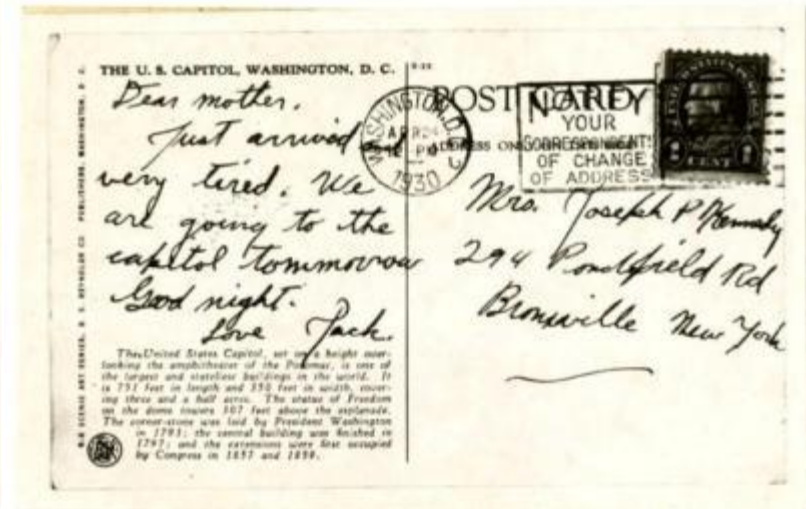


## A Picture Book Biography of John F. Kennedy



Eight of the Kennedy children, Hyannis Port, 1928. [PX 93-49: P16]



Jack sent this postcard of the Capitol to his mother, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, on his first trip to Washington, D.C. If he was born on May 29, 1917, how old was he when the card was sent? (Hint: check the postmark to help you find the answer. See Answer Key on p. 20.)

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, or “Jack” as his family called him, was a young boy when he first visited Washington, D.C. Did he have any idea that thirty-one years later he would stand on the steps of this very building to take the **oath of office**? What happened in his life that brought him to that moment? How did he become the 35<sup>th</sup> president of the United States?

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born on May 29, 1917 in Brookline, Massachusetts, a few miles outside of Boston, Massachusetts. His father, Joseph Patrick Kennedy, was a successful businessman. All eight of his great-grandparents were **immigrants**. They left Ireland during the **potato famine** and traveled by ship to Boston, hoping for a better life. When they came to the United States, it was hard for them to find jobs. They discovered that people from Ireland were not always treated fairly or with respect. But Jack's grandparents were determined and talented. They worked hard and his grandfathers became well-known **politicians** in Boston. By the time Jack was born, his parents expected him to be successful, too.



John Fitzgerald Kennedy was named in honor of his grandfather, John Francis Fitzgerald. Known as “Honey Fitz”, his grandfather was mayor of Boston and also served as a U.S. Representative for Massachusetts. Jack followed in his grandfather’s footsteps when he was elected U.S. Representative to Congress from the same district as his grandfather in 1946.

