

# [The life and death of president john f. kennedy](https://assignbuster.com/the-life-and-death-of-president-john-f-kennedy/)

President Kennedy was born on May 29, 1917, in Brooklin, Massachusetts, asuburb of Boston. The other eight Kennedy children were Joseph, Jr. Rosemary KathleenEunice Patricia Robert F. Jean Edward M. “ Ted” .

As the Kennedy children grew up, their parents encouraged them to develop their owntalents and interests. Loyalty to each other was important to the Kennedys. But thebrothers and sisters also developed a strong competitive spirit. Jack, as his family calledhim, and Joe, his older brother, were especially strong rivals. Jack was quiet and often shy, but he held his own in fights with his older brother. The boys enjoyed playing touchfootball.

John Kennedy attended elementary schools in Brookline and Riverdale. In 1930, when he was 13 years old, his father sent him to the Canterbury School in New Milford, Conn. The next year, he transferred to Choate Academy in Wallingford, Conn. Kennedywas graduated from Choate in 1935 at the age of 18. His classmates voted him “ mostlikely to succeed.” Kennedy wrote a thesis for his senior thesis at Harvard. The thesis was why Britainhad not been ready for war. The book that resulted from this was titled Why EnglandSlept. This book became a best-seller. Kennedy graduated cum laude in 1940. He thenenrolled in the Stanford University graduate business school, but dropped out six monthslater. Kennedy enlisted as a seaman in the U. S. Navy after taking a trip through SouthAmerica.

For a few months, Kennedy was stationed in Washington, D. C. He applied for seaduty following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Kennedy wasassigned to a PT boat squadron late in 1942. After learning to command one of the smallcraft, he was commissioned as an ensign.

Shortly after midnight on August 2, 1943, a Japanese destroyer cut Kennedy’s PTboat in two. His boat was assigned to patrol duty off the Soloman Islands in the SouthPacific. Two of the crew were killed and Kennedy and 10 other men clung all night to thewreckage of their boat. The next morning, Kennedy ordered his men to swim to a nearbyisland. Despite himself being injured (back), he spent five hours towing one of the disabledcrewmen to shore. Over the period of the next four days, Kennedy was in the watersearching for help. On the fifth day, he persuaded friendly natives on Cross Island to gofor help. On August 7th, Kennedy’s crew was rescued. For heroism and leadership, Kennedy received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. He was also awarded the PurpleHeart for being wounded in combat. In December 1943, the navy returned Lieutenant Kennedy to the United States.

His back was giving him pain and he was suffering from malaria. Kennedy spent the rest ofhis naval service as an instructor and in various military hospitals. He then had a shortcareer as a newspaper reporter.

John’s family thought that he would become a writer or a teacher. His brother Joewas going to be the family politician. Joe’s death in 1944 changed his future. Later, as aU. S. Senator, Kennedy said: “ Just as I went into politics because Joe died, if anythinghappens to me tomorrow, my brother Bobby would run for my seat in the Senate. And ifBobby died, Teddy would take over for him.” Kennedy began his political career in 1946. He ran for the U. S. House ofRepresentatives. He opposed nine others for nomination in the solidly Democratic 11thCongressional District of Massachusetts. He won the nomination and went on to easilydefeat his Republican opponent.

In 1946, Kennedy’s brothers and sisters helped him win the nomination in which hewas campaigning. His mother also helped him. The women organised teas in the homes ofvoters. But his father did not take an active part in Kennedy’s political campaigns. Hisisolationism before World War II, his conservatism, and his wealth made him acontroveersial figure.

In January 1947, Kennedy took his seat in Congress. Later that year, he becameseriously ill, and doctors discovered that he was suffering from a malfunction of theadrenal glands. To control the ailment, he had to take medicine daily for the rest of his life.

In Congress, Kennedy voted for most of the social welfare programs of PresidentHarry S. Truman. He was re-elected to the House in 1948 and also 1950.

In April 1952, Kennedy announced that he would oppose Republican SenatorHenry Cabot Lodge, Jr. Lodge, a popular and experienced legislator, seemed certain towin re-election.

Kennedy’s brothers and sisters, their wives and husbands, and his mother joinedhim in the campaign. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican presidential candidate, carried Massachusetts in the 1952 election. But Kennedy upset Lodge by 70, 637 votes.

In 1951, Kennedy met his future wife at a dinner party in Washington, D. C.

Jacqueline Lee Bouvier was the daughter of a wealthy Wall Street broker, John V.

