THE WATERGATE SCANDAL
Stage 1: The Watergate Break-In

- June 17, 1972
- Burglars break in to the offices of the Democratic National Committee
- The burglars (called “plumbers” because their job was to stop the “leaks”) were arrested
- Nixon’s campaign manager, John Mitchell, denied that any of Nixon’s men had anything to do with it
Why would Nixon do it?

- Known as being “paranoid”
- He had been involved in two very close elections
  - 1960 – loses to John F. Kennedy by .2% in the popular vote
  - 1968 – beats Hubert Humphrey by .6% in the popular vote
  - Wants to be re-elected in 1972
- Throughout his political career had created an “enemies list”

His own worst enemy.
Stage 1: The Watergate Break-In

- Two *Washington Post* reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein began investigating.
- They were given information from a secret source known only as “Deep Throat”.
- “Deep Throat’s” identity wasn’t revealed by Woodward and Bernstein until 2006. He was Mark Felt – the number two man at the FBI.
What does this cartoon say?

You know nothing about Watergate. Which group would you most likely suspect of burglary, theft, breaking and entering, wiretapping, election law violations and conspiracy?
Stage 2: Investigation Begins

- As Woodward and Bernstein continue investigating, they uncover more connections to the White House.
- In September, 1972, Judge John Sirica sentenced White House aides Gordon Liddy and Howard Hunt, and the “plumbers” to prison.
What does this cartoon say?

Editors of The Washington Post
Lay OFF - or else!

Meanwhile . . .

Nixon wins the Election of 1972

President Richard Nixon (Republican) vs. South Dakota Senator George McGovern (Democrat)

MCGOVERN:
29.1 million pop. votes
37.5% of the pop. vote
17 electoral votes

NIXON:
47.1 million pop. votes
60.7% of the pop. vote
520 electoral votes
Stage 3: Congressional Hearings

- In January, 1973, James McCord, was willing to reveal information – he had lied because John Dean (counsel to Nixon) and John Mitchell (Attorney General) had told him to.
- This blows Watergate wide open!
- In February the Senate votes 77-0 to investigate.
- In March, 1973, Judge Sirica gave harsh sentences to all except McCord.
Stage 3: Congressional Hearings

- On April 30, Nixon fires Dean, accepts the resignations of Halderman and Erlichman, Attorney General Richard Kleindienst.
- Elliot Richardson becomes the new Attorney General
- Archibald Cox becomes the Special Prosecutor to investigate Watergate.
Stage 3: Congressional Hearings

- In June, 1973, John Dean testifies that Mitchell had ordered the break in.
- On July 16, Alexander Butterfield (another White House aide), said Nixon had a taping system in the White House to record all conversations.
- Cox wants Nixon to turn over the tapes, Nixon claims “executive privilege”; turning over the tapes would threaten national security.
Stage 3: Congressional Hearings

- Instead of giving up the tapes, Nixon is willing to give transcripts of the tapes.
- Meanwhile, Nixon’s Vice-President, Spiro Agnew, resigns the office.
- It is discovered that, as Governor of Maryland, he had taken bribes and cheated on his taxes.
- Republican Minority leader, Gerald Ford, is nominated as the new Vice-President.
Stage 3: Congressional Hearings

- The Saturday Night Massacre
  - Nixon orders Richardson to fire Cox
  - Richardson refuses and resigns.
  - Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus also refuses and resigns.
  - Finally Solicitor-General Robert Bork fires Cox
  - He is replaced by Leon Jaworski
What does this cartoon say?
Stage 4: The Secret Tapes

- Nixon finally agrees to turn over some of the tapes.
- One tape had an 18 ½ minute gap
  - Nixon said it was an error by his secretary Rose Mary Woods
  - Experts concluded it had been erased five different times.
- November 17, 1973, Nixon gives his famous “I am not a crook” speech
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmjMa2hLXpc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmjMa2hLXpc)
Stage 4: The Secret Tapes

- In March 1974, seven White House officials were indicted, but Nixon was not.
- Jaworski had a lot of evidence against Nixon.
- The House Judiciary committee began to look at impeachment charges.
- Nixon’s transcripts contained the words “expletive deleted”
Stage 4: The Secret Tapes

- The tapes revealed Nixon to be very vindictive.
- They also showed him to be a “potty mouth”
- In June 1974, Jaworski requested 64 more tapes, but Nixon refused.
- In July 1974, the Supreme Court ruled 8-0 that Nixon must give up the tapes.
What does this cartoon say?
Stage 5: Nixon Resigns

- In late July, the House Judiciary committee votes 27-11 recommend impeachment.
- On August 5, after hearing the tapes (which have Nixon ordering the cover up of Watergate), the vote is 38-0 to recommend impeachment.
Stage 5: Nixon Resigns

- Three charges were to be brought against him:
  - Misuse of Presidential power
  - Obstructing justice
  - Defying subpoenas
- On August 9, 1974, Richard Nixon becomes the first (and only) President to resign the office.
- Gerald Ford becomes the 38th President.
The King Is Dead. . . . Long Live the Presidency!
Why resign?

- Nixon never admitted any wrongdoing
- If he was innocent why wouldn’t he fight it?
Did it impact Nixon?
What about the polls?

President Nixon’s Approval Ratings, 1969–1974

To complete the graph, record your matches of events and approval ratings for President Nixon.

Jan. 1969
Nixon inaugurated as president of the United States, (59%)

Aug. 1974
Nixon resigns as president, (24%)
"There are no historic or legal precedents to which I can turn in this matter, none that precisely fit the circumstances of a private citizen who has resigned the presidency of the United States. . . . Many months and perhaps more years will have to pass before Richard Nixon could hope to obtain a fair trial by jury . . . But it is not the ultimate fate of Richard Nixon that most concerns me . . . but the immediate future of this great country . . . . Now, therefore, I, Gerald R. Ford, president of the United States . . . have granted and do grant a full, free and absolute pardon unto Richard Nixon for all offenses against the United States which he . . . has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from January 20, 1969 through August 9, 1974."

Excerpts of Gerald Ford’s pardon of Richard Nixon
Why would Ford pardon Nixon?

- Was Ford trying to put Watergate behind us and focus on fixing America’s problems?
- Had Ford and Nixon made a “deal” regarding the vice-presidency and subsequent pardon?