Scandal!

Impeachment, Corruption & Other Sordid Tales

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| Year | President | Scandal | Description |
| 1798 |  |  | In the midst of the Quasi War, the Federalist-controlled Congress and White House supported laws that restricted freedom of speech and the rights of immigrants. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison argued for the nullification of these laws when they wrote the Virginia & Kentucky Resolutions. |
| 1803 |  |  | The president worked out a deal with France for the purchase of an enormous tract of land west of the Mississippi River. However, the deal could not be accomplished without the president loosening his strict interpretation of the constitution. |
| 1824 |  |  | In the presidential election of 1824, Andrew Jackson won the most popular votes but failed to become president when Henry Clay convinced congress to sway the election to Jackson’s most powerful rival. Clay soon became the Secretary of State in that president’s administration. |
| 1830 |  |  | Scandal split the presidential cabinet when a squabble developed between Floride Calhoun, the wife of the vice president and Peggy Eaton, the wife of Senator John H. Eaton. The scandal eventually led to the resignation of the vice president and most of the cabinet and the president had to rely on his informal “Kitchen Cabinet.” |
| 1847 |  |  | Some members of Congress opposed the Mexican-American War because they thought it was initiated as a land-grab for slaveholders. Led by Abraham Lincoln, these congressmen questioned the veracity of the claim that “American blood had been shed on American soil” and requested that the president clarify exactly where the shooting had started. |
| 1867 |  |  | Political pundits called the purchase of Alaska from Russia a colossal mistake because they believed the land was worthless. The discovery of gold and oil soon after proved them wrong. |
| 1868 |  |  | Relations between the Democratic president and Radical Republicans in Congress reached the breaking point after the president vetoed Reconstruction civil rights legislation and fired the Radical Republican Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. |
| 1872 |  |  | The period of Reconstruction and the Gilded Age became known as the “Era of Good Stealings” for the unprecedented amount of embezzlement of public funds by elected officials and their appointees. In this scandal, government officials diverted money into their own pockets that was originally intended to fund the construction of the transcontinental railroad. |
| 1875 |  |  | In another Reconstruction/Gilded Age scandal, government tax collectors were caught siphoning off millions of dollars of liquor tax revenue into their own pockets. |
| 1876 |  |  | In another Reconstruction/Gilded Age scandal, the Secretary of War was caught receiving “kickbacks” as a reward for offering lucrative trading licenses at frontier military bases and Indian trading posts. |
| 1877 |  |  | The 1876 presidential election was so close that the winner was not determined until the following year when Congress decided the outcome. The Republican candidate ended up winning the presidency, but only after he promised to remove federal troops from the south, appoint Democrats to his cabinets, and provide funds for a Southern Pacific Railroad. |
| 1877 | n/a |  | Boss Tweed ran a powerful Democratic Party political machine that controlled New York City elections and local business contracts. Tweed was convicted in 1877 of stealing more than $25 million in public funds, but he had already fled the country. |
| 1910 |  |  | Debates over “managed” conservation policy versus outright exploitation of natural resources split the Republican Party in the lead-up to the 1912 presidential election. As a result, Republican Theodore Roosevelt came out of “retirement” to challenge his handpicked successor already occupying the White House. |
| 1922 |  |  | In a scandal that revealed the close relationship between politicians and businessmen during the Roaring Twenties, Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall accepted bribes for the right to drill for oil on public land. |
| 1937 |  |  | After the Supreme Court struck down key pieces of New Deal legislation, the president proposed adding six new justices to the court who would be sympathetic to his reform efforts. The public, which generally supported the New Deal, saw this as a threat to the system of checks and balances. |
| 1954 | n/a |  | A Wisconsin senator rose to national prominence by hurling reckless accusations of communism, disloyalty and homosexuality against his political opponents. After accusing top army leaders of disloyalty, he was finally censured by the Senate in 1954 and died of alcohol-related illness three years later. |
| 1961 |  |  | In a failed attempt to overthrow the Castro regime in Cuba, the president authorized a covert mission that sent anti-Castro Cubans to invade the island and start a guerilla war against the communist government. Without air support, however, the invaders were killed or captured on the beaches where they landed, causing a major embarrassment for the CIA. |
| 1972 |  |  | Paranoia over “leaks” of information caused the president to set up a unit of “plumbers” to spy on his political enemies. When these burglars were caught breaking into the Democratic Party’s campaign headquarters in a Washington, DC hotel, the resulting cover-up started a chain of events that ended with the resignation of both the vice president and the president. |
| 1986 |  |  | Members of the presidential administration sold arms to the Iranian government in exchange for the release of American hostages in violation of an arms embargo on Iran. Government officials then used some of that money to provide military aid to anticommunist Nicaraguan forces, also in violation of an arms embargo on sales to Nicaraguan civil war belligerents. |
| 1998 |  |  | Prior to his inauguration, the president had been accused of sexual harassment in his home state of Arkansas. As the sexual harassment probe proceeded, it was revealed that the president had also had had an affair with a 22-year old White House intern, a charge that he initially denied while under oath. The president was impeached but found not guilty during the senate impeachment trial. |
| 2004 |  |  | The harsh interrogation techniques used in the War on Terror came under greater scrutiny when evidence emerged that U.S. military jailers at Abu Ghraib prison had tortured, raped, sodomized and had even caused the death of at least one detainee. Eleven soldiers were found guilty of abuse during courts martial. |
| 2013 |  |  | Edward Snowden leaked documents proving that an intelligence official had lied to congress when he denied carrying out bulk data collection on American citizens. The documents also proved that intelligence agencies had designed and exploited “back doors” into secure communications, thwarted encryption used to protect hospital and banking records, and spied on human rights organizations, economic conferences and leaders of allied countries. Snowden took refuge in China and later Russia, where he was granted asylum. |

Answer Bank

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| **Presidents** | **Scandals** |
| John AdamsWilliam TaftFranklin RooseveltThomas JeffersonAndrew JohnsonAndrew JohnsonJohn F. KennedyJohn Quincy AdamsGeorge W. BushAndrew JacksonWarren HardingRutherford HayesRichard NixonJames K. PolkRonald ReaganUlysses S. GrantUlysses S. GrantUlysses S. GrantBill ClintonBarack Obama | Johnson ImpeachmentBallinger-Pinchot AffairAbu Ghraib ScandalPetticoat AffairCompromise of 1877Louisiana PurchaseWatergate Scandal“Seward’s Folly”Teapot Dome ScandalMonica Lewinsky ScandalAlien & Sedition ActsNSA ScandalCredit Mobilier ScandalCourt-Packing Scandal“Corrupt Bargain”Indian RingBay of Pigs Invasion“Spot” ResolutionsIran-Contra ScandalWhisky RingTammany RingMcCarthyism |