

★ **Time Line Activity 15**

John F. Kennedy's Presidency

Background

John F. Kennedy was inaugurated on January 20, 1961. In his inaugural speech, he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." Kennedy followed his own directive—his first several months in office were busy. In March, he formed the Peace Corps, which sent young Americans to help underdeveloped countries fight poverty. In May, he asked Congress for more than \$22 billion to fund Project Apollo, which aimed to land Americans on the moon by the end of the decade. In December, Kennedy appointed Eleanor Roosevelt as head of a Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. The commission's goal was to protect women from sexual discrimination and encourage equal pay.

One of the most prominent failures of JFK's presidency took place during his first months in office. In April 1961, he authorized Cuban exiles to invade the Bay of Pigs on the south coast of Cuba. The invasion was intended to start an uprising among Cubans against Fidel Castro. The operation ended in failure when Castro's forces surrounded the invaders. Kennedy accepted full responsibility for the failure.

In June 1961, Kennedy met with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and reaffirmed America's involvement in West Berlin. As a result, the Soviets constructed the Berlin Wall, which separated East and West Berlin. Two years later, in June 1963, Kennedy visited West Berlin and denounced the wall and the Communist system.

In October 1962, Kennedy faced one of the greatest challenges of his presidency when U.S. intelligence discovered long-range Soviet missiles in Cuba. Kennedy ordered a naval blockade and thus began a weeklong standoff in which both nations were brought to the brink of war. Kennedy and Khrushchev reached an agreement on October 28 that ended the Cuban Missile Crisis. In August 1963, Kennedy addressed the escalating threat of nuclear war by signing a limited test ban treaty with Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

Kennedy's presidency came to a tragic end on November 22, 1963, when he was shot and killed while traveling in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas. The whole nation and the world mourned.

DIRECTIONS: Use the background information to complete a time line about Kennedy's presidency.

1961	1962	1963	1964	

