**Aim: How should JFK’s image/presidency be remembered more positively or negatively?**

**Topic: JFK Presidency (1961-63)**

**Document #1 – Kennedy’s New Frontier**

John F. Kennedy (Democrat) became President of the United States in 1961, after defeating Republican Presidential Candidate Vice President Richard Nixon in the election of 1960. The election was highlighted by the first ever televised Presidential debate. He was the youngest man to ever be elected and was the first Roman Catholic president. He challenged Americans to work for the good of the nation. In his inaugural address he stated, “*We stand on the edge of a New Frontier—the frontier of unfulfilled hopes and dreams, a frontier of unknown opportunities and beliefs in peril. Beyond that frontier are uncharted areas of science and space, unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered problems of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus…In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility - I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it -- and the glow from that fire can truly light the world…And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country.”*

1. **What do you think Kennedy meant by “ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country?”**
2. **What do you think Kennedy meant by “*In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility - I welcome it.”?***
3. **What do you think Kennedy means that his presidency will be a “New Frontier” for America?**
4. **Based on the speech, what goals is Kennedy setting for himself and the American people?**

**Document #2: JFK’s New Frontier Program**

Kennedy’s New Frontier Program consisted of four main points: Civil Rights, Peace Corps Act, improving the economy and the Space Race. In Civil Rights, He pushed to end discrimination based on employment, housing, and also tried to make sure voting rights were given to blacks. JFK made sure court orders, such as integration, were carried out. Kennedy also signed the Peace Corps into law: an organization of volunteers that worked with governments, schools, non-profit organizations, and entrepreneurs in education, hunger, business, information technology, agriculture, and the environment. This gave support to developing nations and still exists today. Kennedy expanded on the ideas of the New Deal and the idea of the government having a strong role in the economy; increasing unemployment benefits, minimum wage, as well as providing money to cities to improve housing and transportation constructing highway systems. Congress also passed a water pollution control act to protect U.S.’s rivers and streams and an agricultural act to raise famers’ incomes. He also signed the Equal Pay Act, said men and women must be paid equally for the same job. Most ambitiously, Kennedy heavily funds education and the sciences to defeat Russia in the space race; promising to land a man on the moon. That was achieved in July of 1969, the U.S. was successful at being the first country to have a **man (Neil Armstrong) on the moon**, showing its power.

1. **What were the four main points of Kennedy’s New Frontier Program?**
2. **Does his domestic agenda deserve to be called “a New Frontier?”**
3. **Do you agree or disagree with Kennedy’s policies as President?**

**Task: 1) Read “Brief History of the Cuban Missile Crisis”**

**2) Answer the 4 questions at the end**

**3) Exit Ticket: How would you grade Kennedy’s handling of the events in Cuba? (one paragraph, 5-7 sentences, with specific details and analysis)**

Brief History of the Cuban Missile Crisis

In 1959, a Communist rebel named **Fidel Castro** took power in Cuba, an island just 90 miles away from Florida. When Castro came to power, however, he **nationalized** (took over) American companies in Cuba. In retaliation, the Americans **stopped all aid** to Cuba, and **all imports** of Cuban sugar. This was a blow to Castro as sugar was the **most important business** of the Cuban economy. Castro was forced to look to the USSR (Russia) for help, and, in 1960, the USSR signed an **agreement** to buy 1 million tons of Cuban sugar every year.

America was alarmed at this Communist alliance so close to our borders. In April 1961, President John F. Kennedy approved a secret mission where the CIA funded, trained, armed and transported 1,300 Cuban exiles to **invade Cuba**. They landed at the **Bay of Pigs** and made an attempt to overthrow Castro. The **Bay of Pigs Invasion** was a **disaster**, all of the invasion force was captured and killed, and President Kennedy was humiliated.

In September 1961, Castro asked for - and Russia publicly promised – nuclear weapons to defend Cuba against America. On October 14, 1962, American spy planes discovered **missile sites** of Long Range Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) in Cuba. These missile sites brought **every town in the US within** **range** of Soviet nuclear missiles. When President Kennedy saw the photographs on October 16, he assembled the National Security Council together to strategize on what to do – fourteen key officials and his brother Robert, at 9.00 a.m. to discuss a response. The U.S. had no plan in place because U.S. intelligence had been convinced that the Soviets would never install nuclear missiles in Cuba. The NSC came up with five possible courses of action:

1) Do nothing.

2) Use diplomatic pressure to get the Soviet Union to remove the missiles.

3) An air attack on the missiles.

4) A full military invasion.

5) The naval blockade of Cuba, which would prevent any trade to or from Cuba or any Russian ships from entering Cuba.

President Kennedy did not dare to invade Cuba, because he believed that action could have started a world war - yet he could not let the missile sites be completed. With his advisers, he decided on a **naval blockade** to prevent Russian ships delivering the missiles for the Cuban sites.

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev warned that Russia would see the blockade as an **act of war**. As the Russian fleet approached Cuba, the two countries were on the brink of war: Russian forces were put on alert**, including nuclear submarines close to the area**, US bombers were put in the air carrying nuclear bombs, and preparations were made to even invade Cuba. There was **massive tension** in both Washington and Moscow. President Kennedy went public with the decision to blockade Cuba on October 22 and for fourteen days everybody thought the world was going to come to an end.

However, the two sides knew that a nuclear war would destroy both of them. Khrushchev, a veteran of World War II who had already seen the destruction of war, sent a secret telegram offering to dismantle the Cuban bases if Kennedy lifted the blockade and promised not to invade Cuba and if he agreed to the dismantling of the Turkish bases. Kennedy publicly agreed to end the blockade and promised not to invade Cuba, and Khrushchev publically agreed to dismantle the Cuban bases and turned the armed Russian ships heading to Cuba back. However, the deal to dismantle the Turkish bases was made in secret so America’s NATO allies would not worry in Europe.

Nuclear war had been averted, but the crisis had **lasting effects** on both leaders and future relations. Did one superpower emerge from the crisis in a more positive light than the other? Speaking many years later, **Khrushchev** claimed that he had **won** the Cuban missile crisis. He had **achieved** both his aims - America **never bothered Cuba again** (which is still a Communist country) and the **US missile sites in Turkey were dismantled** in November 1962. The world did not see it that way at the time, because the Turkey deal was kept secret, the West saw **Kennedy** as the **hero** who had faced down Communism. Meanwhile, Khrushchev **lost prestige**. China broke off relations with Russia and, in 1964, Kruschev was forced to **resign** as Soviet leader.

**1) How did America’s and Cuba’s relationship deteriorate?**

**2) What was the Cuban Missile Crisis? What led to it?**

**3) Why were America and Russia dangerously close to war?**

**4) How did the Cuban Missile Crisis end? Who do you think should be seen as the winner of the Cuban Missile Crisis?**