

Limits and Conservatism

*Contemporary United States
(1968–Present)*



Political fallibility

Energy and economics

Social concerns

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about energy and economic problems during the rise of conservatism and be able to answer these key questions:

- What was the energy crisis? What were its main causes and consequences?
- What was the state of the economy?
- What was Reaganomics? How did it affect society?



Following World War II, the environmentalist movement gained momentum. In particular, Richard Nixon's **Clean Air Act** in 1970 was a significant step in its development.



During this period of U.S. conservatism, presidents became increasingly active on the issues of the environment and **conservation**. Focus was heavily placed on diminishing energy resources and the hunt to find alternative energy sources.

Why do you think energy became such an important topic to U.S. presidents?



Oil supply and demand



What do you know about the global supply and demand of oil in the early 1970s? The following map of the world shows the largest importers and exporters of oil. Use the information contained on the map to answer the questions.

Press **start** to begin.

start



What might happen if countries stopped exporting oil?



In October 1973, the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** agreed to limit or **embargo** oil exportation to countries, like the U.S.



This was in reaction to the U.S. support of Israel during the **Yom Kippur War** in 1973, which involved the supply of arms.

It led to a shortage of oil. Since the oil supply decreased but demand stayed the same, prices also increased.

Scenes showing people lined up to buy oil were not uncommon.

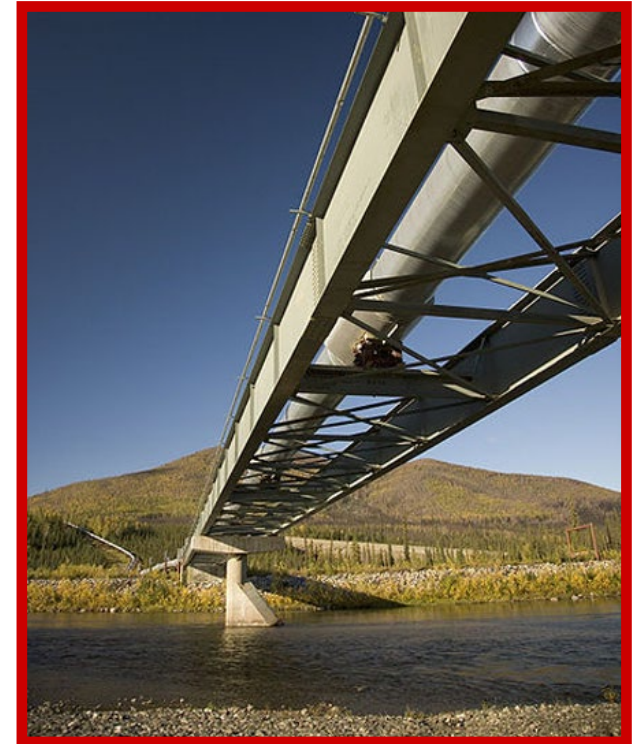
How might the increasing cost of oil affect the U.S.?



Although the oil embargo was lifted in 1974, the price of oil had risen dramatically. Many Americans became concerned about their reliance on oil produced in other countries.

This led to some changes in policy, for example:

- The **Trans-Alaska Pipeline** was approved in 1973 to tap and move domestic oil.
- The **National Energy Act** of 1978 allotted funds in the investigation of alternative energy sources.



Do you know how alternative energy was researched?





To reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil, consecutive presidents created policies to research alternative sources of energy. Drag each statement to the correct place, depending on whether it refers to using nuclear or coal energy.

Press **start** to begin.

start



Which type of energy would you choose?



Opponents of nuclear energy gained support for their arguments as a result of an event that occurred near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on March 28, 1979.

Watch this animation to find out more about the **Three Mile Island** accident.

Press **start** to begin.

start



What do you think the political consequences were?



The momentum of the environmental movement was not constrained to energy sources. In the 1960s, Americans became more concerned with **pollution** and waste disposal.

Awareness of humanity's impact on the environment had been heightened by a 1962 book, called *Silent Spring*, by **Rachel Carson**. She was a marine biologist, who used the book to warn against the use of pesticides.



Politicians took notice of this public interest, leading to roughly 35 pieces of legislation being passed about the environment in the 1970s, and the first **Earth Day** occurring on April 22, 1970.

Why did this movement gain momentum?



In the 1960s, the **baby-boomer** generation became used to prosperity and **consumerism**. The average income had doubled and credit cards were made easily available.

However, the Vietnam War diverted funds and resources from the U.S. There was also a shortage of supplies, making U.S. prices rise and cheaper, foreign imports more popular.

The 1970s saw ongoing economic problems, such as inflation and the energy crisis.

The result was **stagflation**, where prices rose, but employment and economic productivity decreased.



What attempts were made to improve the economy?



"Reaganomics"



During the presidential campaign of 1980, the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan, had highlighted the poor state of the economy. When he won the election, he maintained this focus, pushing forward an economic policy, which later became known as "**Reaganomics**." Read this passage about his policies and select the correct word to fill each blank.

Press **start** to begin.

start



How else did Reagan change the economy?



Effects of “Reaganomics”



In 1980, inflation had risen to about 14%. As a result of this, the U.S. sank into a **recession** between 1981 and 1982. However, things began to change in 1984 with an increase in **consumer spending**.



Reagan’s policy to reduce taxes seemed to have been successful in encouraging public expenditure. Consequently, both inflation and unemployment were reduced. The market improved dramatically, as did the **Gross National Product**.

Do you think “Reaganomics” helped everyone? Why?