

The Vietnam War Years

Lesson 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. President Kennedy confronted Communist threats around the world.
2. The United States and the Soviet Union raced to send a person to the moon.
3. The Cold War conflict in Vietnam led the United States into war.

Key Terms and People

Peace Corps program that sent volunteers to developing countries to help with projects such as digging wells and building schools

Fidel Castro Cuban rebel leader who led a revolution and established a Communist government

Berlin Wall Cold War barrier of concrete and barbed wire that separated East and West Berlin in Germany into two parts

Cuban missile crisis attempt by the Soviet Union to send nuclear missiles to Cuba; U.S. Navy formed a blockade to prevent Soviet ships from bringing in weapons

Neil Armstrong American astronaut; the first man to walk on the moon

Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin crewmate of Neil Armstrong; second man to walk on the moon

Ho Chi Minh leader of Communist revolution against the French in Vietnam

domino theory concern that if one nation became Communist, nearby nations would follow

Vietcong guerrilla fighters opposed to the South Vietnamese government

Lesson Summary

KENNEDY CONFRONTS COMMUNISM

President Kennedy was devoted to stopping communism. He used military forces and nonmilitary programs, such as the **Peace Corps**. In 1959 **Fidel Castro** organized a Communist government in Cuba. The CIA began training Cuban exiles to invade the island. However, the invasion, which occurred at the Bay of Pigs, was a disaster.

The Soviet Union threatened to take over West Berlin in 1961. When the Soviets were unable to

What methods did President Kennedy use to stop the growth of communism?

Lesson 1, *continued*

do so, the **Berlin Wall** was created. In 1962 the **Cuban missile crisis** lasted for 13 days and ended when the Soviet Union stopped placing nuclear weapons in Cuba. The crisis led to the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

RACE TO THE MOON

One aspect of the Cold War during the 1960s was the space race. In 1961 the Soviet Union sent the first man, Yuri Gagarin, into space. Then, in 1961 Alan Shepard Jr. made the first American space flight. John Glenn orbited Earth in 1962. In 1969 **Neil Armstrong** and **Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin** became the first people to walk on the moon.

Who were the first people to walk on the moon?

CONFLICT IN VIETNAM

One of the most serious and devastating events of the Cold War took place in Vietnam. After World War II, **Ho Chi Minh** led nationalists to take Vietnam from the French. He wanted to establish a Communist government. The United States supported the French with military aid because of the **domino theory**. The French surrendered in 1954, and Vietnam was divided into North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

The United States hoped that Ngo Dinh Diem would win elections. He would then be able to unify Vietnam under a non-Communist government. When Diem canceled elections in South Vietnam, a civil war began. South Vietnamese troops fought the **Vietcong**, who were supplied by the North. The United States sent military supplies and advisers to South Vietnam. Diem began to lose popularity. In November 1963 military officers took power.

Underline the theory that caused the United States to be worried about Vietnam having a Communist government.

What action started the civil war in Vietnam?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Identify Cause and Effect Do you think that the United States would have sent

Lesson 1, *continued*

people to the moon in 1969 if there had not been the Cold War? Write a paragraph explaining your answer.

DIRECTIONS Look at each set of terms below. On the line provided, write the letter of the term that does not relate to the others.

- | | |
|--|---|
| _____ 1. a. Neil Armstrong
b. Fidel Castro
c. Alan Shepard Jr.
d. Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin | _____ 3. a. Cuban missile crisis
b. Berlin Wall
c. Bay of Pigs
d. Neil Armstrong |
| _____ 2. a. Peace Corps
b. Ho Chi Minh
c. Fidel Castro
d. Soviet Union | _____ 4. a. Cuban missile crisis
b. Ho Chi Minh
c. Vietcong
d. domino theory |

DIRECTIONS Match the terms in the first column with their correct definitions from the second column by placing the letter of the correct definition in the space provided before each term.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| _____ 5. Fidel Castro | a. the idea that one Communist victory would lead to another |
| _____ 6. Berlin Wall | b. a period of 13 days when nuclear war seemed likely |
| _____ 7. Cuban missile crisis | c. led a Communist revolution in Cuba |
| _____ 8. Ho Chi Minh | d. an army of Communist guerrilla forces |
| _____ 9. domino theory | e. built by the East German government |
| _____ 10. Vietcong | f. wanted to free Vietnamese people with a Communist revolution |