



President Kennedy assassinated

Level **B1**

On November 23, 1963, the day after JFK's assassination, The Guardian reports on the drama of the event and how it was covered on television

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, was shot* during a motorcade* drive through downtown Dallas this afternoon. He died in the emergency* room of the Parkland Memorial Hospital 32 minutes after the attack. He was 46 years old. He is the third President to be assassinated in office* since Abraham Lincoln and the first since President McKinley in 1901.

Prime suspect

In the late afternoon the Dallas police took into custody* a former* Marine, one Lee H. Oswald, aged 24, who is alleged* to have shot a policeman outside a theatre. He is said to have remarked only, "It is all

"Lee Harvey Oswald, is said to have remarked only, 'It is all over now'."

over now". He is the chairman* of a group called the "Fair Play for Cuba Committee" and is married to a Russian girl. He is described at the moment as "a prime* suspect".

The new President is the Vice-President, Lyndon Baines Johnson, a 55 year old native Texan, who took the oath* of office in Dallas at five minutes to four at the hands of

a woman judge and later arrived in Washington with the body of the dead President.

An hour of tumult

This is being written in the numbed* interval between the first shock and the harried* attempt to reconstruct a sequence of fact from an hour of tumult. However, this is the first assassination of a world figure that took place in the age of television, and every network and station in the country took* up the plotting* of the appalling* story. It begins to form a grisly* pattern, contradicted by a grisly preface: the projection on television screens of a happy crowd and a grinning* President only a few seconds before the gunshots.

The President was almost at the end of his two day tour of Texas. He was to make a luncheon speech in the Dallas Trade Mart building and his motor procession had about another mile to go. He had had the warmest* welcome of his trip from a great crowd at the airport. The cries and pleas for a personal touch were so engaging that

Mrs Kennedy took the lead* and walked from the ramp of the presidential plane to a fence* that held the crowd in. She was followed quickly by the President, and they both seized* hands and forearms* and smiled gladly at the people.

The Secret Service and the police were relieved* to get them into their car, where Mrs Kennedy sat between the President and John B Connally, the Governor of Texas.

Three gunshots

The motorcade was going along slowly but smoothly* when three muffled* shots, which the crowd first mistook* for fireworks, cracked through the cheers*. One hit the shoulder* blade and the wrist* of Governor Connally who was taken with the President to the hospital, where his condition* is serious.

The other brought blood trickling* from the back of the sitting President's head. His right arm flopped* from a high wave* of greeting and he collapsed* into the arms of Mrs Kennedy, who fell unharmed*. She was heard to cry "Oh No" and sat there all the way cradling* his head in her lap*.

As some people bayed* and screamed and others fell to the ground, and hid their faces, the secret service escort broke* into two

groups, one speeding the President's car to the hospital – and another joined a part of the heavy police escort in wheeling* off in pursuit of a man fleeing* across some railroad* tracks. Nothing came of this lead*.

The President was taken to the emergency room of the Parkland Hospital and Governor Connally was taken into the surgery*. Mrs Kennedy went in with the living President and less than an hour later came out with the dead man

in a bronze coffin*, which arrived shortly* after two priests* had administered the last* rites of the Roman Catholic Church.

Return to Washington

The body was escorted by Generals Clifton and McHugh, the President's chief military and air force aides to the Dallas Airport and flown thence* to Washington.

Within an hour of the President's death, the Secret Service had found a sniper's* nest inside the building

from which the first witnesses* swore* the bullets had been fired. It is a warehouse* for a school text book firm on the corner of Elm and Houston Streets.

In an upper room, whose open window commanded the route of the Presidential motorcade, the Servicemen found the remains* of a fried chicken and a foreign made rifle* with a telescopic sight. Alongside it lay three empty cartridges.

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FRONT-PAGE NEWS: shocked silence as subway passengers read about JFK's last hours and death.



Our thanks to Isabelle Proietti for attributing CEFR levels to this article.

VOCABULARY p.32

alleged: présumé
appalling: épouvantable
bay: hurler

break into: se diviser
chairman: président
cheer: acclamation
collapse: s'écrouler
condition: état

cradle: bercer
custody: garde à vue
emergency room: les urgences

fence: clôture
flop: s'affaler
forearm: avant-bras
former: ancien
grinning: souriant

grisly: macabre
harried: tourmenté
lap: genoux
lead (take the): prendre le devant

mistake (p. mistook): se tromper
motorcade: cortège motorisé
muffled: étouffé

numbed: hébété
oath (to take): prêter serment
office (in): en exercice
plea: appel

plotting: scénario
prime: principal
relieved: soulagé
seize: saisir
shot: touché par balle

shoulder blade: omoplate
smoothly: sans heurts
take up: s'intéresser à
trickle: écouler

unharmed: indemne
warm: chaleureux
wave: salut de la main
wrist: poignet

VOCABULARY p.33
coffin: cercueil
flee: s'enfuir
last rites: derniers sacrements

lead: piste
priest: prêtre
railroad track: voie de chemin de fer

remains: restes (d'un repas)
rifle: fusil
shortly after: peu après

sniper's nest: planque de tireur
surgery: bloc opératoire
swear (p. swore): entrepôt

jurer
thence: de ce lieu-là
warehouse: entrepôt

wheel off: démarrer en vitesse
witness: témoin