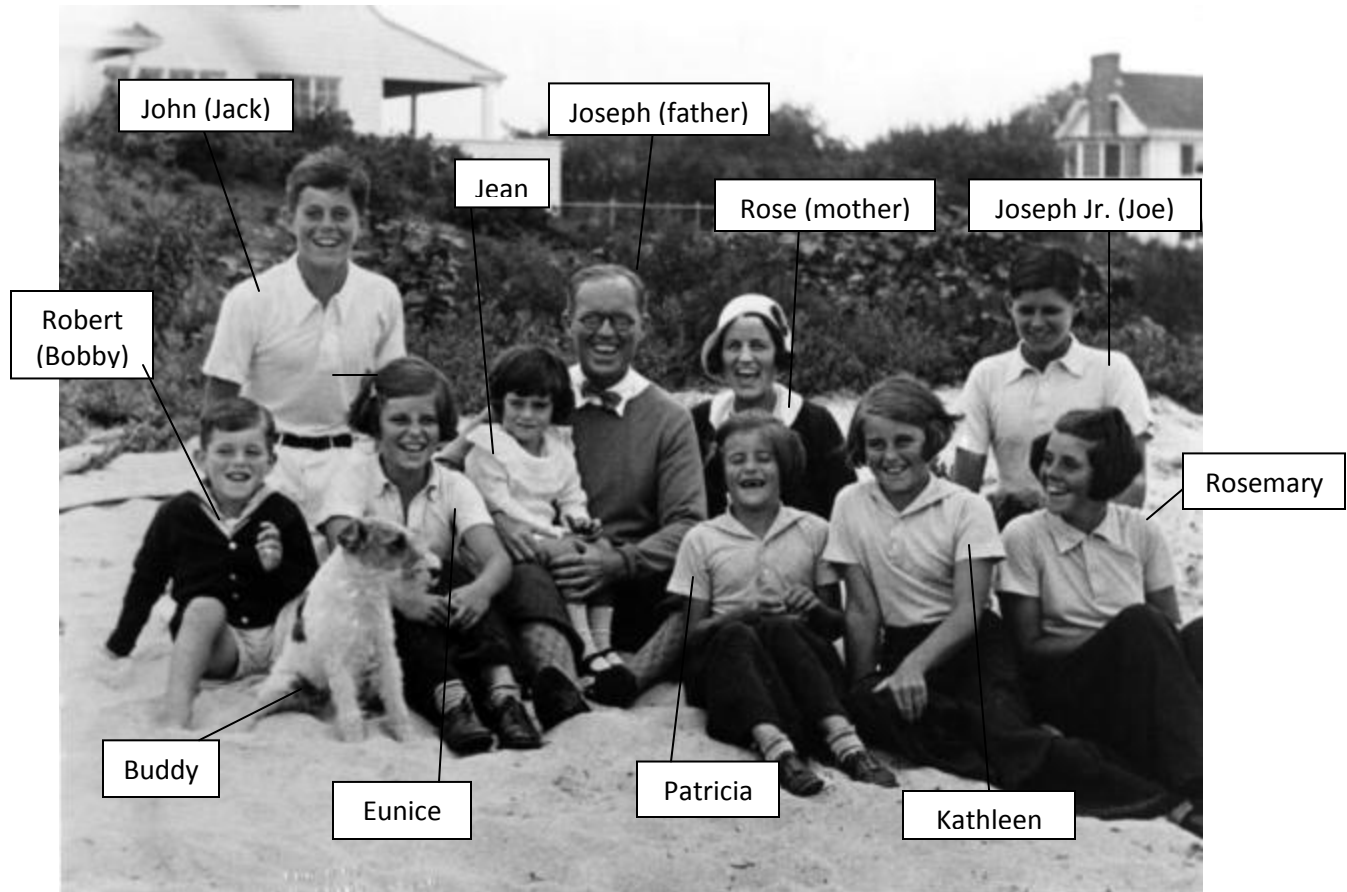
Left to right: Mary Fitzgerald (wife of “Honey Fitz”), “Honey Fitz”, Eunice, Jack, Kathleen, Rosemary, Joe Jr. (KFC235N)

John Fitzgerald Kennedy  
Born Brookline Mass. (83 Teals Street) May 29. 1917  
Has had whooping cough. measles - chd sleepox  
Had scarlet fever. Feb. 20. 1920  
At City Hospital Boston. with Dr. Hill. Dr. Reardon  
took care of ear.  
Has had mumps.  
German measles 1928  
Schick test 1928  
Bronchitis occasionally

John F. Kennedy's mother, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, was very organized. She kept note cards for each of her nine children in a small wooden box. Here is the card for Jack. When is his birthday? Where was he born? What illnesses did he have as a young boy? (Answer key on page 20.)

Growing up, Jack was often sick. He even had scarlet fever, a dangerous disease which could have ended his life. Reading helped him pass the hours he spent in bed, trying to recover from his many illnesses. He became an excellent reader as he learned about history through books. He also discovered many things about people and places around the world.

