Cold War Choices

Three crises, three ways to confront Soviet power

USH.6.4 "Explain and analyze U.S. foreign policies and conflicts during the Cold War, including relations between the United States and the Soviet Union."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline U.S. responses, circle Soviet or Soviet-backed moves, and number three phrases that show a result or danger so you can compare how the two countries confronted each other.

When Rivals Faced a Choice

1. In June 1948, the Soviet Union blocked road, rail, and canal routes into West Berlin, a Western-controlled part of a city deep inside Soviet-occupied eastern Germany. Soviet leaders hoped the United States, Britain, and France would give up their positions there. Instead of sending troops through the blockade and risking a direct fight, the United States and Britain flew in food and coal. Aircraft landed around the clock, keeping West Berlin supplied. The Soviet Union lifted the blockade in May 1949, but the airlift continued until September to build up supplies. The crisis showed that firm resistance did not have to mean war.

2. In June 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea. The Soviet Union had armed and supported North Korea, but Soviet and U.S. soldiers did not openly fight each other as national armies. The United States led a United Nations force to defend South Korea, aiming to stop communist expansion without starting a direct war with the Soviet Union. When UN forces pushed far north toward China, China entered the war and drove them back. A 1953 armistice stopped major fighting near the prewar boundary, but no peace treaty ended the war. Containment protected South Korea, yet the conflict killed millions and left Korea divided.

3. In October 1962, U.S. reconnaissance photographs revealed Soviet nuclear missiles being installed in Cuba, about 90 miles from Florida. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev wanted to defend Cuba and strengthen the Soviet position against the United States. President John F. Kennedy ordered a naval quarantine to prevent more offensive weapons from reaching Cuba, while both governments exchanged messages. An attack on the missile sites might have triggered a nuclear war. Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles, and Kennedy publicly pledged not to invade Cuba. The United States also secretly agreed to remove its missiles from Turkey. Negotiation ended the immediate crisis, but rivalry continued.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the airlift address the Soviet blockade while limiting the risk of direct war?

2. How did Soviet support for North Korea and the U.S. response make the Korean War a Cold War conflict?

3. Compare the U.S. responses in Berlin and Cuba. What did each try to prevent, and how did each limit the chance of a direct clash?

4. What does the outcome of the Korean War show about both the success and the limits of containment?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence advice note for a hypothetical U.S. president: The Soviet Union threatens to cut rail access to an allied city. Recommend a response other than an airlift, support it with evidence from two different crises in the passage, and explain one likely benefit and one risk for U.S.-Soviet relations.

ANSWER KEY

Cold War Choices

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline U.S. responses, circle Soviet or Soviet-backed moves, and number three phrases that show a result or danger so you can compare how the two countries confronted each other. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the airlift address the Soviet blockade while limiting the risk of direct war?	**U.S. and British flights supplied West Berlin without sending troops through the Soviet blockade, which could have led to a direct fight.**
2	How did Soviet support for North Korea and the U.S. response make the Korean War a Cold War conflict?	**The Soviet Union armed and supported North Korea. The United States led a UN force to defend South Korea and stop communist expansion, though the two powers did not openly fight each other as national armies.**
3	Compare the U.S. responses in Berlin and Cuba. What did each try to prevent, and how did each limit the chance of a direct clash?	**The airlift kept West Berlin supplied without forcing troops through the blockade. The naval quarantine sought to stop more offensive weapons from reaching Cuba, while messages between leaders offered a path to a negotiated settlement.**
4	What does the outcome of the Korean War show about both the success and the limits of containment?	**South Korea remained independent, but millions died, Korea stayed divided, and the armistice did not produce a peace treaty.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would seek direct talks with Soviet leaders and ask the United Nations to oppose the threat. During the Cuban missile crisis, messages between leaders helped them reach a settlement without nuclear war. In Korea, a conflict involving a Soviet-backed country killed millions, showing the danger of letting a standoff turn into fighting. Talks might preserve access without a direct clash, but they could fail if Soviet leaders refuse to change course.

Accept other historically grounded comparisons and proposed responses if students use evidence from two distinct crises and explain a plausible benefit and risk. The hypothetical response must differ from an airlift.