**The Great Society: Suggested Activities**

A Powerpoint introducing the students to LBJ and what the great society was and what its goals were, maybe how it was an extension of JFK new Frontier?

Have them work with a partner and research 5 acts passed under GS and answer the following questions about each?

* The Civil Rights Act of 1964
* The Equal Opportunity Act of 1964
* The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
* The Medicare Act of 1965
* The Immigration Act of 1965

What cause did it deal with?  Who did it help?  Was it successful? Do we still have it today?  How would President Obama feel about these issues today?

Design a graphic organizer to go with the Powerpoint

**The Great Society: Background Information**

The **Great Society** was a set of domestic programs in the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) promoted by President [Lyndon B. Johnson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyndon_B._Johnson) and fellow Democrats in Congress in the 1960s. Two main goals of the Great Society social reforms were the elimination of poverty and racial injustice

New major spending programs that addressed education, medical care, urban problems, and transportation were launched during this period. The Great Society in scope and sweep resembled the [New Deal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal) domestic agenda of [Franklin D. Roosevelt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_D._Roosevelt), but differed sharply in types of programs enacted.

**Civil rights**

Historian Alan Brinkley has suggested that the most important domestic achievement of the Great Society may have been its success in translating some of the demands of the [civil rights movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_Rights_Movement_%281955-1968%29) into law.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-Brinkley-10) Four civil rights acts were passed, including three laws in the first two years of Johnson's presidency. The [Civil Rights Act of 1964](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Rights_Act_of_1964)[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-cra64-8) forbade job discrimination and the segregation of public accommodations. The [Voting Rights Act of 1965](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_Rights_Act_of_1965) assured minority registration and voting. It suspended use of literacy or other voter-qualification tests that had sometimes served to keep [African-Americans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American) off voting lists and provided for federal court lawsuits to stop discriminatory [poll taxes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poll_tax). It also reinforced the Civil Rights Act of 1964[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-cra64-8) by authorizing the appointment of federal voting examiners in areas that did not meet voter-participation requirements. The [Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_and_Nationality_Services_Act_of_1965) abolished the national-origin quotas in immigration law. The [Civil Rights Act of 1968](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Rights_Act_of_1968) banned housing discrimination and extended constitutional protections to [Native Americans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) on [reservations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_reservation).

**War on Poverty**

The most ambitious and controversial part of the Great Society was its initiative to end poverty. The Kennedy Administration had been contemplating a federal effort against poverty. Johnson, who, as a teacher had observed extreme poverty in [Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas) among [Mexican-Americans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican-American), launched an "unconditional war on poverty" in the first months of his presidency with the goal of eliminating hunger and deprivation from American life. The centerpiece of the [War on Poverty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Poverty) was the [Economic Opportunity Act of 1964](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_Opportunity_Act_of_1964), which created an [Office of Economic Opportunity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Office_of_Economic_Opportunity) (OEO) to oversee a variety of community-based antipoverty programs.

The OEO reflected a fragile consensus among policymakers that the best way to deal with poverty was not simply to raise the incomes of the poor but to help them better themselves through education, job training, and community development. Central to its mission was the idea of "[community action](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_Action_Agencies)", the participation of the poor in framing and administering the programs designed to help them.

The War on Poverty began with a $1 billion appropriation in 1964 and spent another $2 billion in the following two years. It spawned dozens of programs, among them the [Job Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job_Corps), whose purpose was to help disadvantaged youth develop marketable skills; the [Neighborhood Youth Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Neighborhood_Youth_Corps&action=edit&redlink=1), established to give poor urban youths work experience and to encourage them to stay in school; [Volunteers in Service to America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volunteers_in_Service_to_America) ([VISTA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volunteers_in_Service_to_America)), a domestic version of the [Peace Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_Corps), which placed concerned citizens with community-based agencies to work towards empowerment of the poor; the [Model Cities Program](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Model_Cities_Program) for urban redevelopment; [Upward Bound](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upward_Bound), which assisted poor high school students entering college; legal services for the poor; the [Food Stamp Act of 1964](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_Stamp_Act_of_1964) (which expanded the federal food stamp program);[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-11) the [Community Action Program](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_Action_Program), which initiated local [Community Action Agencies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_Action_Agencies) charged with helping the poor become self-sufficient; and Project [Head Start](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_Start_%28education%29), which offered preschool education for poor children. In addition, funding was provided for the establishment of community health centers to expand access to health care,[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-12) while major amendments were made to [Social Security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Security_%28United_States%29) in 1965 and 1967 which significantly increased benefits, expanded coverage, and established new programs to combat poverty and raise living standards.[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-13) In addition, average AFDC payments were 35% higher in 1968 than in 1960, but remained insufficient and uneven.[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-14)

