

CHAPTER 32 Section 2 (pages 1008–1013)

Watergate: Nixon’s Downfall

BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about President Nixon’s approach to politics and the Cold War.

In this section, you will learn about the Watergate scandal.

AS YOU READ

Use the diagram below to take notes about the causes and effects of the Watergate scandal.

TERMS AND NAMES

impeachment The constitutional process for removing a president from office

Watergate Scandal that forced Nixon to resign

H. R. Haldeman Adviser to Nixon

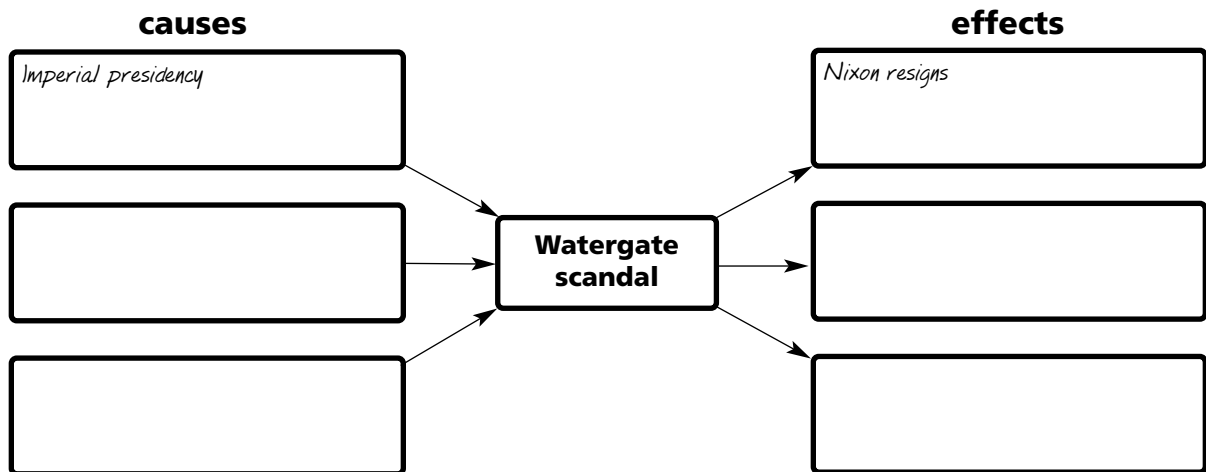
John Ehrlichman Adviser to Nixon

John Mitchell Attorney general and director of Nixon’s campaign

Committee to Reelect the President Nixon’s campaign committee

Judge John Sirica Judge in the trial of the Watergate burglars

Saturday Night Massacre Nixon’s firing of Justice Department officials, including the special prosecutor investigating Watergate



President Nixon and His White House (pages 1008–1009)

What was Watergate?

In 1974, the House Judiciary Committee voted to recommend the **impeachment** of—the bringing of formal charges against—President Richard Nixon. The cause was the **Watergate** scandal which was an attempt to *cover up* a burglary of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters.

By the time Richard Nixon became president, the executive branch had become powerful. Nixon expanded the power of the presidency. He confided in a small group of very loyal advisers. These advisers included **H. R. Haldeman**, chief of staff; **John**

Ehrlichman, chief domestic adviser; and **John Mitchell**, the attorney general. These men helped Nixon get reelected. They also shared Nixon’s desire for power. This would lead Nixon and his advisers to cover up their role in the Watergate burglary.

1. Define Watergate scandal.

The Drive Toward Reelection

(pages 1009–1010)

What was the CRP?

Nixon campaign aides were determined to win the 1972 election. They hired five men to raid

Democratic party offices in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. The men were caught photographing files and placing wiretaps on phones. The press soon discovered that the group's leader, James McCord, was a former CIA agent. He was also an official of a group known as the **Committee to Reelect the President** (CRP). John Mitchell, who had been attorney general, was the CRP's director.

Nixon and his staff tried to hide the link to the White House. Workers shredded evidence. Nixon and his staff asked the CIA to urge the FBI to stop its investigations into the burglary.

The Watergate burglary was not a big issue in the 1972 election. Only two reporters kept on the story. In a series of articles, the reporters found information that linked members of the administration to the burglary. The White House denied any connections.

2. Why did the CRP order the burglary of the Democratic National Committee headquarters?

The Cover-Up Unravels (pages 1010–1012)

How did Nixon get caught?

After Nixon's reelection, the cover-up began to unravel. In January of 1973, the Watergate burglars went to trial. All of the burglars except James McCord changed their pleas from innocent to guilty. McCord was found guilty by a jury. The trial's presiding judge, **Judge John Sirica**, believed that the burglars did not act alone. Then in March 1973, McCord sent a letter to Sirica, stating that he had lied under oath. He also stated that the White House was involved in the cover-up.

Soon the public interest in the Watergate burglary increased. In April 1973, three top Nixon aides resigned. The President then went on television and denied any cover-up. He announced that he was appointing Elliot Richardson as the new attorney general. He authorized Richardson to appoint a *special prosecutor* to investigate Watergate.

In May 1973, the Senate began its own investigation of Watergate. The Senate hearings were televised live. In the hearings, one of Nixon's aides said that Nixon knew about the cover-up. Then it was

revealed that White House meetings had been tape-recorded. The Senate committee demanded the tapes. Nixon refused to release them.

Court battles over the tapes lasted a year. Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor, took the president to court in October 1973 to get the tapes. Nixon refused and ordered Richardson to fire Cox. In what became known as the **Saturday Night Massacre**, Richardson refused the order and resigned. The deputy attorney general also refused and resigned. Solicitor General Robert Bork finally fired Cox. But his replacement, Leon Jaworski, was determined to get the tapes.

3. What did Nixon do during the investigation?

The Fall of a President (pages 1012–1013)

How did Nixon's presidency end?

In March 1974, a grand jury charged seven Nixon aides with *obstruction of justice* and *perjury*. Nixon released more than 1,250 pages of taped conversations. But he did not release the conversations on some key dates. In July 1974, the Supreme Court ordered the White House to release the tapes.

Three days later, a House committee voted to impeach President Nixon. If the full House of Representatives approved, Nixon would go to trial in the Senate. If Nixon was judged guilty there, he would be removed from office. When the tapes were finally released, they proved that Nixon had known of the cover-up. On August 8, 1974, before the impeachment could happen, Nixon resigned.

Watergate produced distrust about the presidency. A poll taken in 1974 showed that 43 percent of Americans had lost faith in the presidency. In the years after Vietnam and Watergate, Americans developed a deep distrust of government officials.

4. Why did President Nixon resign from office?