Bouvier III. She had attended Vassar College and the Sorbonne in Paris. When she metKennedy, she was a student at George Washington University in Washington. Later, sheworked as an inquiring photographer for the Washington Times-Herald. She and Kennedywere married on September 12, 1953. A daughter was still-bron on August 23, 1956, andwas unnamed. Their daughter Caroline was born November 27, 1957. Their son John F.

Jr., was born on November 25, 1960. Another son, Patrick Bouvier, was born prematurelyAugust 7th, 1963. He died August 9, 1963. Five years after Kennedy’s death, MrsKennedy married Aristotle Onassis, a Greek millionaire. Senator Kennedy concentrated at first on helping Massachusetts and NewEngland. He sponsored bills to help local industries, such as fishing, textile manufacturing, and watchmaking. Kennedy served on the Senate Labor Committee, and the GovernmentOperations Committee, chairmanned by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin.

Robert Kennedy, his brother, served for a time on the Government Operations Committeestaff as an assistant counsel.

At the time, McCarthy was the most controversial figue in American politics.

Many people praised him for his attacks on communist influence in government. Otherscritized McCarthy because they felt he had violated the civil liberties of personsinvestigated by his committee. Kennedy felt that McCarthy often abused his power andwas endangering the honor of the Senate. Kennedy was ill when the Senate condemnedMcCarthy in 1954. But he said later that if he had been present, he would have voted forthe condemnation. During his first Senate term, Kennedy’s back caused him severe pain. In October1954, and in February, 1955, he underwent operations to correct the injury. Whilerecovering, Kennedy wrote a book about some of the brave deeds performed by U. S.

Senators. For the book, Profiles in Courage, Kennedy was awarded the Pulitzer prize forbiography in 1957.

In 1957, Kennedy was appointed to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, akey assignment in Congress. He criticized the foreign policy of the Republicanadministration, and supported a program of increased aid to underdeveloped countries.

Kennedy also worked for moderate legislation to end alleged corruption in laborunions. He was a member of a Senate committee investigating racketeering inlabor-management relations. Kennedy’s brother Robert was counsel for the committee.

The Kennedys and other committee members engaged in dramatic arguments withcontroversial labor leaders, including James R. Hoffa, of the Teamsters union.

In June 1956, a movement to nominate Kennedy for Vice-President had gainedstrength among Democratic leaders. At the party’s national convention in Chicago, Kennedy made the presidential nominating speech for former Governor Adlai E.

Stevenson of Illinois. The delegates chose Stevenson to oppose Eisenhower for the secondtime. Kennedy worked furiously for the vice-presidential nomination. But he lost toSenator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee after a nip-and-tuck battle.

Kennedy began working for the 1960 presidential nomination right after the 1956convention. He spent nearly every weekend campaigning. In 1958, Kennedy wonre-election to the Senate by a majority of 874, 608 votes.

Many Democratic leaders thought Kennedy had several disadvantages as apresidential candidate. His main drawback was his religion. Alfred E. Smith, the onlyRoman Catholic ever nominated for President by a major political party, had been badlydefeated in 1928. Other possible shortcomings included Kennedy’s youth, his familywealth, and his relative inexperience in international affairs. Some Democrats opposedKennedy because they thought he was too conservative, and because he never activelyopposed Senator McCarthy.

Kennedy decided that the key to the presidential nominations would be to win asmany state primary elections as he could. He believed that victories in the pirmaries wouldprove he could win the presidency. Kennedy entered and won primaries in seven states.

At the Democratic national convention, Kennedy’s chief opponents for thepresidential nomination were Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas, Senator StuartSymington of Missouri, and Stevenson. Kennedy won on the first ballot. The delegates, atthe request of Kennedy, nominated Johnson for Vice-President.

The Republicans chose Vice-President Richard M. Nixon to oppose Kennedy forthe presidency. Kennedy’s old opponent, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., then U. S. delegate tothe UN, was Nixon’s running mate.

The 1960 campagin was a hard-fought race. Both candidates were young, vigorous campaigners. At first, most experts believed Nixon would win. He had theadvantage of being Vice-Presient under Eisenhower, an unusually popular President.

But Kennedy was not as unknown as some persons believed. His good looks, wealth, and attractive wife had made him a popular subject for articles in newspapers andmagazines. Television also helped Kennedy greatly during his four televised debates withNixon. His poise helped answer criticism that he lacked the maturity needed for thepresidency. The debates marked the first time that presidential candidates arguedcampaign issues face to face.

Nixon ran chiefly on the record of the Eisenhower administration. Kennedypromised to lead Americans to a “ New Frontiere.” He charged that, under theRepublicans, the United States had lost ground to Russia in the Cold War.

