 1908, "A United States senator was born today – my grandson." But Johnson's parents were poor farmers living in a farmhouse lacking indoor plumbing and electricity and water was drawn from a well in central Texas. Lyndon was the oldest of five children. Johnson's father did serve twice in the Texas House of Representatives.

The Johnson family moved to Johnson City, Texas so the children could attend school. Johnson City was a small town named for Lyndon's grandfather. Lyndon Johnson had political ambitions from an early age. While in high school he said he wanted to be president of the United States.

Johnson graduated from high school at age fifteen and set out on an adventure to California with five friends to find work. After a short time, Johnson returned home and worked on a road crew. His Mother finally convinced him to go to Texas State Teachers College and he finally graduated in 1930. He was an excellent debater and taught public speaking and debate at a Houston, Texas high school. A year later, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Texas asked Johnson to go to Washington, D.C. and be his secretary.

In 1934, Johnson met and married Claudia Taylor whose nickname was "Lady Bird." They had two daughters, Lynda and Luci.

During this time the country was gripped by the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt was president and he started many programs to create jobs for workers. One of the programs was the National Youth Administration which gave part-time jobs to college students and full-time jobs to other young people. This program had a director for each state and in 1935 Johnson was director for Texas. In 1937, at age twenty-eight, Johnson filled a vacant seat in the U.S. House of Representatives for the State of Texas. He went on to be elected five more times to this position.

In 1948 Johnson, a Democrat won a very close victory over another Democrat for the nomination to run for Senate in Texas. Johnson then won the Senate seat in the general election. As a Senator, Johnson was the first chairman of the Senate Aeronautics and Space Sciences Committee. In the Senate, Johnson

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### **President Lyndon Johnson (Cont'd)**

was known as a persuasive individual who brokered many deals with Democrats and Republicans alike to get bills passed.

Even though Johnson did not actively campaign during the primary season to run for president in 1960, many delegates at the convention voted for him. In 1960 John Kennedy was the Democratic nominee for president and Lyndon Johnson became the nominee for vice president. On November 22, 1963 Johnson and his wife were in the parade when President Kennedy was assassinated. Vice President Johnson immediately flew to Washington, D.C. He was sworn in as President about the presidential airplane named Air Force One.

President Johnson was responsible for getting Kennedy's civil rights legislation passed by Congress. Among other rights, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 allowed African Americans equal access to all public places. Prior to that African Americans were not allowed in restaurants, for example, in southern states. In 1964, Johnson introduced his Great Society plans to end poverty and racial injustice. In 1964, Johnson was elected president by a huge landslide, getting 61% of the popular vote.

Johnson's Great Society program, among other things, introduced Medicare to provide medical services to people over the age of sixty-five, Head Start for preschoolers, and clean air and water provisions. Those opposed to the Great Society objected to the costs of these new programs.

Johnson lost popularity with the American people over the Vietnam War. Johnson did not want South Vietnam to become a Communist country and he sent American combat troops to the country in 1965 believing they could easily defeat the North Vietnamese army. The last American troops did not leave Vietnam until 1973 during the second term of President Nixon. As the Vietnam War dragged on and thousands of American soldiers were dying, many Americans opposed the war and wanted the United States to withdraw from Vietnam. Even though Johnson could run for another term, he did not run again in 1968. He returned to his ranch in Texas where he died on January 22, 1973.

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### President Lyndon Johnson Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Lyndon Johnson once worked
  - a. As an accountant
  - b. On a road crew
  - c. As an astronaut
  
2. In 1935, during the Great Depression, Lyndon Johnson was
  - a. Unemployed
  - b. A farmer
  - c. Texas director of the National Youth Administration
  
3. Lyndon Johnson served the State of Texas
  - a. As a U.S. Representative
  - b. As a U.S. Senator
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  
4. Lyndon Johnson was Vice President under President
  - a. Franklin Roosevelt
  - b. John Kennedy
  - c. Richard Nixon
  
5. How did Lyndon Johnson first become president?
  - a. The president was assassinated and Johnson was vice president
  - b. He was appointed by the Senate
  - c. He won the election by a landslide
  
6. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 allowed African Americans
  - a. To vote
  - b. To go to school
  - c. To go to public places like restaurants
  
7. Johnson's plans to end poverty and racial injustice were called
  - a. The Great Society
  - b. The Civil Rights Act of 1964
  - c. Aeronautics and Space Sciences Committee
  
8. Lyndon Johnson lost his popularity with the American people because of
  - a. The Great Society
  - b. The Civil Rights Act of 1964
  - c. The Vietnam War

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## President Lyndon Johnson Answers

### Multiple Choice

1. b.
2. c.
3. c.
4. b.
5. a.
6. c.
7. a.
8. c.