



UNDERSTANDING THE
20TH CENTURY
WITH
FORREST
GUMP





CHAPTER 1

RACISM IN THE US

Racism has always been an issue in the United States. But in the period between 1876 and 1965 it was very clear that the country had a racist base, because a series of laws -known as the Jim Crow Laws- established racial segregation in a formal way: it was legal to act racist. White people and black people were treated differently by the Law. From 1950 on, the Civil Rights Movement tried to put pressure on the politicians to change the racist laws through demonstrations and actions. The older generations did not support this movement, but the youth did, and so did President Kennedy (the youngest President ever, who wanted to attract the young voters). Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, but the change was inevitable.

A. SUFFICIENT



A1 Forrest mentions that he is named after Nathan Bedford Forrest. Who was he? What is he famous for?

A2 What is the ideology of the Ku Klux Klan?

B. GOOD



B1 Forrest is a student of the Alabama University. This university appeared in the news in June 1963. Why?

B2 Who was George Wallace?

C. NOTABLE



C1 The Civil Rights Movement was not always peaceful. What was the name of the group pictured in the image?

C2 What were the goals of this group formed in 1966?

D. EXCELLENT



D1 Look for information about the famous speech *Report to the American People on Civil Rights*, by President John F. Kennedy. When was it delivered? What was the principal idea of this speech?

EXTRA

The United States is a country suffering a North-South division. This is not a geographical division, but a cultural one. Northern states and Southern states have different culture, history and ideology. Print or draw a map of the US showing the Southern States. Point where Alabama is.



CHAPTER 2

VIETNAM WAR

The American society's reaction to the Vietnam War was marked by profound division and dissent. A massive anti-war movement emerged, fueled by moral objections, concerns about the draft, and opposition to government policies. Protests and rallies swept the nation, representing one of the largest expressions of public dissent in U.S. history. Concurrently, the war era witnessed a cultural revolution, with the rise of the counterculture challenging traditional values and authority. Vietnam veterans faced a mixed reception upon returning home, with some hailed as heroes while others encountered hostility and alienation.

A. SUFFICIENT



A1 In this scene Vietnamese farmers keep workin while American troops are advancing. What do you think this image wants to tell?

B. GOOD



B1 When Forrest and Bubba arrive to Vietnam they find the American troops driking beer and having fun at a barbeque. What do you think this scene wants to tell?

C. NOTABLE



C1 What is napalm? What was it used for?

C2 What were the consequences of using napalm?

D. EXCELENT



D1 One of the biggest issues after the Vietnam War was the treatment of the veterans. Many of them ended in the street due the lack of social care given by the Government. Why is lieutenant Dan angry for?

EXTRA

Look information about the network of tunnels built by the Viet Cong during the war and explain how did it worked.



CHAPTER 3

HIPPIE MOVEMENT

The Hippie Movement emerged in the 1960s as a countercultural phenomenon characterized by a rejection of mainstream values and an embrace of peace, love, and personal freedom. Influenced by Eastern philosophies, psychedelic drugs, and opposition to the Vietnam War, hippies promoted ideals of communal living, environmentalism, and social justice. They expressed themselves through unconventional fashion, music, art, and lifestyles, leaving a lasting impact on society's attitudes toward individual expression, social activism, and cultural norms. In the movie, Forrest's love interest Jenny unites this movement.

A. SUFFICIENT



A1 What were those people demonstrating for?

A2 Why were they predominantly young?

B. GOOD



B1 In this image a certain symbol can be seen up to three times. Look for this symbol's history.

B2 Draw the symbol in the box.



C. NOTABLE



C1 Who is that man next to Forrest?

C2 He is famous for having been a leader of the peace and love movement. Name two of his songs about peace.

D. EXCELENT



D1 The hippie movement is associated with the drugs. Why did the hippies use drugs?

D2 What effect do drugs have on Jenny?

EXTRA

Look information about John Lennon's murder. When and where did it happen? Who was the killer? Why did he killed Lennon? Where is the killer nowadays?



CHAPTER 4

THE COLD WAR

'Forrest Gump' presents several pivotal moments of the Cold War, offering insights into the geopolitical tensions and historical events of the era. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy, president Lyndon B. Johnson's decision to escalate U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, the Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union, the diplomatic thaw between the United States and China through ping-pong diplomacy... Through these moments, "Forrest Gump" offers a multifaceted portrayal of the Cold War era, capturing its complexities and global implications.

A. SUFFICIENT



A1 Who is the first US President that Forrest meets?

A2 What happened to him? When?

B. GOOD



B1 What historic moment is airing the TV?

B1 Read about the "Space Race" and briefly explain it:

C. NOTABLE



C1 Who is the second US President that Forrest meets?

C2 What was his policy towards the Vietnam War?

D. EXCELENT



D1 Forrest gets so good at table tennis that is sent to China to play. This is a funny reference to an historical episode known as the Ping-Pong Diplomacy. Talk about it:

EXTRA

Look information about the achievements of both the US and the USSR during the Space Race and name some of them.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL ISSUES

The movie explores various social issues amidst its rich narrative. Rock and roll emerges as a defining genre for the new generation, reflecting changing attitudes and cultural shifts. The Watergate scandal highlights deep-rooted corruption within the political system, casting doubt on the integrity of those in power. Consumerism is depicted through the merchandising of Forrest's table tennis achievements, illustrating how fame and success can be commodified and exploited for profit. Additionally, the film subtly addresses the emergence of AIDS as a new and largely unknown disease during the 1980s, reflecting the fear and uncertainty surrounding its impact on society.

A. SUFFICIENT



A1 Forrest's mom is shocked about a new musical genre. Who is the singer they are watching?

A2 Why did rock and roll represent a generational change?

B. GOOD



B1 In a certain moment of the movie, Forrest is staying at the Watergate Hotel. What is he discovering in this scene?

C. NOTABLE



C1 After becoming a ping pong star, many companies want to take advantage of Forrest's fame. Why is it an hypocrisy to use Mao's face in products to sell?

D. EXCELENT



D1 What is the new disease that kills Jenny?

D2 How is this new disease spread? How many people got infected worldwide? And how many have died?

EXTRA

Look information about Hurricane Carmen. Explain how is it linked with the movie, when did it happen, where did it hit most severely and what were its consequences