**Education**

The most important educational component of the Great Society was the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elementary_and_Secondary_Education_Act) of 1965, designed by Commissioner of Education [Francis Keppel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Keppel). It was signed into law on April 11, 1965, less than three months after it was introduced. It ended a long-standing political taboo by providing significant federal aid to public education, initially allotting more than $1 billion to help schools purchase materials and start special education programs to schools with a high concentration of low-income children. The Act established [Head Start](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_Start_%28education%29), which had originally been started by the Office of Economic Opportunity as an eight-week summer program, as a permanent program.

The Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, which was signed into law by Johnson a month after becoming president,[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-15) authorized several times more college aid within a five-year period than had been appropriated under the Land Grant College in a century, and provided better college libraries, ten to twenty new graduate centers, several new technical institutes, classrooms for several hundred thousand students, and twenty-five to thirty new community colleges a year.[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-16) This major piece of legislaton was followed by the [Higher Education Act of 1965](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_Education_Act_of_1965), which increased federal money given to universities, created scholarships and low-interest loans for students, and established a national [Teacher Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teacher_Corps) to provide teachers to poverty-stricken areas of the United States. The Act also began a transition from federally funded institutional assistance to individual student aid.

The [Bilingual Education Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilingual_Education_Act) of 1968 offered federal aid to local school districts in assisting them to address the needs of children with limited English-speaking ability until it expired in 2002.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-17)

**Health**

**Medicare**

The [Social Security Act of 1965](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Security_Act_of_1965) authorized [Medicare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicare_%28United_States%29) and provided federal funding for many of the medical costs of older Americans.[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-18) The legislation overcame the bitter resistance, particularly from the [American Medical Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Medical_Association), to the idea of [publicly funded health care](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publicly_funded_health_care) or "[socialized medicine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialized_medicine)" by making its benefits available to everyone over sixty-five, regardless of need, and by linking payments to the existing private insurance system.

**Medicaid**

In 1966 welfare recipients of all ages received medical care through the [Medicaid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicaid) program. Medicaid was created on July 30, 1965 under Title XIX of the Social Security Act of 1965. Each state administers its own Medicaid program while the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) monitors the state-run programs and establishes requirements for service delivery, quality, funding, and eligibility standards.

**Arts and cultural institutions**

**National endowments for arts and humanities**

In September 1965, Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act into law, creating both the [National Endowment for the Arts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Endowment_for_the_Arts) and [National Endowment for the Humanities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Endowment_for_the_Humanities) as separate, independent agencies. Lobbying for federally funded arts and humanities support began during the Kennedy Administration. In 1963 three scholarly and educational organizations—the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the Council of Graduate Schools in America, and the United Chapters of [Phi Beta Kappa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phi_Beta_Kappa)—joined together to establish the National Commission on the Humanities. In June 1964, the commission released a report that suggested that the emphasis placed on science endangered the study of the humanities from elementary schools through postgraduate programs. In order to correct the balance, it recommended "the establishment by the President and the Congress of the United States of a National Humanities Foundation."[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-neh-19)

In August 1964, Congressman [William S. Moorhead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_S._Moorhead) of Pennsylvania proposed legislation to implement the commission's recommendations. Support from the White House followed in September, when Johnson lent his endorsement during a speech at [Brown University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_University). In March 1965, the [White House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_House) proposed the establishment of a National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities and requested $20 million in start-up funds. The commission's report had generated other proposals, but the White House's approach eclipsed them. The administration's plan, which called for the creation of two separate agencies each advised by a governing body, was the version approved by Congress. [Richard Nixon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Nixon) dramatically expanded funding for NEH and NEA.[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-neh-19)

**Public broadcasting**

After the First National Conference on Long-Range Financing of Educational Television Stations in December 1964 called for a study of the role of noncommercial education television in society, the [Carnegie Corporation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnegie_Corporation) agreed to finance the work of a 15-member national commission. Its landmark report, *Public Television: A Program for Action*, published on January 26, 1967, popularized the phrase "public television" and assisted the legislative campaign for federal aid. The [Public Broadcasting Act of 1967](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_Broadcasting_Act_of_1967), enacted less than 10 months later, chartered the [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporation_for_Public_Broadcasting) as a private, non-profit corporation.

