Debate to Distrust

Political conflicts from the 1990s into the early 2000s

SS24.US2.20a "Assess how political events beginning with the Clinton presidency and into the early 2000s contributed to growing political polarization."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each major political conflict. Circle a nearby detail that shows how it increased disagreement or distrust between the parties.

When Political Fights Deepened

1. In 1994, Republicans won control of both chambers of Congress after campaigning on a "Contract with America," a set of proposed changes to federal policy. President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, now faced a Congress led by the other party. Disputes over spending led to two federal government shutdowns in 1995 and early 1996. Each side blamed the other for the closures. The standoff made compromise look like surrender to some voters and lawmakers.

2. In 1998, the House of Representatives impeached Clinton on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice connected to his testimony about a personal relationship. Most House Republicans voted to impeach him, while most House Democrats opposed it. In 1999, the Senate acquitted Clinton, so he remained president. Supporters of impeachment called it a defense of the rule of law. Critics argued it was a partisan effort to remove a president. The conflict turned judgments about presidential conduct into a sharp party divide.

3. In 2000, the presidential election came down to a disputed vote count in Florida. The Supreme Court's decision in Bush v. Gore stopped a recount, and George W. Bush won Florida and the presidency. Many Democrats questioned the result's fairness, while many Republicans defended the decision. After the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, arguments over the war's justification further divided voters and officials. Together, these fights made each party more likely to distrust the other's decisions, not just its policies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the government shutdowns make compromise harder for political leaders?

2. Why did impeachment deepen the party divide even though the Senate acquitted Clinton?

3. How did the disputed 2000 election create distrust beyond a disagreement about policies?

4. How did the Iraq War debate add to divisions that had grown during the election dispute?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence museum caption connecting two events from the passage in chronological order. Explain a different way each increased polarization, then judge which effect might last longer and why.

ANSWER KEY

Debate to Distrust

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.20a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each major political conflict. Circle a nearby detail that shows how it increased disagreement or distrust between the parties. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the government shutdowns make compromise harder for political leaders?	**Each side blamed the other, and compromise began to look like surrender to some voters and lawmakers.**
2	Why did impeachment deepen the party divide even though the Senate acquitted Clinton?	**Most House Republicans supported impeachment and most House Democrats opposed it. The sides also disagreed about whether it defended the rule of law or was a partisan effort.**
3	How did the disputed 2000 election create distrust beyond a disagreement about policies?	**Many Democrats questioned whether the result was fair, while many Republicans defended the Supreme Court's decision.**
4	How did the Iraq War debate add to divisions that had grown during the election dispute?	**The election dispute raised questions about the fairness of a political decision, and arguments over the war's justification gave voters and officials another reason to distrust decisions made by the other side.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The 1995 to 1996 shutdowns turned a spending dispute into a contest over which party was to blame. In 2000, the Florida recount fight led many Democrats to question whether the election had been decided fairly. The shutdowns made compromise look risky, but the election dispute put trust in the process for choosing a president at stake. I think doubts about that process might last longer because future close elections could revive them.

Accept supported causal explanations that distinguish disagreement over policy from distrust of the opposing party or political process. The caption should connect two events in chronological order and justify its judgment.