

CHAPTER 16 SECTION 3	Section Summary THE WAR DIVIDES AMERICA
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READING CHECK

Why did the Tet Offensive surprise Americans?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *deferments* mean in the underlined sentence? Circle the words in the surrounding sentences that could help you learn what *deferments* means. Think about the privileges that college students and professionals might enjoy.

READING SKILL

Recognize Sequence How did the protests at the Democratic National Convention in 1968 help Richard Nixon?

Although many Americans supported the war in Vietnam, many others opposed it. Because the government lacked enough volunteer soldiers, the military drafted young men to serve in the armed forces. Some **draftees** thought that the method of selecting men was unfair. Draft boards gave deferments to college students and men who worked in certain occupations. As a result, African Americans, the poor, and working-class men served in disproportionately high numbers.

Many college students opposed the war. One organization, called the **Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)**, organized antiwar demonstrations. Opposition to the war grew as Americans watched bad news about it on television every night. Still, government reports about the war continued to be positive. This difference created a “**credibility gap.**”

In early 1968, the North Vietnamese conducted a major attack, the **Tet Offensive**. Because the U.S. government often gave positive reports about the war, the offensive surprised the country. The United States repelled the attack, but it showed that the enemy was still strong.

Antiwar Democrats began to campaign for President in 1968. Senator **Eugene McCarthy** was successful in an early primary election. Senator **Robert Kennedy** also entered the race. In March, President Johnson announced that he would not run for a second term as President.

In the spring and summer of 1968, both Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. Police clashed with antiwar protesters at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The chaos helped Republican candidate Richard Nixon to win the presidency. Nixon promised to achieve “peace with honor” in Vietnam.

Review Questions

1. Why did some people think that the draft system was unfair?

2. How did television play a role in the Vietnam War?

