Power and Trade-Offs

Weigh the gains and costs of presidential decisions from Truman to Carter.

USH.6.7 "Evaluate the presidential administrations from Truman to Carter, including domestic and foreign policy, programs, and legal rulings."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one gain and circle one cost or limit for each administration you find. Number the two pieces of evidence you think matter most when judging a president's record.

Seven Presidents, Difficult Choices

1. After World War II, President Harry Truman faced Soviet expansion. His administration funded European recovery through the Marshall Plan and committed the United States to defending countries threatened by communism. Abroad, those choices strengthened allies but deepened Cold War rivalry. At home, Truman ordered the armed forces desegregated, although Congress blocked much of his Fair Deal. Dwight Eisenhower kept Cold War pressure on the Soviet Union while warning later that military spending could gain too much influence. During his presidency, the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that public-school segregation was unconstitutional. Eisenhower then sent troops to enforce school integration in Little Rock.

2. John F. Kennedy confronted Soviet missiles in Cuba with a naval quarantine, and the crisis ended without nuclear war. He proposed a civil rights bill, but Congress had not passed it when he was assassinated. Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and expanded health coverage with Medicare. His Great Society attacked poverty, yet his escalation of the Vietnam War brought heavy casualties and protests. Richard Nixon later opened relations with China and pursued détente with the Soviet Union, but Watergate led him to resign. During Nixon's presidency, the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade ruling recognized a constitutional right to abortion at the time.

3. Gerald Ford took office after Nixon resigned. He pardoned Nixon, arguing that the country needed to move on, but critics said the pardon weakened trust in government. Ford signed the Helsinki Accords, which affirmed European borders and included commitments to human rights; enforcement remained uncertain. Jimmy Carter made human rights a stated goal of foreign policy and helped broker the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel, which led to a peace treaty. Yet the Iran hostage crisis exposed limits on American power, while high inflation strained households. Across these administrations, presidential choices produced gains and costs; Supreme Court rulings shaped domestic policy but were not presidential orders.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Truman's foreign policies produce both a gain and a cost?

2. How do Johnson's domestic gains and his handling of the Vietnam War lead to a mixed judgment of his presidency?

3. Evaluate Nixon's record using one foreign-policy gain and one setback. Why should the Roe v. Wade ruling not count as a presidential action?

4. What foreign-policy success and challenge make Carter's record mixed? Include one domestic problem that added to his difficulties.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose two presidents not compared in the questions above. In 5 to 6 sentences, argue which had the stronger overall record, using a domestic action or legal ruling and a foreign-policy action for each president; explain one trade-off in your judgment.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.6.7

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one gain and circle one cost or limit for each administration you find. Number the two pieces of evidence you think matter most when judging a president's record. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Truman's foreign policies produce both a gain and a cost?	**The Marshall Plan and his commitment to defend threatened countries strengthened allies, but these policies deepened Cold War rivalry.**
2	How do Johnson's domestic gains and his handling of the Vietnam War lead to a mixed judgment of his presidency?	**He signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and expanded health coverage through Medicare, but his escalation of the war brought heavy casualties and protests.**
3	Evaluate Nixon's record using one foreign-policy gain and one setback. Why should the Roe v. Wade ruling not count as a presidential action?	**Nixon opened relations with China or pursued détente, but Watergate led him to resign. The Supreme Court, not Nixon, issued the Roe v. Wade ruling.**
4	What foreign-policy success and challenge make Carter's record mixed? Include one domestic problem that added to his difficulties.	**The Camp David Accords led to a peace treaty, but the Iran hostage crisis exposed limits on American power. High inflation strained households.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Eisenhower had a stronger overall record than Ford because he sent troops to enforce school integration in Little Rock. Ford's pardon of Nixon, though intended to help the country move on, weakened public trust. In foreign policy, Eisenhower maintained pressure on the Soviet Union, while Ford signed the Helsinki Accords. Those accords included human rights commitments, but their enforcement was uncertain. I weigh Eisenhower's direct action in Little Rock more heavily, although Ford's diplomatic work offered a different kind of gain.

Accept judgments supported by accurate passage evidence, even when students weigh the same gains and costs differently. Do not credit a president with issuing a Supreme Court ruling.