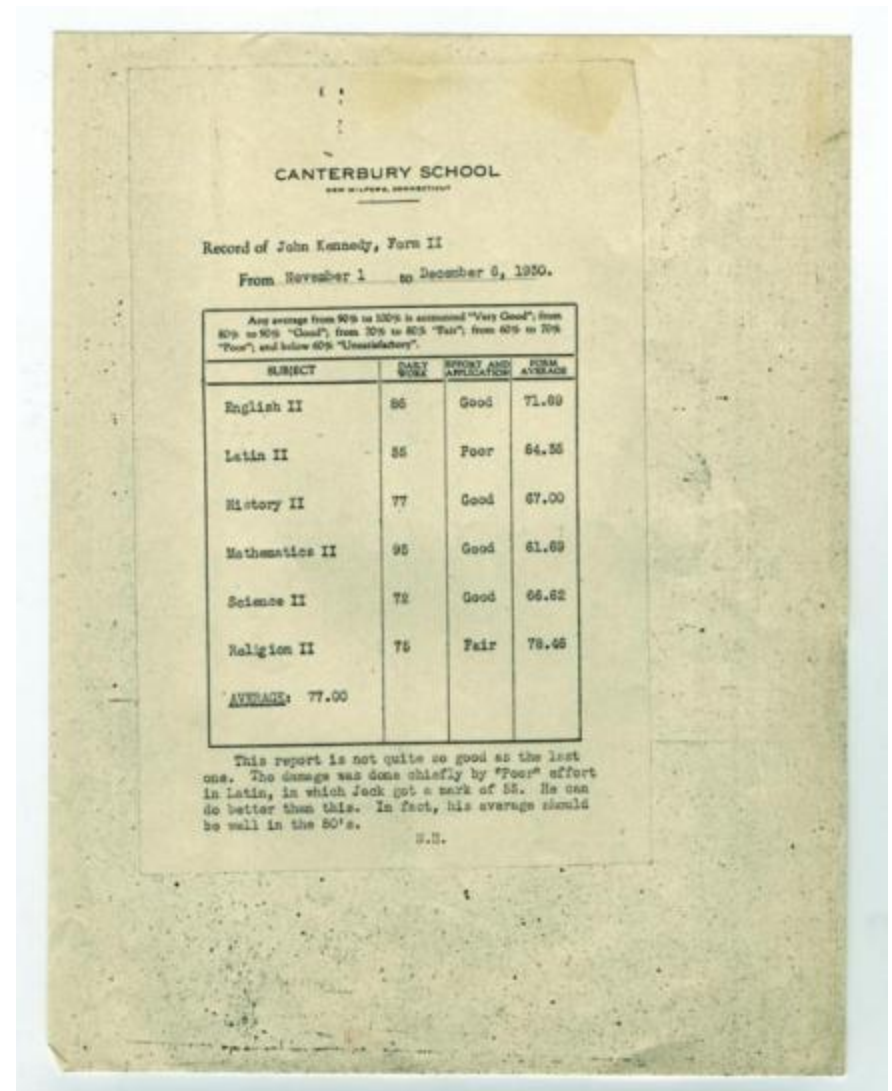
Jack had many brothers and sisters to keep him company. He had one older brother (Joe), five younger sisters (Rosemary, Kathleen, Eunice, Patricia, and Jean), and two younger brothers (Robert and Edward). The family loved to play sports and spent many summers at the beach swimming, sailing and playing football. Their father taught them to compete and to play hard to win. Joe was older and stronger and usually



won, but Jack played clever tricks to get the better of Joe. One time, Joe carefully scraped the chocolate icing off his cake, saving the best part to eat last. In a flash, Jack grabbed the plate and wolfed down the frosting in front of his brother. Joe was furious and smacked him. Jack hit him back and then both boys were sent off to bed.