The law initiated federal aid through the CPB for the operation, as opposed to the funding of capital facilities, of public broadcasting. The CPB initially collaborated with the pre-existing [National Educational Television](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Educational_Television) system, but in 1969 decided to start the [Public Broadcasting Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_Broadcasting_Service) (PBS). A public radio study commissioned by the CPB and the [Ford Foundation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ford_Foundation) and conducted from 1968–1969 led to the establishment of [National Public Radio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Public_Radio), a public radio system under the terms of the amended Public Broadcasting Act.

**Cultural centers**

Two long-planned national cultural and arts facilities received federal funding that would allow for their completion through Great Society legislation. A National Cultural Center, suggested during the [Franklin Roosevelt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Roosevelt) Administration and created by a bipartisan law signed by [Dwight Eisenhower](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight_Eisenhower), was transformed into the [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kennedy_Center), a living memorial to the assassinated president. Fundraising for the original cultural center had been poor prior to legislation creating the Kennedy Center, which passed two months after the president's death and provided $23 million for construction. The Kennedy Center opened in 1971.[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-20)

In the late 1930s the United States Congress mandated a [Smithsonian Institution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smithsonian_Institution) art museum for the National Mall, and a design by [Eliel Saarinen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eliel_Saarinen) was unveiled in 1939, but plans were shelved during World War II. A 1966 act of Congress established the [Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hirshhorn_Museum_and_Sculpture_Garden) as part of the [Smithsonian Institution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smithsonian_Institution) with a focus on modern art, in contrast to the existing [National Art Gallery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Gallery_of_Art). The museum was primarily federally funded, although New York financier [Joseph Hirshhorn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Hirshhorn) later contributed $1 million toward building construction, which began in 1969. The Hirshhorn opened in 1974.[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-21)

**Transportation**

The most sweeping reorganization of the federal government since the [National Security Act of 1947](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Act_of_1947) was the consolidation of transportation agencies into a cabinet-level [Department of Transportation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Transportation).[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-22) The department was authorized by Congress on October 15, 1966 and began operations on April 1, 1967. The [Urban Mass Transportation Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_Mass_Transportation_Act_of_1964) of 1964 provided $375 million for large-scale urban public or private rail projects in the form of matching funds to cities and states and created the [Urban Mass Transit Administration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_Mass_Transit_Administration) (now the [Federal Transit Administration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Transit_Administration)). The [National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Traffic_and_Motor_Vehicle_Safety_Act_of_1966) and the Highway Safety Act of 1966 were enacted, largely as a result of [Ralph Nader](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Nader)'s book [*Unsafe at Any Speed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unsafe_at_Any_Speed).

**Consumer protection**

In 1964, Johnson named Assistant Secretary of Labor [Esther Peterson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esther_Peterson) to be the first presidential assistant for consumer affairs.

The Cigarette Labeling Act of 1965 required packages to carry warning labels. The Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 set standards through creation of the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Highway_Traffic_Safety_Administration). The [Fair Packaging and Labeling Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_Packaging_and_Labeling_Act) requires products identify manufacturer, address, clearly mark quantity and servings. The statute also authorizes permits HEW and FTC to establish and define voluntary standard sizes. The original would have mandated uniform standards of size and weight for comparison shopping, but the final law only outlawed exaggerated size claims. Child Safety Act of 1966 prohibited any chemical so dangerous that no warning can make it safe. The Flammable Fabrics Act of 1967 set standards for children's sleepwear, but not baby blankets.

