

One assassination. A thousand theories

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Secrets: Donald Trump has begun releasing classified files on the 1963 assassination of President John F Kennedy (pictured above just before he was shot dead) making thousands of records available to the public for the first time.

Do the new files solve the JFK debate? It is more than 60 years since the US president was shot in Texas. Yet speculation about the killing has become only more intense with time.

What's happening?

Donald Trump has honoured a campaign promise and released 80,000 new pages of documents relating to the **assassination** of President John F Kennedy (JFK) in Dallas, in 1963.

An inquiry ordered by Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B Johnson, concluded that JFK had been shot by **Lee Harvey Oswald**, acting alone, but polls show only 29% of Americans believe this version of the story.

Find out more

Many ask: how could a lone gunman organise the slaying of the world's most powerful person?

Then there is the "magic bullet": one bullet passed through JFK's neck to injure the Governor of Texas, who was also in the car. **Sceptics** say it is impossible for a single bullet to do so much damage and argue this proves there was a second gunman positioned to the north of the shooting site.

Kennedy was not the first US president to be shot. In fact, three presidents before him were assassinated by gunmen.

As early as 1966, some people began to argue that the assassination had been arranged by the **CIA**.

Other suspects include the **Mafia**, on which the Kennedy administration was clamping down, and Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

Do the new documents shed any light on the event? It may take weeks to find out.

Much material is still **redacted** or unreleased.

Do the new files solve the JFK debate?

Some say

Yes! All the tens of thousands of pages of documents on the assassination have revealed no involvement by the CIA, the mafia, or Cuba.

Others think

No! The mysteries of the assassination — the "magic bullet", the swift slaying of Oswald — remain unanswered.

Some people say

"Assassination is the extreme form of censorship."

George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950), Irish playwright

What do you think?

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Which version of the JFK story do you believe? Was there a cover-up?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Will big events always spawn conspiracy theories? Should governments ever lie?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are doing some research on the JFK assassination and you stumble across conclusive proof of who killed the president. How do you publicise this information in a way that will persuade people to believe it?

5. Express

What do others believe? - Get in a small group, do some research, and come up with your own case regarding who killed Kennedy.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - The year is 2063 and the US is commemorating 100 years since the Kennedy assassination. What do people now think happened? Write a newspaper article exploring this.

Glossary

Assassination - The murder of an important person, such as a politician, royal or business leader.

Lee Harvey Oswald - The US Marine veteran who assassinated John F Kennedy.

Sceptics - Those who doubt commonly accepted opinions - named after the "skeptical" philosophers of Ancient Greece.

CIA - The Central Intelligence Agency is a US government organisation that collects secret information about other countries.

Mafia - An organised international body of criminals, operating originally in Sicily and now especially in Italy and the US.

Redacted - To obscure or remove (text) from a document prior to publication or release.