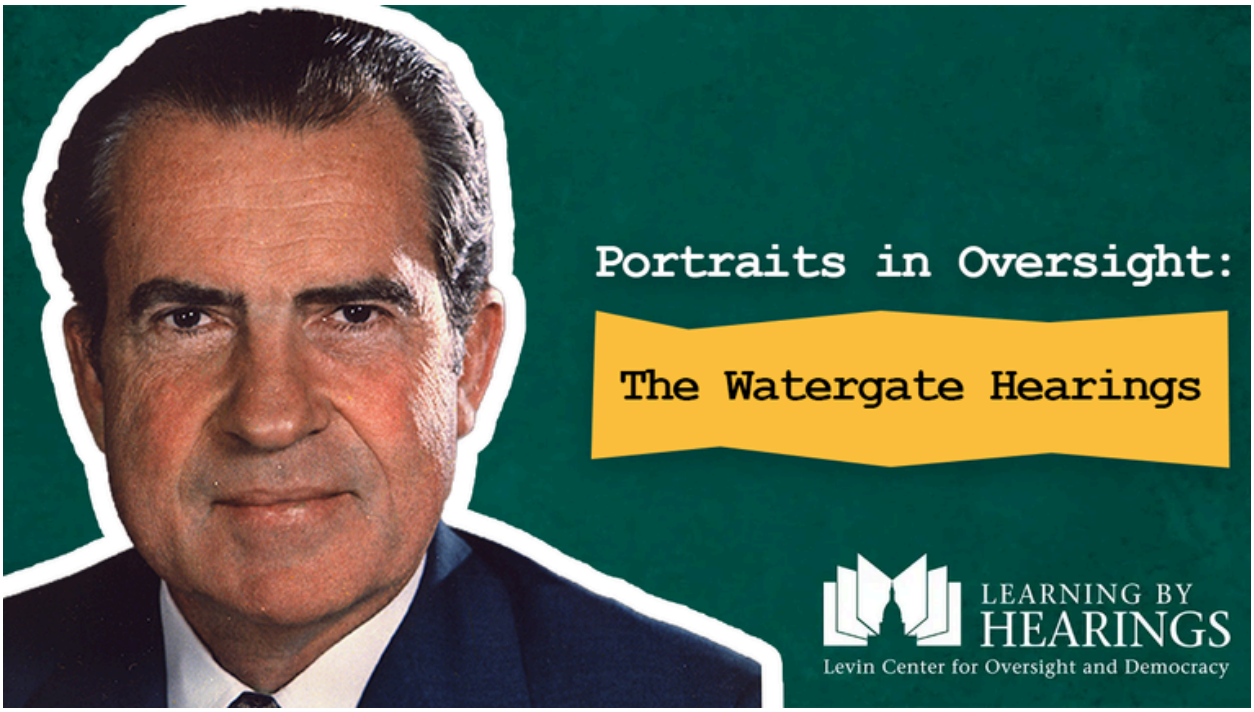
Watergate: The investigation that toppled a Presidency

bit.ly/LbHWatergate Runtime: 11:49



Video Guides

Guide A: Best for checking understanding of key events and details. Includes answer key with video timestamps.

Guide B: Best for active note-taking and connecting evidence to the video's big ideas. Does not include answer key, as student responses will vary.

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Watergate: The investigation that toppled a presidency

Guide A: Comprehension and Discussion Questions

https://bit.ly/LbHWatergate

Comprehension Questions

1) What happened at the Watergate complex in June 1972, and how did the Senate respond when evidence of something larger emerged?

2) What role did the media play during the Watergate investigation, and how did television coverage influence public opinion and pressure for accountability?

3) What was the Saturday Night Massacre, and how did the actions of the Supreme Court demonstrate the system of checks and balances during the Watergate scandal?

4) What evidence ultimately connected President Nixon to the cover-up, why did he resign, and what lessons does the scandal offer about government transparency and accountability?

Discussion Questions

The takeaways from this investigation are:

1. Congressional oversight works best when it is bipartisan.
2. Transparency is the best safeguard for democracy.
3. The Rule of Law depends on public engagement.

Which of these is the most important or lasting, and why? Do any of them still impact our lives today?

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LEARNING BY HEARINGS

Watergate: The investigation that toppled a presidency ANSWER KEY

Guide A: Comprehension and Discussion Questions

https://bit.ly/LbHWatergate

Comprehension Questions

1) What happened at the Watergate complex in June 1972, and how did the Senate respond when evidence of something larger emerged?

On June 17, 1972, five men were caught breaking into the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex while attempting to wiretap the offices. Evidence eventually connected the break-in to people associated with Nixon's administration and a broader cover-up. In response, the Senate voted unanimously to hold hearings and investigate the scandal. (1:18)

2) What role did the media play during the Watergate investigation, and how did television coverage influence public opinion and pressure for accountability?

Investigative journalists helped uncover evidence connecting the Watergate break-in to the Nixon administration, while televised Senate hearings allowed millions of Americans to watch testimony and evaluate the evidence themselves. News coverage increased public outrage and skepticism toward the White House. This public pressure helped build support for congressional action and demonstrated how the media can inform citizens and contribute to government accountability. (2:30 and 6:00)

3) What was the Saturday Night Massacre, and how did the actions of the Supreme Court demonstrate the system of checks and balances during the Watergate scandal?

The Saturday Night Massacre occurred when Nixon ordered the firing of special prosecutor Archibald Cox to avoid turning over White House tapes. When Attorney General Elliot Richardson was ordered to fire Cox, he resigned in protest; and so did Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus, also ordered to fire Cox. Although Nixon eventually succeeded in firing Cox, the Supreme Court later rejected Nixon's claim of executive privilege as grounds for withholding the tapes and ordered their release, demonstrating that presidential authority was subject to judicial review. (8:00)

4) What evidence ultimately connected President Nixon to the cover-up, why did he resign, and what lessons does the scandal offer about government transparency and accountability?

A tape was released where Nixon is heard discussing ways to stop the FBI from investigating the break-in. Seen as direct evidence of Nixon's involvement, congressional Republicans informed Nixon he would likely be impeached and removed from office. To avoid that, Nixon resigned in August 1974. The scandal demonstrated the importance of congressional oversight, judicial independence, and public engagement in holding government officials accountable. (10:57)

Discussion Questions

The takeaways from this investigation are:

1. Congressional oversight works best when it is bipartisan.
2. Transparency is the best safeguard for democracy.
3. The Rule of Law depends on public engagement.

Which of these is the most important or lasting, and why? Do any of them still impact our lives today?

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Guide B: Evidence Graphic Organizer

Directions: As you watch the video, record facts, examples, or statements that support each takeaway.

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Takeaway	Fact, example, or statement to support it
Congressional oversight works best when it is bipartisan.	
Transparency is the best safeguard for democracy.	
The Rule of Law depends on public engagement.	

Which takeaway was most compelling or convincing? Circle or highlight your answer. How does this investigation (and its consequences) still impact our lives today?

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