This photograph was taken on September 4, 1931 at the Kennedy's house in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts on Cape Cod. How old was Jack? There are only eight children pictured since Edward (or Ted) was not born until 1932. (PC 8)

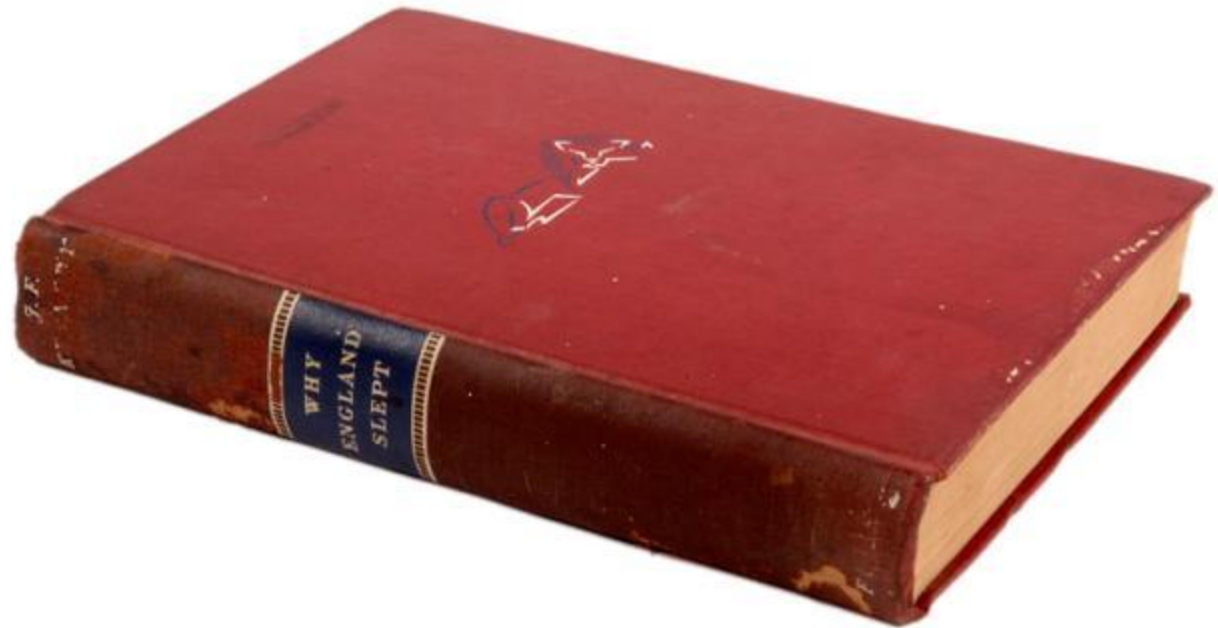
From kindergarten to the beginning of third grade, Jack went to the Devotion School, the public school near his house. He then attended private schools: first Dexter, then Riverdale, and for eighth grade, the Canterbury School. Jack then went to the Choate School, as did his brother Joe. Jack was very smart and well informed. He read the newspaper every day as a high school student. But he wasn't always the best student. At Choate, Jack and his friends did not always follow the school rules. They liked to have fun. They would sneak out for milkshakes and play their radios very loudly.



Jack let his parents know about his low grade in Latin before they saw this report card. Do you think he could have earned a higher grade?

After high school, Jack went to Princeton University first, then to Harvard College. He studied government and history and earned a B average by his senior year. While Jack was in college, his father became **ambassador** to England. Jack spent part of his college years with his family in England. He traveled to many places in Europe and Asia, and saw for himself how people lived in other countries. It was a tense time because World War II, a war between many different countries all over the world, was about to begin. Jack wrote a book about the start of the war called *Why England Slept*.

While he was studying in England, Jack became very interested in why England was not ready to fight in World War II. He wrote an important research paper, called a thesis, on the information he gathered in England. His father encouraged him to edit his paper and try to publish it as a book.



World War II began in 1939 and the United States entered the war in 1941. Jack and his brother Joe joined the Navy. Joe flew airplanes and Jack served on a patrol torpedo boat. In August 1943, Jack's boat, the PT-109, was hit by a Japanese ship. Jack hurt his back in the crash but still helped other men swim to a nearby island. They were stranded there for seven days. Luckily, two men from the islands, Eroni Kumana and



Biuku Gasa, found them. Jack carved a message onto the husk of a coconut and gave it to the islanders. They took it in their canoe to a nearby Navy base. The crew was rescued and Jack was given a special medal for his leadership and a purple heart for his injuries.