Kennedy defeated Nixon by fewer than 120, 000 popular votes. But he won a clearmajority of votes in the electoral college. Kennedy received 303 electoral votes to 219 forNixon. Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia received 15 eletoral votes.

Kennedy was inaugurated President on January 20, 1961. As he took charge of thefederal government, he faces such internal problems as increased racial tensions, unemployment, and a sluggish economy. In foreign affairs, he faced the continuing spreadof Communist influence, and the threat of nuclear war.

The New Frontier, the name Kennedy gave to his program, got off to a slow start.

But the 87th Congress finally began passing measures sponsored by the administration. InApril 1961, the legislators approved aid to economically depressed areas. In May, Congress approved an increase in the minimum hourly wage from $1 to $1. 25. InSeptember 1962, Congress passed the President’s Trade Expansion Act. The act gave thePresident wide powers to cut tariffs so the U. S. could trade freely with the EuropeanCommon Market.

One of the most successful of Kennedy’s programs was the U. S. Peace Corps. Itwas launched by executive order in March 1961, and was later authorized by Congress.

The corps sent thousands of Americans abroad to help people in developing nations raisetheir standards of living. The Peace Corps seemed to carry the enthusaism of the Presidentto the people of other countries, who often called it “ Kennedy’s Corps.” Kennedy also met major legislative defeats. Congress rejected a cabinet-levelDepartment of Urban Affairs and Kennedy’s plan for medical care for the aged. Bothmeasures later passed during Johnson’s presidency. Kennedy’s farm program also suffereddefeats.

Kennedy reogranized the nation’s defense policies by increasing conventionalweapons. He wanted to be prepared for non-nuclear wars and to amke every effort toavoid using nuclear weapons.

In March 1962, the major steel producers signed a contract with the steelworkersunion that increased workers’ benefits, but not their wages. Kennedy praised the contract, which he said would help prevent inflation. On April 10, the United States SteelCorporation led a move to raise steel prices $6 a ton. Kennedy angrily denounced themove as causing unnecessary inflation, and the companies canceled it.

In May, prices on the new York Stock Exchange made their sharpest drop since1929. Many people blamed the Kennedy administration. They felt the President’s actiontoward the steel companiew reflected an antibusiness attitude. The President tried toanswer the antibusiness charges in a speech. He said there are three great ideas, or“ myths,” in our domestic affairs that may prevent effective action: (1) that the federal debtis too large; (2) that the federal government is too big; and (3) that business cannot placeits confidence in his administration.

The President aided business by increasing tax benefits for companies investing innew equipment. In 1963, he proposed a $10 billion tax cut, which included loweringcorporate taxes. He thought that the public would be able to spend more if taxes were cut.

The increased spending would generate new business, and the taxes received from anexpanded economy would more than offset the revenue lost in the tax cut.

Demands for equal rights for blacks became the major domestic issue during theKennedy adminstration. In 1961, a group of black and white freedom riders enteredMontgomery, Ala., by bus to test local segregation laws. Rioting broke out, and AttorneyGeneral Robert F. Kennedy sent U. S. marshals to the city to help restore order. In 1962, James Meredith became the first black to enroll at the University of Mississippi, despitemuch opposition. Two people were killed in the rioting that followed on the universitycampus at Oxford. The President ordered 3, 000 federal troops to the area to restoreorder., In 1963, demands by blacks for equal civil and economic rights increased. Racialprotests and demonstrations took place in all parts of the United States, in the North andthe South. In May 1963, rioting broke out in Birmingham, Ala. In June, the Presidentfederalized the Alabama National Guard to enfoce the integration of the University ofAlabama. Kennedy federalized the Guard again in September to ensure the integration ofpublic schools in three Alabama cities. On August 28, 1963, about 200, 000 people stageda Freedom March in Washington, D. C., to demonstrate their demands for equal rights forblacks.

To meet the growing demands of the blacks, Kennedy asked Congress to passlegislation requiring hotels, motels, and restaurants to admit customers regardless of race.

The President also asked Congress to grant the Attorney General authority to begin courtsuits to desegregate schools on behalf of private citizens who were unable to start legalaction themselves. In requesting the sweeping civil rights legislation, the President said,“ The time has come for the Congress of the United States to join with the executive andjudicial branches in making it clear to all that race has no place in American life or law.” Kennedy’s Democratic party gained four seats in the Senate and lost only two seatsin the House in the 1962 elections. This was only the third time in the 1900’s that the partyin power increased its representation in Congress in a midterm election. In his second yearin office, Kennedy appointed two justices of the Supreme Court. The first was Byron R.