The [Wholesome Meat Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wholesome_Meat_Act) of 1967 required inspection of meat which must meet federal standards. The [Truth-in-Lending Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth-in-Lending_Act) of 1968 required lenders and credit providers to disclose the full cost of finance charges in both dollars and annual percentage rates, on installment loan and sales. The Wholesome Poultry Products Act of 1968 required inspection of poultry which must meet federal standards. The Land Sales Disclosure Act of 1968 provided safeguards against fraudulent practices in the sale of land. The Radiation Safety Act of 1968 provided standards and recalls for defective electronic products.

**Environment**

[Joseph A. Califano, Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_A._Califano%2C_Jr.) has suggested that Great Society's main contribution to the environment was an extension of protections beyond those aimed at the conservation of untouched resources.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-califano-23) Discussing his administration's environmental policies, [Lyndon Johnson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyndon_Johnson) suggested that "[t]he air we breathe, our water, our soil and wildlife, are being blighted by poisons and chemicals which are the by-products of technology and industry. The society that receives the rewards of technology, must, as a cooperating whole, take responsibility for [their] control. To deal with these new problems will require a new conservation. We must not only protect the countryside and save it from destruction, we must restore what has been destroyed and salvage the beauty and charm of our cities. Our conservation must be not just the classic conservation of protection and development, but a creative conservation of restoration and innovation."

At the behest of Secretary of the Interior [Stewart Udall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stewart_Udall), the Great Society included several new environmental laws to protect air and water. Environmental legislation enacted included:

* Clear Air, Water Quality and Clean Water Restoration Acts and Amendments
* [Wilderness Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilderness_Act) of 1964
* [Endangered Species Preservation Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endangered_Species_Preservation_Act) of 1966
* [National Trails System Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Trails_System_Act) of 1968
* [Wild and Scenic Rivers Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_and_Scenic_Rivers_Act) of 1968
* [Land and Water Conservation Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Land_and_Water_Conservation_Act&action=edit&redlink=1) of 1965
* [Solid Waste Disposal Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solid_Waste_Disposal_Act) of 1965
* [Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motor_Vehicle_Air_Pollution_Control_Act) of 1965
* [National Historic Preservation Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Historic_Preservation_Act) of 1966
* [Aircraft Noise Abatement Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Aircraft_Noise_Abatement_Act&action=edit&redlink=1) of 1968
* [National Environmental Policy Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Environmental_Policy_Act) of 1969

**Labor**

Amendments made to the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act in 1964 extended the prevailing wage provisions to cover fringe benefits,[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-illinois.edu-24) while several increases were made to the [federal minimum wage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_minimum_wage).[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-25) In addition, a comprehensive minimum rate hike was signed into law that extended the coverage of the [Fair Labor Standards Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_Labor_Standards_Act) to about 9.1 million additional workers.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-illinois.edu-24)

**The Legacies of the Great Society**

**The War on Poverty**

Interpretations of the War on Poverty remain controversial to American conservatives. The Office of Economic Opportunity was dismantled by the [Nixon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Nixon) and [Ford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerald_Ford) administrations, largely by transferring poverty programs to other government departments. Funding for many of these programs were further cut in President [Ronald Reagan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan)'s first [budget](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gramm-Latta_Budget) in 1981.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

[Alan Brinkley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Brinkley) has suggested that "the gap between the expansive intentions of the War on Poverty and its relatively modest achievements fueled later conservative arguments that government is not an appropriate vehicle for solving social problems."[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-Brinkley-10) One of Johnson's aides, [Joseph A. Califano, Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_A._Califano%2C_Jr.), has countered that "from 1963 when [Lyndon Johnson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyndon_Johnson) took office until 1970 as the impact of his Great Society programs were felt, the portion of Americans living below the poverty line dropped from 22.2 percent to 12.6 percent, the most dramatic decline over such a brief period in this century."[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-califano-23) The percentage of African Americans below the poverty line dropped from 55 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 1968.[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-26)

[Libertarian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarianism) economist [Thomas Sowell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Sowell) argues that the Great Society programs only contributed to the destruction of African American families, saying "the black family, which had survived centuries of slavery and discrimination, began rapidly disintegrating in the liberal welfare state that subsidized unwed pregnancy and changed welfare from an emergency rescue to a way of life."[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society#cite_note-27)

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