**It all started when…**

* On June 17, 1972, five men carrying wiretapping equipment were arrested breaking into the Democratic National Committee’s headquarters located in the Watergate Complex in Washington D.C.

**Whitehouse Response**

* Questioned by the press, the White House dismissed the incident as “a third-rate burglary attempt.” Pressed further, President Nixon himself denied any White House involvement.

**In Reality**

* In fact, G. Gordon Liddy & E. Howard Hunt, were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ FBI and CIA agents currently working for Nixon’s Committee to Re-elect the President. Their job was to protect the Nixon administration, anyway necessary, legal or not.
* Hunt and Libby had arranged for the illegal wiretaps (listening devices) at the Democratic headquarters, part of their campaign of ‘dirty tricks’ against the rival Democratic party.

**Misuse of power**

* The Watergate incident was not an isolated incident. It was part of a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of illegality and misuse of power by a paranoid and ruthless White House.

**The nature of Politics**

* Nixon could have dissociated himself from the break-in by dismissing his guilty aides, but it was election time. Fearful of bad press, he arranged \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ money for the burglars and instructed the CIA to stop the FBI investigation.

**Misuse of power**

* Ordering the CIA to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the FBI from investigating the Watergate incident was an obstruction of justice, a criminal offense.
* Nixon managed to keep the lid on the incident until after his re-election, but eventually the lid blew off due to congressional investigations.
* In January 1973, the Watergate burglars were found guilty. One of them began to talk about his White House connections.

**C.R.E.E.P**

* In the meantime, two reporters at the *Washington Post*, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, uncovered the Committee’s to Re-elects illegal “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’ and its links to key White House aides.
* The slush fund received its money illegally from the campaign contributions of the Republican Party to finance “mischief” against anyone that posed a threat to the Nixon administration.

**Congress takes notice**

* In May, a Senate committee began holding nationally televised hearings, at which it was discovered that the Watergate break-in was linked to the White House.
* The guilty White House officials implicated President Nixon. During the testimony, it was discovered that Nixon had installed a secret taping system in the Oval office.

**Abuse of “Executive Power”**

* Claiming executive \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Nixon refused to surrender the White House tapes. Under enormous pressure, he eventually released some of the tapes. One of the tapes was suspiciously missing 18-minutes of recording.
* Finally on June 23, 1974, the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to release the unaltered tapes. Lawyers were shocked to find concrete evidence that the president had ordered the cover-up of the Watergate break-in.

**Congress takes action**

* By then, the House of Representatives had begun to consider articles of impeachment, to remove the president from office.
* **Certain that he would be convicted by the Senate, on August 9, 1974, Nixon became the first U.S. president to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from office.**

**A new President**

* The next day, Vice President Gerald Ford was sworn in as president. Congressman Ford had replaced Vice President Spiro Agnew, who had himself resigned in 1973 for accepting “kickbacks” while governor of Maryland.

**A new President; shocks a nation**

* A month later, Ford stunned the nation by granting Nixon a “full, free, and absolute “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” for all offenses he had committed or might have committed during his presidency.”
* President Ford took that action, he said, to spare the country the agony of Nixon’s criminal prosecution. He felt the country needed to move on.

**Reaction:**

* In Moscow, puzzled Soviets leaders could not understand how a powerful president could be forced to resign, because of what they viewed as a minor offense.
* Soviet history knew no parallel. That was one lesson of Watergate – that, in America, the rule of law prevailed. No one is above the law, not even the president.

**A lesson learned…**

* A second lesson involved the constitutional separation of powers. As commander-in-chief, Nixon asserted unlimited authority, excusing his wiretapping. The president does not have absolute power due to checks & balances.
* Congress pushed back against the abuses of the Nixon administration, passing the War Powers Act (1973), limiting the president’s ability to deploy U.S. forces without congressional approval.
* Congress passed the Freedom of Information Act (1974), protecting privacy and access to federal records, and the Fair Campaign Practices Act (1974), limiting and regulating contributions in presidential campaigns.
* Lastly, Congress passed the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act (1978), prohibiting domestic wiretapping without a warrant.