Berlin Under Pressure

Trace the causes and effects of an early Cold War crisis

USH.6.3 "Explain the origins and cultural, economic, and political implications of the Cold War."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two causes of the Berlin Blockade, circle two economic effects, and write C beside one cultural effect and P beside one political effect to trace how the crisis spread beyond Berlin.

A City at the Center of the Cold War

1. In 1945, Berlin was a city of rubble divided into occupation sectors, even though it lay deep inside the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. The United States and the Soviet Union had fought Nazi Germany together, but they disagreed about Europe's future. U.S. leaders backed elections and market economies; Soviet leaders wanted friendly governments on their borders after devastating wartime invasions. In 1948, the Western powers planned a new currency for their German zones and West Berlin. The Soviet Union, fearing a stronger West Germany on its border, blocked road, rail, and canal access to West Berlin.

2. West Berlin had about two million residents who relied on shipments of food and coal. Instead of forcing a land route through Soviet territory, the United States and Britain flew supplies into the city for nearly a year. The airlift kept fuel and food flowing, although both remained scarce. Meanwhile, the U.S. Marshall Plan offered funds to rebuild European economies, including those of the Western occupation zones in Germany. Soviet leaders rejected the plan and barred Eastern European countries under their influence from joining it. Economic recovery became part of a wider contest over which system could deliver security and prosperity.

3. The blockade ended in May 1949, but the confrontation hardened Europe's political divide. In April 1949, the United States and several other countries formed NATO, a military alliance promising collective defense against attack. Later that year, separate West and East German states were established. The conflict also entered daily life: U.S. newspapers and radio celebrated airlift crews, while reports about Soviet actions fed fears of communist expansion. Some Americans supported loyalty investigations at home, although these could threaten civil liberties. Berlin showed how a dispute over access to one city could reshape alliances, spending, and public attitudes far beyond it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Western powers' currency plan and Soviet concerns help lead to the blockade?

2. How did the airlift and the Marshall Plan make economic recovery part of the Cold War?

3. How did the confrontation in Berlin connect to changes in Europe's political divisions?

4. Why might the blockade have changed public attitudes in the United States?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a West Berlin shopkeeper writing a five-sentence letter in 1949, after the blockade ends. Explain what caused the blockade, describe an effect on your business, connect the crisis to one change in international politics and one change in public attitudes, and state one realistic action you will take next.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two causes of the Berlin Blockade, circle two economic effects, and write C beside one cultural effect and P beside one political effect to trace how the crisis spread beyond Berlin. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Western powers' currency plan and Soviet concerns help lead to the blockade?	**The Western powers planned a new currency for their German zones and West Berlin. Soviet leaders feared a stronger West Germany on their border and blocked land and canal access to West Berlin.**
2	How did the airlift and the Marshall Plan make economic recovery part of the Cold War?	**The airlift supplied West Berlin despite the blockade, while the Marshall Plan offered funds to rebuild Western European economies. Soviet leaders rejected the plan and kept countries under their influence from joining.**
3	How did the confrontation in Berlin connect to changes in Europe's political divisions?	**The confrontation hardened the divide between East and West. The United States and other countries formed NATO, and separate West and East German states were established in 1949.**
4	Why might the blockade have changed public attitudes in the United States?	**Coverage of the airlift celebrated its crews, while reports about Soviet actions increased fears of communist expansion. Some Americans supported loyalty investigations, despite the risk to civil liberties.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Soviet blockade cut off road, rail, and canal access after the Western powers planned a new currency for our part of Berlin. The airlift brought food, but shortages left my grocery shelves thin. NATO's new defense promise makes me think Western countries will stand together if another crisis comes. My customers praise the pilots, yet many fear another Soviet move. I will set aside a small stock of canned food in case deliveries stop again.

Accept answers that accurately connect the blockade to competing postwar aims or the currency plan and support effects with passage evidence. For the letter, look for five sentences with a plausible shopkeeper perspective, all four requested connections, and a realistic next action.