

chapter 20 section 2 the harding presidency

guided reading answers

Chapter 20 Section 2: The Harding Presidency Guided Reading Answers explores the pivotal moments and policies of Warren G. Harding's administration from 1921 to 1923. Harding's presidency is often characterized by a return to normalcy after the tumultuous years of World War I. This article delves into the key themes, controversies, and outcomes of his administration, providing a comprehensive understanding of the period.

Background of the Harding Presidency

Warren Gamaliel Harding, the 29th President of the United States, took office in March 1921. His election came at a time when the nation was yearning for stability and a sense of normalcy after the upheaval of the war and the progressive reforms of the early 20th century. Harding campaigned on the promise of returning America to its pre-war state, emphasizing conservative values and limited government intervention in the economy.

The Concept of Normalcy

1. **Definition:** Harding's concept of normalcy was centered around a desire to return to the way of life that Americans experienced before World War I, which included a focus on domestic issues rather than international affairs.
2. **Public Sentiment:** The public was exhausted from the war and social changes. They welcomed Harding's promise to restore stability and traditional values.
3. **Political Climate:** The Republican Party, which dominated national politics at the time, supported Harding's vision and platform.

Harding's Domestic Policies

Harding's domestic policies were characterized by a focus on pro-business initiatives, tax cuts, and a reduction in government regulation. These policies were designed to stimulate the economy and promote growth.

Economic Policies

1. **Tax Cuts:** Harding supported significant tax reductions for individuals and corporations, believing that lowering taxes would increase spending and investment.
2. **Tariff Policies:** The Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act of 1922 raised tariffs on imports to protect American industries but also strained international relations.
3. **Budget and Accounting Act:** Passed in 1921, this act established the first formal federal budget

and aimed to streamline government expenditure.

Labor Relations

The Harding administration faced significant labor unrest during its tenure. Key events included:

- Strikes: The post-war period saw numerous strikes as workers sought better wages and working conditions.
- Response to Strikes: Harding's administration often sided with business interests, leading to government intervention to break strikes, such as the 1922 coal strike.
- Labor Policies: Harding's approach to labor relations was generally conservative, reflecting his support for business over labor, which alienated many workers.

Key Events During Harding's Presidency

Several significant events occurred during Harding's short presidency that shaped his legacy.

Teapot Dome Scandal

One of the most notorious scandals of the Harding administration, the Teapot Dome scandal involved the secret leasing of federal oil reserves.

- Details of the Scandal: Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall secretly leased naval oil reserves at Teapot Dome, Wyoming, to private oil companies in exchange for bribes.
- Consequences: The scandal led to Fall's conviction for bribery and represented a significant breach of public trust in the federal government, casting a shadow over Harding's presidency.

Foreign Policy Initiatives

Harding's foreign policy was less interventionist than that of his predecessors, focusing instead on diplomatic agreements and disarmament.

1. Washington Naval Conference: Held in 1921-22, this conference aimed to prevent an arms race by limiting naval construction among the world's major powers.
2. Nine-Power Treaty: This treaty, which emerged from the conference, affirmed China's sovereignty and the Open Door Policy, promoting equal trading rights.
3. Kellogg-Briand Pact: Signed in 1928, although after Harding's death, this pact aimed to renounce war as a means of resolving disputes, reflecting Harding's commitment to peace.

Harding's Leadership Style

Harding's leadership style has often been criticized for its lack of decisiveness and reliance on his Cabinet members, many of whom were later implicated in corruption.

Cabinet and Advisors

- "Ohio Gang": Harding's close friends and political allies, known as the Ohio Gang, filled many key positions in his administration. Their corruption and mismanagement contributed to the scandals that plagued his presidency.
- Laissez-faire Approach: Harding largely adopted a hands-off approach to governance, allowing his advisors to dictate policy, which ultimately led to numerous ethical breaches.

Public Perception and Legacy

Harding's presidency is often viewed through a lens of controversy and scandal, leading to a mixed legacy:

1. Initial Popularity: Harding was initially popular, enjoying high approval ratings due to his promises of normalcy and prosperity.
2. Declining Reputation: As scandals emerged, public perception of Harding soured, and he became associated with corruption and incompetence.
3. Posthumous Evaluation: After his death in 1923, historians have reassessed his presidency, recognizing the challenges he faced and the complexity of his policies.

Conclusion: The Impact of Harding's Presidency

Warren G. Harding's presidency is a compelling study of the tension between the desire for stability and the realities of political corruption. His commitment to a return to normalcy resonated with a public eager for peace and prosperity after World War I. However, the scandals that marred his administration, particularly the Teapot Dome scandal, have overshadowed his accomplishments and raised questions about his leadership capabilities.

Despite the criticisms, Harding's presidency laid the groundwork for the economic boom of the 1920s, and his foreign policy initiatives, though limited, represented an early attempt at international cooperation in a post-war world. As such, understanding the Harding presidency is crucial for comprehending the broader context of American political history in the early 20th century. The lessons learned from his administration continue to inform discussions about governance, ethics, and the role of leadership in shaping public trust.

Frequently Asked Questions

What were the main policies of Harding's presidency discussed in Chapter 20, Section 2?

The main policies included a focus on pro-business measures, tax cuts for the wealthy, and a reduction in government regulation.

How did Harding's administration handle international relations?

Harding's administration promoted isolationism and sought to reduce military involvement overseas, exemplified by the Washington Naval Conference.

What was the significance of the Teapot Dome scandal during Harding's presidency?

The Teapot Dome scandal was a major political scandal involving the secret leasing of federal oil reserves, which highlighted corruption in Harding's administration.

What economic conditions did the U.S. face during the Harding presidency?

The U.S. experienced a post-World War I economic boom, followed by inflation and labor unrest, leading to a turbulent economic environment.

How did Harding's leadership style impact his presidency?

Harding's leadership style was characterized by a hands-off approach and reliance on his cabinet, which led to both effective governance and significant corruption.

What was Harding's approach to civil rights during his presidency?

Harding advocated for civil rights and spoke against lynching, but his administration did not take significant action to advance these issues.

What role did women play in the Harding administration?

Women gained some political influence during Harding's presidency, with the appointment of the first female federal employee, but significant progress on women's rights was limited.

What were the public's perceptions of Harding at the time of

his presidency?

Initially, Harding was seen as a likable leader, but public perception deteriorated due to scandals and corruption revealed during and after his term.

How did Harding's presidency end?

Harding's presidency ended with his sudden death from a heart attack in 1923, which left many issues unresolved and scandals unaddressed.

What lessons can be learned from the Harding presidency as outlined in Chapter 20, Section 2?

The Harding presidency illustrates the importance of ethical leadership, accountability in government, and the potential consequences of corruption.

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