Cuba Under Pressure

Weigh the goals, results, and limits of Kennedy's Cuba policy.

SS24.US2.13a "Assess the effectiveness of John F. Kennedy's foreign policy toward Cuba, including the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Kennedy's goals, circle the results of his choices, and write S beside evidence of success or L beside evidence of a limit.

Two Tests of Cuba Policy

1. Just 90 miles from Florida, Cuba became a major test of U.S. policy after Fidel Castro's revolution. Castro's government drew closer to the Soviet Union, a rival of the United States. President John F. Kennedy wanted to weaken Castro without starting a war between the two powerful nations. In April 1961, Kennedy approved a CIA-backed landing by Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs. He kept direct U.S. military support limited to avoid openly invading Cuba. Cuban forces defeated the exiles within days. The operation failed to remove Castro, embarrassed the United States, and strengthened Castro's ties to the Soviet Union.

2. In October 1962, U.S. spy planes photographed Soviet nuclear missile sites under construction in Cuba. Kennedy faced a different choice: an air strike could destroy some sites but might trigger war with the Soviet Union. Instead, he announced a naval quarantine to block further shipments of offensive weapons and demanded that the missiles already in Cuba be removed. Soviet ships approached the quarantine line, while U.S. forces prepared for possible conflict. The quarantine increased pressure without immediately attacking Cuba, but it did not by itself remove the missiles. For thirteen days, leaders weighed decisions that could have led to nuclear war.

3. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev eventually agreed to withdraw the missiles. Publicly, Kennedy pledged that the United States would not invade Cuba. Privately, his administration also agreed to remove U.S. Jupiter missiles from Turkey later, without publicly linking that step to the Cuba settlement. The result kept Soviet nuclear missiles out of Cuba and avoided immediate war, but Castro remained in power. Compared with the Bay of Pigs, the missile crisis showed a more effective use of pressure and negotiation to manage a dangerous standoff. Yet neither episode achieved the broader goal of ending Castro's government or U.S.-Soviet competition over Cuba.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How effective was the Bay of Pigs invasion at weakening Castro? Use its outcome and one further consequence to support your judgment.

2. Why might Kennedy's naval quarantine have been more effective than an immediate air strike at avoiding war? Include one limit of the quarantine.

3. Was the missile crisis settlement a complete U.S. victory? Weigh one success against one concession or unresolved problem.

4. Across both episodes, which of Kennedy's goals was met more effectively: avoiding war with the Soviet Union or removing Castro? Use evidence from both episodes.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 110 word advisory paragraph to a future president. Name one goal for Cuba policy, judge both Kennedy decisions with a fact about each, explain one trade-off, and recommend a lesson for future crises.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.13a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Kennedy's goals, circle the results of his choices, and write S beside evidence of success or L beside evidence of a limit. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How effective was the Bay of Pigs invasion at weakening Castro? Use its outcome and one further consequence to support your judgment.	**It was ineffective: Cuban forces defeated the exiles, Castro stayed in power, and his ties to the Soviet Union grew stronger.**
2	Why might Kennedy's naval quarantine have been more effective than an immediate air strike at avoiding war? Include one limit of the quarantine.	**It pressured the Soviet Union without immediately attacking Cuba, while an air strike risked war. The quarantine alone did not remove the missiles already in Cuba.**
3	Was the missile crisis settlement a complete U.S. victory? Weigh one success against one concession or unresolved problem.	**No. The Soviet missiles were withdrawn and immediate war was avoided, but Kennedy pledged not to invade Cuba, agreed privately to remove missiles from Turkey, and Castro remained in power.**
4	Across both episodes, which of Kennedy's goals was met more effectively: avoiding war with the Soviet Union or removing Castro? Use evidence from both episodes.	**Avoiding war was met more effectively: Kennedy limited direct U.S. support at the Bay of Pigs, and the missile crisis ended without immediate war. The invasion failed to remove Castro, and he remained in power after the crisis.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

To a future president: Make preventing direct war with a nuclear rival your first goal when confronting Cuba. At the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy kept direct U.S. support limited, yet the exile landing failed and left Castro closer to the Soviet Union. During the missile crisis, his naval quarantine raised pressure without an immediate attack, and Soviet missiles were eventually withdrawn. This was a stronger result, but the settlement left Castro in power and required a U.S. pledge not to invade. Before authorizing force, test whether a limited operation can achieve its aim, and leave room for negotiation.

Accept different judgments when students accurately weigh a stated goal against evidence from the passage. For the advisory paragraph, check the 80 to 110 word range and require a fact about each episode, a trade-off, and a recommendation.