A Political Turning Point

Trace the coalition, policies, and events of the Reagan era

SS24.US2.17 "Analyze the conservative revolution in American politics and how this shaped Ronald Reagan's domestic and foreign policies. 17a Describe the growth and composition of movement conservatism beginning in the 1960s..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline groups in Reagan's coalition and pressures that helped him win in 1980. Circle domestic policy choices and their effects, then number the dated Cold War turning points in order.

Reagan's Rise and Its Consequences

1. By the 1960s, movement conservatives were building networks through campaigns, churches, and business groups. They argued for lower taxes, fewer federal rules, traditional social values, and a strong military. The movement drew Sun Belt entrepreneurs, evangelical Christians, Cold War hawks, and some white Southern Democrats shifting toward Republicans. In 1980, these groups formed a powerful Reagan Coalition. Inflation, unemployment, and the Iran hostage crisis weakened President Jimmy Carter, helping Ronald Reagan win the election.

2. Reagan's 1981 tax cuts lowered rates, especially for high earners, while his administration reduced some business regulations and cut certain domestic programs. He argued these policies would spur investment and growth. A deep recession struck in 1981 and 1982. The Federal Reserve's high interest rates helped curb inflation but also worsened unemployment. Growth returned afterward, yet tax cuts combined with higher military spending enlarged federal deficits. Critics also pointed to rising income inequality and cuts in aid to poor households.

3. Reagan first intensified pressure on the Soviet Union through military spending and his 1983 Strategic Defense Initiative proposal. When Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev took power in 1985, he pursued reforms and negotiations amid serious Soviet economic problems. Reagan and Gorbachev signed a treaty eliminating a class of nuclear missiles in 1987. Popular protests and weakening Soviet control helped bring down the Berlin Wall in 1989. The Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, after Reagan left office, leaving the United States the sole superpower.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the movement's range of supporters and Carter's difficulties help Reagan win in 1980?

2. What were two different economic results described after Reagan's tax cuts and other policy changes?

3. How did Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union change between 1983 and 1987?

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say Reagan alone caused the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word museum label connecting one concern of Reagan's coalition to a domestic policy and one Cold War choice to a later outcome. Explain one reason Reagan should not receive sole credit for an outcome.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.17

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline groups in Reagan's coalition and pressures that helped him win in 1980. Circle domestic policy choices and their effects, then number the dated Cold War turning points in order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the movement's range of supporters and Carter's difficulties help Reagan win in 1980?	**Sun Belt entrepreneurs, evangelical Christians, Cold War hawks, and shifting Southern Democrats formed a broad coalition. Inflation, unemployment, and the Iran hostage crisis weakened Carter.**
2	What were two different economic results described after Reagan's tax cuts and other policy changes?	**Growth returned after the recession, but tax cuts combined with higher military spending enlarged federal deficits. Accept rising inequality or cuts in aid as a second result.**
3	How did Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union change between 1983 and 1987?	**He proposed the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983 as part of a pressure campaign, then signed a nuclear missile treaty with Gorbachev in 1987.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say Reagan alone caused the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union?	**Popular protests, weakening Soviet control, Gorbachev's reforms, and Soviet economic problems also mattered. The wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, both after Reagan left office.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Lower taxes helped unite Sun Belt business owners with other conservatives in Reagan's 1980 coalition. Once elected, Reagan cut taxes to encourage investment, but tax cuts alongside higher military spending widened federal deficits. His military buildup increased pressure on the Soviet Union, while his later negotiations produced a 1987 arms treaty. Yet Reagan did not bring down the Berlin Wall by himself: protests and weakening Soviet control mattered. The wall fell after he left office, and the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

Accept other passage-supported coalition concerns, domestic effects, and Cold War choices. Look for a clear connection between each choice and outcome, plus recognition that forces beyond Reagan shaped events.