This painting hung in the White House when John F. Kennedy was President. It shows the *Amagiri*, a Japanese destroyer, ramming into the PT-109, the boat JFK commanded during World War II. Gerard Richardson, an official artist for the U.S. Navy, painted it in 1961. How many years after the crash was the painting made? Why might it have been painted then?





World War II changed Jack in many ways. He never forgot his war experience and the bravery of his crew. His brother Joe also died during the war. Jack wanted to make a difference. He decided to be a **politician**. In 1946 he won his first election. He became a Democratic congressman for Massachusetts and served for six years. Then he was elected to the United States Senate.

John F. Kennedy had severe back trouble as a teenager and as an adult. He sometimes used crutches to help him walk and stand. His mother, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, who often gave speeches on his behalf, is pictured here cheering him on during this campaign speech for the U.S. Senate. (PC2225, May 1952, Worcester, Massachusetts.)

As a congressman and senator, John F. Kennedy worked to pass laws that would help people in the United States. At this time, he was also focused on his family. In 1953, he married Jacqueline Bouvier. Their daughter Caroline was born in 1957 and their son John Jr. was born in 1960.



John F. Kennedy, Jacqueline Kennedy, and their two children, John Jr. and Caroline, had fun family time on Cape Cod at the Kennedy house in Hyannis Port. During what time of year was the photograph taken? How do you know? [ST-C22-1-62]



In 1960, John F. Kennedy ran for president of the United States. He traveled around the country, meeting people, and giving speeches about what he would do as president. The Democratic Party chose him as their **candidate** for president. The election was very close. Just over 100,000 more people voted for him than his opponent, Republican candidate Richard M. Nixon. At 43 years old, he became the youngest man elected president of the United States.

Kennedy asked Lyndon B. Johnson, a powerful U.S. senator from Texas, to be his running mate. Some historians believe that by having Johnson run for vice president, Kennedy gained more votes from southern states.

On January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy became the 35<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. In his first speech – his **Inaugural Address** – President Kennedy asked Americans to help their country. He said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” Thousands of people wrote letters to the President, congratulating him on his speech and asking what they could do for the country.



From the steps of the Capitol, John F. Kennedy delivered his inaugural address to twenty thousand people and through television to millions more around the world. Can you find Jacqueline Kennedy in the photograph? Can you find Vice President Johnson? Dwight D. Eisenhower, the departing president, is sitting to the right of Jacqueline Kennedy. He was 70 at the time. John F. Kennedy was 43.



Many of the letters were from people who wanted to join the Peace Corps, a program started by President Kennedy. Peace Corps **volunteers** leave the United States for two years to live and work with people in a different country. They work as teachers, farmers, nurses, doctors, and builders. The Peace Corps has helped many people and still exists today.

Willie Douglas (far right) left the United States for two years and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Pakistan. What work did he do there? What might he have learned as a Peace Corps volunteer in Pakistan? [PX65-2:55 (not dated), Original Peace Corps photograph by Paul Conklin, in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.]

Creating the Peace Corps was only one of President Kennedy's important accomplishments. Every day he made important decisions, and met with powerful people. In 1963 he welcomed 82 leaders of other countries to the White House! President Kennedy had certain things he did almost every day. He ate a big breakfast, read at least four newspapers, and swam in the White House pool. Swimming helped his back feel better and kept him in good shape. Caroline and John Jr. sometimes joined him in the pool! Even though he was very busy, it was very important to him to spend time with his family.



President Kennedy would clap his hands three times to let Caroline and John Jr. know that he had time to visit with them in the Oval Office. What might have happened if he didn't have a signal? Use a magnifying glass to examine the special objects and furniture JFK chose to have in his office. [ST-441-10-62]

While Kennedy was president, the United States was in the middle of the **Cold War** with the **Soviet Union**. Both countries were making and testing nuclear bombs and missiles. Each country feared the other would be more powerful. It was a scary time because one nuclear bomb could destroy an entire city. People were most worried in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis when the Soviet Union placed nuclear weapons on the island of Cuba, near the United States. President Kennedy convinced the Soviet Union to remove the missiles. He began to work with the Soviet Union so that both countries would agree to stop testing nuclear weapons.



