

The Century: Peter Jennings Starting Over: 1976-1980

1. Why were Americans “unsure” of themselves in 1976?

Many Americans were unsure of America at the time because we had just finished dealing with numerous social problems at home, we had just lost the war in Vietnam, and we had an unelected president. Americans felt like the country's days of prosperity and unity were long gone.

2. What did Jimmy Carter represent to many Americans? Why weren't young people interested in politics?

Carter represented the traditional type of American that many people had forgotten about where he was led by his faith and basic morals. Many young people didn't care about politics any more since the loss of Vietnam it greatly affected the American youths interest in politics.

3. Describe disco and the nightclubs in which people danced.

Disco was a new type of music that this new generation loved since it helped them forget about all the troubles from the past few years.

Numerous nightclubs popped up across the country but the most famous one was located in New York called Studio 54.

4. What impact does the women's rights movement have on marriages and families? How is this “unorthodox”?

Women began to demand the same rights as men and abandoned their duties as housewives to go out and protest. This led to numerous divorces across the country and many people saw this social movement as unusual and un-American.

5. What impact did the cold weather in 1977 have on the U.S. and our energy sources?

In 1977 the US was hit by the worst winter in forty years. The snow was so thick that people had to dig underground tunnels under the snow just to get from the house to the street. With the temperature dropping gasoline couldn't be transported to gas stations and hundreds of thousands of people became unemployed.

6. What impact did foreign competition have on the auto industry and the American worker?

Foreign industry soon brought many domestic automobile industries down leading to massive unemployment.

7. Why were Japanese and German cars more attractive to Americans? Foreign cars were proving to be more effective than domestic vehicles with faster speed build-up, lower prices, and high quality parts.

8. What was "Love Canal"? How did the people remedy their problem? Love Canal was an underground build-up of dangerous chemicals in Niagara Falls, New York that affected the immune system of most of the children in the region. The families of the region demanded to be moved away from the toxic build-up and though the state did cooperate they only moved 239 families closest to the build-up. After two years of demanding to be moved as well the remaining families locked two Federal Environmental Officials in a house and would not release them until their demands were met.

9. Why was there forced busing in urban schools? How was it received in America? How did it impact the schools? With more schools being desegregated the bus system was now being desegregated as well. There was still strong opposition to integration across the country leading to riots and violence. Many white and black families pulled out their kids from public schools because they didn't like what was going on.

10. What happened in San Francisco that galvanized the gay community? The gay population in San Francisco got support from mayor George Miscone and Harvey Milk and then the two men were assassinated on November 27, 1978 by anti gay activist, Dan White.

11. Why were conservatives concerned that America was disintegrating by the late 1970s? The country had greatly changed from the beginning of the century and many people began to fear that chaos would soon take over and the country would fall to ruin. So to help ease concern over 100,000 people marched to Washington and prayed for the chaos to end.

12. What happened in Iran in 1979? What were Khomeini's ideas?

In 1979 the Shah of Iran was forced to flee the country when opposition towards him grew too great for him to handle and soon Ayatollah Khomeini returned from his exile in France to assume leadership of Iran. Khomeini spread anti-America ideas throughout Iran and turned millions of Iranians against the West this was the setting stage for future conflicts in the Middle East.

13. What impact did OPEC's raising of oil prices have on the U.S.?

The higher oil prices made it harder for Americans to get the needed fuel for their vehicles and tensions continued to rise as more people began to lose faith in the government. President Carter decided that the best thing to do was to not just tell the people to calm down and move on with life; instead he decided the best thing to do is connect with their people again.

14. Describe Carter's "malaise" speech! What was his message?

To connect with the people again President Carter invited a handful of people from across the country to come meet with him and tell him what they thought was wrong with America. In his famous "malaise" speech his popularity went up 15 points.

15. What did Iranians do in response to the U.S. giving the Shah of Iran refuge? What images did Americans see on television?

Upon hearing that the Shah was being given refuge in America the people of Iran were outraged and attacked the US Embassy in Iran. After taking the US embassy workers hostage the Iranian people demanded that the Shah be returned to Iran to face trial. On TV sets across America people saw images of Iranians chanting about hating America and burning American flags.

16. What did the Carter Administration do to try and free the hostages? What was the result?

Throughout the night of Ronald Reagan's inauguration Carter worked to try and get the hostages out of Iran before his term as President ended. Finally just minutes after Reagan's inaugural the hostages were allowed to leave Iran.

17. Why was the U.S. hockey team's victory in the 1980 Olympics so important for America?

It was a tough time Vietnam still loomed on America and the Soviets and invaded Afghanistan it was the type of victory that we needed. At the 1980 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid, New York American hockey team achieved a victory over the Soviet team by one point. It was a joyous occasion.

18. Who is Ronald Reagan and why was he so appealing to Americans?

Reagan was the newly elected President that always seemed to have a positive attitude and continued to tell the people that things would get better. He helped keep American spirits high in the difficult times and many people loved his glass half full attitude.