Crises and Choices

Trace causes, responses, and consequences in the 1970s.

SS24.US2.15 "Describe how significant domestic events during the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter shaped United States economics, politics, and society..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a trigger, circle a government response, and box a result in each paragraph. Use your marks to trace how events changed the country.

Three Crises, Lasting Effects

1 In 1969, a fire on Ohio's polluted Cuyahoga River became a vivid sign of industrial waste, although the river had burned before. Smog and contaminated waterways worried many Americans. At the first Earth Day in 1970, millions joined public events demanding change. President Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency that year, and Congress strengthened the Clean Air Act. Federal rules gave regulators power to limit air pollution, while citizens kept pressing officials and companies to protect the places where they lived.

2 In June 1972, burglars linked to Nixon's reelection campaign broke into Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate complex. Nixon's aides tried to conceal their role, and the president joined efforts to obstruct the investigation. Senate hearings exposed the cover-up; White House recordings then provided crucial evidence. In 1974, the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to turn over the tapes. Facing likely impeachment and removal, he resigned in August. Vice President Gerald Ford became president and later pardoned Nixon, a decision that provoked fierce debate about accountability.

3 The economy posed another crisis across both presidencies. A 1973 oil embargo raised energy costs, and a 1979 oil supply disruption after Iran's revolution pushed prices higher again. Slower productivity growth also strained the economy. Rising prices alongside high unemployment became known as stagflation. Nixon's temporary wage and price controls slowed inflation briefly, but prices surged when controls ended. Carter promoted energy conservation, while the Federal Reserve began sharply raising interest rates in 1979. Inflation eventually fell, but costly borrowing helped bring a severe recession in the early 1980s.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did environmental concerns lead to both government regulation and civic action?

2. Trace how the Watergate break-in led to Ford's presidency.

3. Why could prices rise while unemployment remained high in the 1970s?

4. Compare the results of Nixon's price controls and the Federal Reserve's interest-rate increases.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences advising a 1970s president on an approach to handling crises. Use evidence from two different paragraphs and explain one trade-off your approach involves.

ANSWER KEY

Crises and Choices

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.15

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a trigger, circle a government response, and box a result in each paragraph. Use your marks to trace how events changed the country. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did environmental concerns lead to both government regulation and civic action?	**Pollution concerns helped spur Earth Day activism. Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency, Congress strengthened the Clean Air Act, and citizens continued pressing for change.**
2	Trace how the Watergate break-in led to Ford's presidency.	**The break-in led to an investigation that exposed a cover-up. Recordings provided evidence, Nixon resigned while facing likely removal, and Vice President Ford became president.**
3	Why could prices rise while unemployment remained high in the 1970s?	**Oil disruptions raised energy costs, while slower productivity growth strained the economy. Inflation and high unemployment occurred together, a condition called stagflation.**
4	Compare the results of Nixon's price controls and the Federal Reserve's interest-rate increases.	**Price controls slowed inflation briefly, but prices surged when they ended. Higher interest rates eventually helped lower inflation, but costly borrowing helped bring a severe recession.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A 1970s president should consider lasting effects before choosing a quick response to a crisis. Public pressure about pollution helped bring federal rules that could limit air pollution. In contrast, Nixon's wage and price controls slowed inflation only briefly before prices surged. A longer-term approach may take more time to show results, but a quick fix may not last.

Accept other evidence-based cause-and-effect explanations. For the advice note, look for evidence from two distinct paragraphs and a trade-off tied to the student's proposed approach.