White, then Deputy Attorney General. The second was Secretary of Labor Arthur J.

Goldberg.

The Kennedy’s brought youth and informality to the White House. Caroline andJohn, Jr., were the youngest children of a President to live in the White House in morethan 60 years. Caroline’s antics and bright comments amused the nation.

Women in many countries copied Jacqueline Kennedy’s stylish clothes and hairdo.

In 1961, Mrs Kennedy flew to Europe with her husband. Wherever she went, huge crowdsgathered. President Kennedy presented himself to a Paris luncheon by saying, “ I am theman who accompanie Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris . . . ” In March 1962, Mrs Kennedytoured Pakistand and India without the President.

Mrs Kennedy won praise for her redecoration of the White House. She gatheredfurnishings of past Presidents and made the mansion a historic showplace and a touristattraction.

The President gave recognition to the creative arts by appointing a Special Advisoron the Arts. Many artists were invited to the White House.

On April 17, 1961, Cuban rebels invaded their homeland to overthrow FidelCastro, the Communist-supported dictator. The assualt ended in disaster. PresidentKennedy accepted blame for the ill-fated invasion, which had been planned by the UnitedStates.

Another Cuban crisis erupted in October 1962, when the United States learnedthat Russia had established missiles on the island capable of stirking U. S. cities. Kennedyordered the U. S. Navy to quarantine Cuba. Navy ships were ordered to turn back all shipsdelivering Russian missiles to Cuba. Kennedy also called about 14, 000 Air Force reserviststo active duty. For a week, war seemed likely. Then, Russian Premier Nikita S. Khrushchevordered all Soviet offensive missiles removed. The President then lifted the quarantine.

In 1961, Russia threatened to give Communist East Germany control over theWest’s air and land supply routes to Berlin. The threat was part of a Russian effort to endthe combined American, British, French, and Russian control of Berlin, begun when WorldWar II ended. The western nations opposed any threat to the freedom of West Berlin.

In June 1961, Kennedy discussed Berlin with Khrushchev at a two-day meeting inVienna, Austria. Nothing was settled, and the crisis deepened. Both countries increasedtheir military strength. In August, the East Germans built a wall between East and WestBerlin to prevent people from fleeing to the West. Kennedy called up about 145, 000members of the National Guard and reservists to strengthen U. S. military defense. Theywere released about 10 months later.

In 1961, the United States established the Alliance for Progress, a 10-year programof aid for Latin-American countries that agreed to begin democratic reforms. ThePresident hoped this program would bring social and political reform as well as fightpoverty.

In 1961, Kennedy was interviewed by Khrushchev’s son-in-law, then editor ofIzvestia, the Russian government newspaper. Izvestia printed the entire interview.

In 1962, Congress approved a plan to purchase up to $100 million worth of bondsto help finance the U. N.

The westeren Atlantic alliance remained strong, but Kennedy had troubleestablishing a united NATO nuclear force. President Charles de Gaulle refused to commitFrance to the NATO nuclear force. He preferred an independent role for his country.

Kennedy made a 10-day tour of Europe in the summer of 1963. He visited West Germany, Italy, Ireland, and Great Britain.

Southeast Asia continued to be a trouble spot. Kennedy ordered U. S. militaryadvisers to the area in 1961 and 1962 when the Communists threatened South Vietnamand Thailand. Kennedy also sent advisers to Laos. In the summer and autumn of 1963, theU. S. severly criticized the South Vietnamese governemtn headed by Ngo Dinh Diem forits repressive policies against the country’s Buddhists. The government imprisoned manyBuddhist leaders and students who were leading demonstrations against the Diemgovernment. Kennedy sent former Republican senator and vice-presidential candidateHenry Cabot Lodge, Jr., to South Vietnam as ambassador in 1963.

In September 1961, the Russians resumed testing atomic weapons. The tests brokean un-offical test ban that had lasted nearly three years. The United States began testingshortly after the Russians resumed their tests, but the U. S. conducted its testsunderground, which created no dangerous fallout. But in April 1962, the United Statesresumed testing in the atmosphere over the Pacific Ocean.

In July 1963, Russia, the United States, and Great Britain signed a treaty banningatomic testing in the atmosphere, outer space, and under water. Testing was permittedunderground. The treaty avoided the issue of internal inspections, which had deadlockedprevious negotiations. Many countries that had no atomic weapons also signed the treaty.

The U. S. Senate approved the treaty in September by a vote of 80 to 19.

This section is in a completely different file. This area is then written in moredetail. Kennedy’s Assassination