This map, which was top secret at the time, was shown to President Kennedy after Soviet missiles were discovered in Cuba. Can you find Cuba? Historians have pointed out that the target range shown here is much larger than the reach of the type of missiles sighted in Cuba. On this map, how much of the United States could be hit by the missiles?

President Kennedy wanted the United States to lead the world in exploring outer space. He challenged the U.S. to be the first country to send a man to the moon by the end of the 1960s. The government put time, effort, and money into building better rockets, training astronauts, and sending them closer and closer to the moon. The United States reached President Kennedy's goal on July 20, 1969 when Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin set foot on the moon while fellow astronaut Michael Collins orbited nearby.



On February 20, 1962, John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth. His successful mission encouraged the U.S. to reach President Kennedy's goal of landing an astronaut on the moon. Traveling 160 miles above the earth's surface, Glenn sped around the planet at 17,500 mph in his space capsule, the *Friendship 7*. Courtesy of NASA [GPN-2002-000075]





President Kennedy was a leader who believed in fairness. He thought it was wrong that in some cities and towns, black people were not allowed to attend the same schools as white people. They had to sit in a different part of the movie theater and use separate restrooms. Many people, black and white, young and old, worked together to try to end this unfair separation, called **segregation**. President Kennedy wanted to end segregation, too. In June 1963, he asked Congress to make a new law for civil rights. He gave a speech on television and said that the United States stood for equality. He believed everyone deserved to be treated fairly and with respect.

After Martin Luther King Jr. told the world, “I have a dream” at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, he and other civil rights leaders went to the White House. They met with President Kennedy to discuss the newly-proposed law for equal rights.  
[ST-C277-1-63]

On November 22, 1963, President Kennedy traveled to Dallas, Texas. He was beginning his **campaign** for the 1964 presidential election. As he was riding through the city, shots were fired at him. Seriously wounded by the shooting, he was rushed to the hospital, but he did not survive. Soon after, people around the world gathered together for comfort as they listened to radio and television reports announcing the sad news. Vice President Johnson was in Dallas, too. He took the **oath of office** and became the new president. He flew back to Washington, D.C. that day to keep everyone calm and safe.



To honor President Kennedy, there is an eternal flame at his grave in Arlington National Cemetery. [PX 74-19-no#]

People remember John F. Kennedy as a president who was young and energetic. But he is also remembered as a leader who made a difference. His words and actions made people want to help others and serve their country. His efforts to promote equal rights gave people hope and helped end segregation. He got people excited about exploring space and encouraged them to meet difficult challenges. He helped keep the United States safe and led the country to work towards peace with other nations. President Kennedy believed that if we all join together, we can make the world a better place.



## Answer Key:

### **Page 2, Postcard to Rose Kennedy from her son, John F. (Jack) Kennedy**

If he was born on May 29, 1917, how old was he when the card was sent? *(He was twelve years old. The postmark is April 24, 1930, about a month before his thirteenth birthday. If he was twelve years old in 1930, how old was he when he took the oath of office to become the nation's 35<sup>th</sup> president?)*

### **Page 4, Note card on JFK:**

When is Jack's birthday? *(May 29, 1917)*

Where was he born? *(Brookline, Mass. 83 Beals Street)*

What illnesses did he have as a young boy? *(Whooping cough, measles, chicken pox, scarlet fever, German measles, bronchitis)*

### **Page 5, Photograph from September 4, 1931.**

How old was Jack? *(Fourteen years old)*

### **Page 6, Canterbury report card**

Do you think he could have earned a higher grade? *(Yes, he earned high grades in other subjects. His teacher writes a comment that he can do better.)*

### **Page 8, Photograph of the painting *Heavenly Mist***

How many years after the crash was the painting made? *(It was made 22 years after the crash.)*

Why might it have been painted then? *(John F. Kennedy was president, perhaps it was made to honor him.)*

**Page 10, Photograph of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, JFK, Caroline, and John Jr.**

During what time of year do you think the photograph was taken? *(summer)*

How do you know? *(They are wearing summer clothes, they do not have jackets, they look suntanned.)*

