A Conservative Turn

Causes and effects of the 1980s conservative movement

USH.7.6 "Explain the origins and the impacts of the American Conservative Revolution in the 1980s on the economic, political, cultural, and social lives of Americans."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two concerns that helped fuel the conservative movement, circle two government actions, and number two effects on Americans. Beside each numbered effect, write E for economic, P for political, C for cultural, or S for social.

Changing Course in the 1980s

1. In 1980, many Americans faced high inflation, slow economic growth, and distrust of the federal government. Some believed taxes and regulations made it harder for businesses to grow. Others wanted public life to reflect traditional religious values and opposed abortion rights. Conservative groups joined these concerns with calls for a stronger military against the Soviet Union. Ronald Reagan won the presidency in 1980 by promising to reduce the federal government's role at home and restore American strength abroad.

2. Reagan and Congress cut federal income tax rates, especially the highest rates, and his administration eased some business regulations. Supporters argued that letting people and companies keep more money would encourage investment and jobs. The economy grew after a deep recession in 1981 and 1982, but the gains were uneven. Reagan also increased military spending. Along with tax cuts, that spending helped expand federal budget deficits, even as he called for smaller government.

3. The conservative movement also reshaped politics and daily life. Religious conservative organizations mobilized voters around abortion and school prayer, making these issues more prominent in elections. Reagan appointed conservative federal judges, while opponents organized to defend abortion rights and other policies they feared were threatened. In 1981, he fired striking federal air traffic controllers, signaling a tougher stance toward public employee unions. Supporters praised a return to traditional values; critics warned that weaker unions and cuts to some social programs could hurt vulnerable Americans.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did economic concerns help bring support for Reagan's proposed changes?

2. How did tax cuts and military spending affect the federal budget?

3. How did religious conservatives change elections, and what cultural concerns drove them?

4. What did Reagan's response to the air traffic controllers' strike signal to public employee unions?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a small-business owner and a federal worker in the 1980s. In four or five sentences, compare how two actions from the passage could affect them, explain why, and name one trade-off.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two concerns that helped fuel the conservative movement, circle two government actions, and number two effects on Americans. Beside each numbered effect, write E for economic, P for political, C for cultural, or S for social. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did economic concerns help bring support for Reagan's proposed changes?	**High inflation and slow growth led some Americans to support Reagan's promises to reduce taxes and regulations.**
2	How did tax cuts and military spending affect the federal budget?	**Together, tax cuts and increased military spending helped expand federal budget deficits.**
3	How did religious conservatives change elections, and what cultural concerns drove them?	**They mobilized voters and made abortion and school prayer more prominent election issues, reflecting concerns about traditional religious values.**
4	What did Reagan's response to the air traffic controllers' strike signal to public employee unions?	**Firing the striking controllers signaled a tougher federal stance toward public employee unions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A small-business owner might favor lower income tax rates because the owner could keep more income. A federal worker might worry after Reagan fired striking air traffic controllers because a strike could now seem riskier. These reactions differ because one action offered a possible financial benefit while the other signaled less power for striking workers. A trade-off was that tax cuts, together with increased military spending, helped raise federal deficits.

Accept other accurate cause-and-effect links supported by the passage. For the open task, effects on the imagined people should be presented as possibilities, not as certain outcomes.