

## Watergate Timeline

- 1972:**
- June 17** – Five men are arrested breaking into the headquarters of the Democratic Party at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, DC. The FBI launches an investigation.
  - June 20** – A secret informant provides Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post* inside information about the break in.
  - August 1** – A *Washington Post* article reveals that a \$25,000 check to the Nixon re-election campaign had been deposited by a Watergate burglar.
  - November 7** – Richard Nixon is re-elected president.
- 1973:**
- January** – The five Watergate burglars, plus G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, are convicted for the break-in.
  - February 7** – The U.S. Senate launches an investigation into the Watergate break-in.
  - March 19** – The Watergate burglar James McCord claims he was pressured to stay silent and that others were involved in the scandal.
  - April 30** – President Nixon gives nationally televised speech on Watergate.
  - June 25** – John Dean testifies before the Senate committee investigating Watergate.
  - July 13** – A Nixon aide Alexander Butterfield reveals to the Senate committee that Nixon had bugged the White House and recorded all conversations in the Oval Office.
  - August 1** – H.R. Haldeman testifies before the Senate committee investigating Watergate.
- 1974:**
- July 24** – The Supreme Court rules in *United States v. Nixon* that President Nixon must turn over the White House tapes.
  - July 27-30** – The House Judiciary Committee adopts three articles of impeachment against Nixon that would be voted on by the entire House of Representatives.
  - August 9** – Nixon resigns from the presidency before the impeachment vote. Vice President Gerald Ford becomes president.
  - September 8** – President Ford pardons Nixon.

## Document A: Nixon Watergate Speech

*As public concern about the Watergate scandal grew, President Richard Nixon went on live television to deliver this address to the nation.*

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I decided, as the 1972 campaign approached, that the presidency should come first and politics second. To the maximum extent possible, therefore, I sought to ... remove the day-to-day campaign decisions from the president's office. ...

Who, then, is to blame for what happened in this case?

The easiest course would be for me to blame those to whom I **delegated** the responsibility to run the campaign. But that would be a cowardly thing to do.

I will not place the blame on **subordinates**—on people whose **zeal** exceeded their judgment and who may have done wrong in a cause they deeply believed to be right.

In any organization, the man at the top must bear the responsibility. That responsibility, therefore, belongs here, in this office. I accept it. And I pledge to you tonight, from this office, that I will do everything in my power to ensure that the guilty are brought to justice.

**Source:** *President Richard Nixon's first speech to the nation on the Watergate affair, April 30, 1973.*

### Vocabulary

delegate: assign a task to another person

subordinate: a person who works at a lower level in an organization

zeal: passion

## Document B: Dean Testimony

*John Dean, an attorney, served as White House counsel to President Nixon. Dean had begun cooperating with the Senate's investigation into the Watergate scandal in April 1973, and Nixon fired Dean shortly after. The following excerpt is from sworn testimony Dean gave to the Senate committee investigating Watergate. At the time, Dean believed that the White House might try to claim he was responsible for ordering the Watergate break-in.*

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[On March 13] I told the president that there was no money to pay [the burglars] to meet their demands. He asked me how much it would cost. I told him that I could only estimate; that it might be as high as a million dollars or more. He told me that that was no problem. ...

[On the morning of March 21] I began by telling the president that there was a cancer growing on the presidency and that if the cancer was not removed, that the president himself would be killed by it. ...

I concluded by saying that it is going to take continued **perjury** and continued support of these individuals to **perpetuate** the **cover-up** and that I did not believe that it was possible to so continue it.

[In a meeting on the afternoon of March 21] It was quite clear that the **cover-up** as far as the White House was concerned was going to continue. [I told President Nixon and Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman] it was time that everybody start thinking about telling the truth.

**Source:** *John Dean testimony before the Senate, June 25, 1973.*

### Vocabulary

perjury: lying under oath

perpetuate: continue

cover-up: hide something

## Document C: Haldeman Testimony

*H.R. Haldeman was President Richard Nixon's Chief of Staff until April 1973. Haldeman offered this sworn testimony to the Senate committee investigating Watergate.*

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Haldeman: President Nixon had no knowledge of or involvement in either the Watergate affair itself or the **subsequent** efforts of a cover up of the Watergate. It will be equally clear, despite all the unfounded **allegations** to the contrary, that I had no such knowledge or involvement.