**Page 12, Photograph of Kennedy delivering his inaugural address.**

Can you find Jacqueline Kennedy in the photograph? *(She is in the first row. She is the second person to the left of JFK. She is wearing a beige coat, a beige hat, and a muff to keep her hands warm.)*

Can you find Vice President Johnson? *(He is in the first row. He is the first person to the right of JFK.)*

**Page 13, Willie Douglas in Pakistan**

What work did he do there? *(He helped with farming.)*

What might he have learned as a Peace Corps volunteer in Pakistan? *(He might have learned more about farming. He might have learned new languages -- there are many spoken in Pakistan. He might have learned how to make friends with people in a different country. He might have learned what it was like to live in a different culture. He might have learned information about his host village and Pakistan, his host country.)*

**Page 14, Photograph of President Kennedy and his children in the Oval Office**

What might have happened if he didn't have a signal? *(Caroline and John Jr. could barge in during an important meeting. They could interrupt a televised speech. They would be able to come in any time, and it would be hard for President Kennedy to complete his work.)*

**Page 15, Map of missile range from Cuba**

Can you find Cuba? *(It is the island just south of Miami, Florida.)*

On this map, how much of the United States could be hit by the missiles? *(Almost all of it, except the far northwest and Hawaii. However, this target range was larger than the reach of the type of missiles sighted in Cuba.)*

## Glossary

**ambassador** – A government official who represents his or her home country to a foreign country. An ambassador builds a friendship with a foreign country and helps solve conflicts that involve the two countries.

**campaign** – Planned actions to help a candidate win an election. When someone runs for president, he or she gives speeches, meets people, distributes buttons and posters, and appears on television advertisements. These actions are all part of his or her campaign.

**candidate** – A person who runs for an elected position such as senator or president.

**Cold War** – Following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union became the two most powerful nations in the world. They were known as “the superpowers.” The two countries had serious disagreements about many things and did not trust one another. Both the Soviet Union and the United States knew that nuclear weapons were dangerous, but neither country wanted to be caught short of weapons. Both the United States and the Soviet Union wanted to be well-protected and appear very powerful. The Cold War was a time of tension that also carried the threat of nuclear war.

**immigrant** – A person who leaves the country where he or she was born to live in another country.

**inaugural address** – The first official speech by a newly-elected official, such as the president. The inauguration refers to the ceremony during which the newly-elected president takes the oath of office and then delivers the inaugural address.

**oath of office** – The promise the person who has been elected president of the United States must make before he or she can officially take office. He or she must promise to respect and follow the Constitution. The Constitution is a set of rules that describes how the United States government works.

**politician** – A person who runs for an elected office in the government.

**potato famine** – Beginning in 1845, a fungus, or disease, destroyed the potato crop in Ireland. A million people died over ten years because they lost their main source of food. The lack of food forced about 2 million people to immigrate to the United States.

**segregation** – Segregation means separation. Up until 1964 in the United States, the laws in some parts of the country stated that black people and white people should be kept separate. Black people could not use the same public water fountains and bathrooms as white people. Many movie theaters, restaurants, and parks were only open to white people or had separate sections for black people. The facilities for white people were usually of better quality than those set aside for black people.

