

## Reading Zone 4.2

Read the following passage and then answer the questions that follow. You can check your answers on page 237.

### **BREACH OF FAITH**

In June 1972, the District of Columbia police took into custody five burglars who had broken into the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the fashionable Watergate complex in Washington, apparently to plant a listening device. A trail of clues led incredibly from the perpetrators—three Cuban émigrés and two native-born Americans, all with CIA connections—to E. Howard Hunt, an administration consultant who a dozen years earlier had helped plan the Bay of Pigs invasion, and to G. Gordon Liddy, a Republican campaign official. All seven men were indicted. The head of the Nixon campaign committee, the president's close friend, former Attorney General John Mitchell, denied prior knowledge but resigned all the same.

As the Watergate Seven awaited trial that fall, the Democrats attempted unsuccessfully to make an issue of the episode. The American electorate, apparently unwilling to face the prospect of a McGovern presidency, behaved almost as a willing conspirator in the increasingly dubious pretense that the break-in had been the work of a few overzealous underlings. In fact, Nixon himself had secretly allowed his top domestic aid, H.R. Haldeman, to dissuade the FBI from a serious investigation that would have demonstrated otherwise.

Throughout 1973 and into 1974, the cover-up slowly came apart, partly because of pressure from a determined opposition, partly because Nixon and those around him displayed monumental ineptitude and inexplicable irresolution in dealing with a matter of political life and death. The events are well known: the conviction of the original Watergate burglars; the decision of their leader to implicate hitherto untouched administration figures; an investigation conducted by a special Senate committee headed by Sam Ervin of North Carolina; indictments of more

administration figures; the resignations of FBI director L. Patrick Gray and Attorney General Richard Kleindienst; the appointment of Archibald Cox as special prosecutor; the discovery that the president had taped most of his confidential conversation; the inexorable push to make the tapes public; the Saturday Night Massacre firing of Cox and others in October, 1973; the conviction of various administration officials on charges such as perjury and obstruction of justice; continued pressure from a new special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski; the issuance of some “sanitized” transcripts; court orders mandating full release of the tapes. Along the way, there also occurred the forced resignation of Vice-President Agnew under charges of taking illegal payoffs, an Internal Revenue Service assessment against the president for back taxes, and the revelation that some of the Watergate burglars had been part of a White House “plumbers” unit that had engaged in other illegal activities. During the last week of July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee recommended impeachment. A few days later, Nixon was forced by his own angry Lawyers to release the “smoking gun” transcript of June 23, 1972, proving conclusively that the president long had known about cover-up efforts. On August 8, 1974, he became the first chief executive in American history to resign from office.

As with any series of events played out on the level of epic human drama, Watergate was utterly fascinating in itself—for its human interest, its complexity, and its alteration of the course of American history. Beyond the public view of powerful men parading from the Senate committee rooms to the courtrooms and thence to public disgrace, however, there remain compelling questions. How could Watergate have happened in the first place? And how could a trivial surreptitious entry about which a president almost certainly had no advance knowledge be allowed to become a national obsession for nearly a year and a half? And how could this obsession bring down a leader who had been elected by overwhelming majorities? The answers appear to reside within Richard Nixon—in his own insecure, meanspirited personality and the responses it aroused.

1. According to the passage, the action initially responsible for the downfall of President Nixon was
  - (A) the Bay of Pigs
  - (B) the Watergate break-in
  - (C) the taping of confidential conversations
  - (D) the hiring of E. Howard Hunt
  - (E) the firing of the independent prosecutor
  
2. The term “smoking gun,” as used in the passage, implies
  - (A) information which led to discovery of the break-in
  - (B) information which led to resignation of the FBI director
  - (C) the weapon used by Nixon to kill himself
  - (D) information which proved Nixon’s culpability
  - (E) information which implicated Nixon’s participation in the break-in
  
3. The name of the *second* special prosecutor was
  - (A) Leon Jaworski
  - (B) L. Patrick Gray
  - (C) Archibald Cox
  - (D) Sam Ervin
  - (E) Spiro Agnew
  
4. The purpose of the initial break-in at the Watergate Hotel was to
  - (A) spy on the Democrats
  - (B) plant an agent at the Democratic National Convention
  - (C) steal documentation outlining the Democrats’ plans for the upcoming election
  - (D) assassinate George McGovern, the Democratic candidate
  - (E) plant listening devices

5. The special senate committee was headed by
- (A) Archibald Cox
  - (B) Sam Ervin
  - (C) G. Gordon Liddy
  - (D) L. Patrick Gray
  - (E) Richard Kleindienst
6. Which of the following, if true, most supports the author's position?
- (A) The FBI was later cleared of any complicity in covering up the break-in.
  - (B) President Gerald Ford subsequently pardoned Richard Nixon.
  - (C) Richard Nixon grew up insecure and unsure of his position in life.
  - (D) Pat Nixon, Richard's wife, was a Rhodes scholar.
  - (E) Archibald Cox later suggested that he was fired because he was discovering the truth.
7. Who, according to the passage, was most responsible for the downfall of President Nixon?
- (A) E. Howard Hunt
  - (B) G. Gordon Liddy
  - (C) John Mitchell
  - (D) Spiro Agnew
  - (E) Richard Nixon
8. Which member of the Nixon advisers was integral in the planning of the Bay of Pigs invasion?
- (A) Richard Kleindienst
  - (B) G. Gordon Liddy
  - (C) Sam Ervin
  - (D) E. Howard Hunt
  - (E) L. Patrick Gray

9. The title *Breach of Faith* refers to
- (A) the disregard of the president for the electorate
  - (B) the disregard of the prosecutors for the president
  - (C) the disregard of members of the cabinet for the president
  - (D) the disregard of the Republican Party for the Democratic Party
  - (E) all of the above
10. The “Saturday Night Massacre” mentioned in the passage refers to
- (A) the resignation of major cabinet officials in the face of potential prosecution
  - (B) the firing of major cabinet officials in the face of potential prosecution
  - (C) the firing of Archibald Cox and the special prosecutors
  - (D) the firing of Leon Jaworski and the special prosecutors
  - (E) the resignation of L. Patrick Gray and Richard Kleindienst in the face of potential prosecution

## Reflection

For any question you got wrong, go back and leave notes next to each answer choice indicating why it is correct or incorrect. It’s important that you not only practice, but also reflect on your performance! This way, you’ll see what issues give you trouble and gain a better understanding of how to improve.