[Howard Baker, a Republican Senator from Tennessee, questioned Haldeman about whether John Dean's claim that Nixon had suggested paying the Watergate burglars \$1 million to stay quiet was true.]

Baker: I want to test the accuracy of your recollection and the quality of your notetaking from those **tapes**. ... [You claim that] the president said, "There is no problem in raising a million dollars. We can do that, *but it would be wrong*." ... [I]t would be a most damning statement if, in fact, the tapes clearly show he said, "but it would be wrong." It's an entirely different context. Now how sure are you, Mr. Haldeman, that those tapes, in fact, say that?

Haldeman: I'm absolutely positive.

**Source:** *H.R. Haldeman testimony before the Senate, August 1, 1973.*

### Vocabulary

subsequent: later

tapes: Nixon's White House audio tape recordings

allegation: accusation

## Document D: White House Tapes

*These conversations were recorded in the White House by President Nixon.*

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June 23, 1972

Haldeman: Now, on the investigation, you know, the Democratic break-in thing, we're back in the problem area because the FBI is not under control, because [FBI Director Pat] Gray doesn't exactly know how to control [FBI agents investigating the crime], and their investigation is now leading into some productive areas, because they've been able to trace the money. ... [John Dean and John Mitchell believe] the way to handle this now is for us to have [CIA Deputy Director] Walters call Pat Gray and just say, "Stay the hell out of this business." ...

Nixon: What about Pat Gray, ah, you mean he doesn't want to?

Haldeman: Pat does want to. He doesn't know how to, and he doesn't have any basis for doing it. Given this, he will then have the basis.

March 21, 1973

Nixon: How much money do you need?

Dean: I would say [the burglars] are going to cost, uh, a million dollars over the next, uh, two years.

Nixon: We could get that.

Dean: Uh, huh.

Nixon: You, on the money, if you need the money, I mean, uh' you could get the money. Let's say—

Dean: Well, I think that we're going—

Nixon: What I mean is, you could get a million dollars. And you could get it in cash. I know where it could be gotten.

**Source:** *White House recordings from June 23, 1972, and March 21, 1973.*

## Guiding Questions

### **Document A: Nixon Watergate Speech**

- 1) (Close Reading) President Richard Nixon claimed he was not directly involved in his own re-election campaign in 1972. What reason did he give for not being involved?
  
- 2) (Close Reading) Who did Nixon say was responsible for Watergate?
  
- 3) (Sourcing) How reliable a source is Nixon's speech for understanding whether he was involved in the Watergate break-in? Explain.

### **Document B: Dean Testimony**

- 1) (Close Reading) What does Dean say about Nixon's involvement in the Watergate break-in?
  
- 2) (Corroboration) How does Dean's account compare with Nixon's account in Document A?
  
- 3) (Contextualization) Dean gave this testimony under oath. How might that affect the reliability of his account?
  
- 4) (Sourcing) How reliable a source is Dean's testimony for understanding whether President Nixon was involved in the Watergate break-in? Explain.

**Document C: Haldeman Testimony**

- 1) (Close Reading) What does Haldeman say about Nixon's involvement in the Watergate break-in?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) (Corroboration) How does Haldeman's account compare to Document B? How does it compare to Document A?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) (Sourcing) Dean and Haldeman gave directly conflicting accounts under oath. Which account is more reliable? Explain.

**Document D: White House Tapes**

- 1) (Close reading) What do the recordings reveal about Nixon's involvement in a cover-up of the Watergate break-in?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) The tape from June 23, 1972, was recorded just six days after the Watergate break-in. What does that suggest about Nixon's involvement in the break-in?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) (Corroboration) Do the tapes from March 21, 1973, support Dean's account or Haldeman's?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) (Sourcing) The recording from June 23, 1972, is commonly referred to as the "smoking gun" because it provides strong evidence. Why is this recording considered stronger evidence than Haldeman's or Dean's sworn testimony?