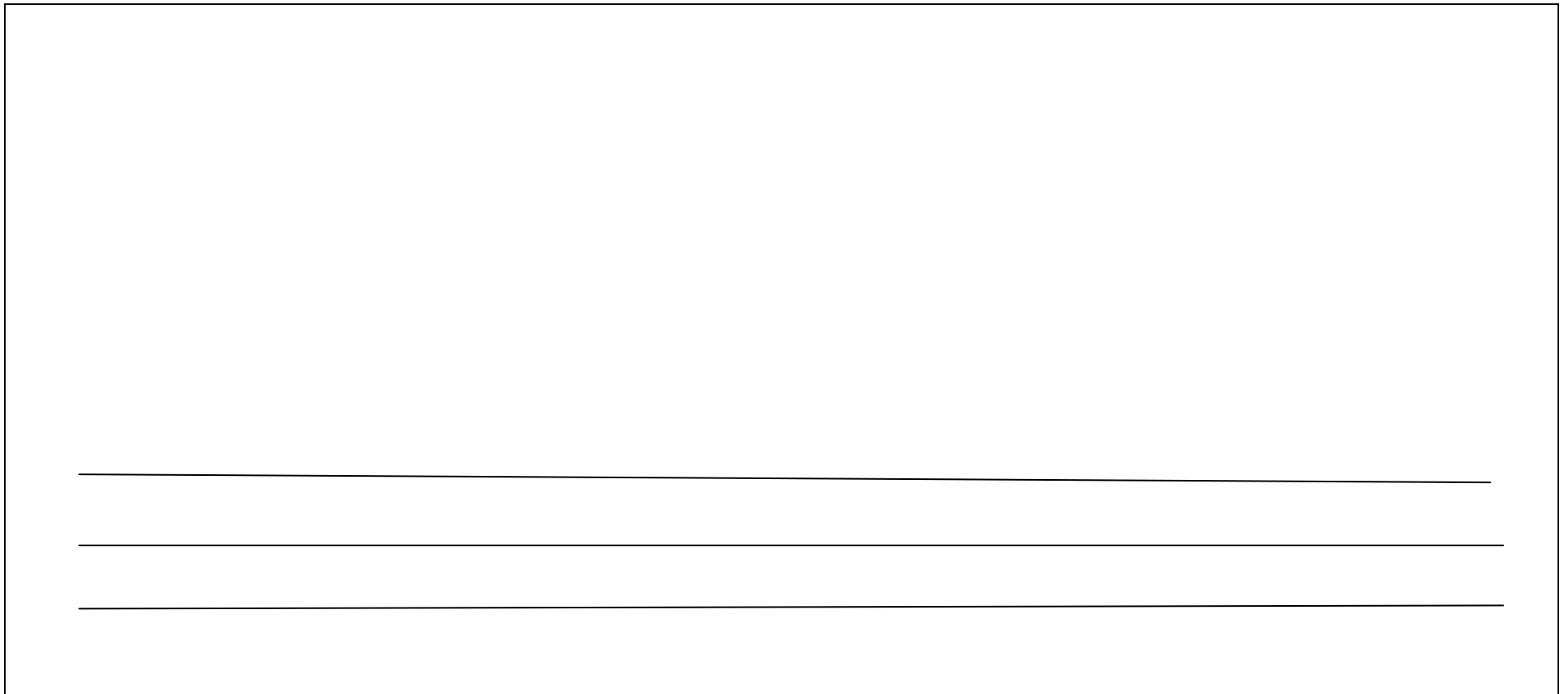
**Soviet Union** – Also known as the U.S.S.R., or Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Soviet Union formed when Russia joined with several surrounding countries including, for example, Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The country was communist. In a communist country, the government owns and controls businesses and services such as newspapers, industry, electrical companies, and farms. Big changes occurred in 1991 when some leaders of the Soviet Union made the decision to dissolve the Soviet Union. They agreed to give independence to Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Later, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and other countries became independent.

**volunteer** – Someone who works without getting paid. When you volunteer, you donate your time to help with something that is important to you.



### Thinking it Over

When John F. Kennedy was a young boy, he did not know that one day he would become president. What happened in his life that led him to that position? Write a sentence and draw a picture of an important part of John F. Kennedy's life that you think helped prepare him to become the 35<sup>th</sup> president of the United States.



A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for a drawing and a sentence. At the bottom left of the box, there are three horizontal lines for writing.

## A Timeline of President Kennedy's Life

What happened first? Cut out these pictures and paste them in order in the boxes below.



John F. Kennedy becomes President of the United States.



John F. Kennedy is born.



President Kennedy gives a speech about Civil Rights.



John F. Kennedy's boat PT-109 is attacked in World War II.



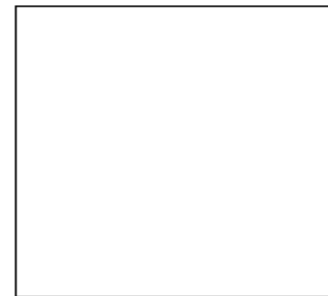
May 29, 1917



August 1943



January 20, 1961



June 1963