A Union Takes Shape

How the USSR became a formal state

TOT.C.3.2.F "formal establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the date and actions that formally established the USSR, circle its four founding republics, and number one republic right 1 and one union power 2.

The Founding of the USSR

1. People sometimes date the Soviet Union to the Russian Revolution of 1917, but that revolution did not create the USSR. After the Bolsheviks took power in Russia, civil war and conflict reshaped the former Russian Empire. Several Soviet republics emerged, with their own governments on paper. They cooperated closely, especially in military affairs. By late 1922, Bolshevik leaders sought a formal union that would join these republics under a shared government rather than leave their cooperation as a series of separate agreements.

2. On December 30, 1922, delegates at the First All-Union Congress of Soviets in Moscow approved a Declaration and a Treaty establishing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Four republics formed the union: the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The last of these joined Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia within one republic. The vote and the two founding documents made the union a formal political entity.

3. The founding documents described a federation: each republic kept a government and, in principle, the right to leave. Yet the union government took charge of matters such as foreign relations and defense. In practice, the Communist Party leadership also concentrated power, so the republics' formal rights did not mean equal independence. A Soviet constitution adopted in 1924 developed the new union's governing structure. That later constitution did not mark the USSR's birth; the formal establishment had already occurred in December 1922.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the passage distinguish the 1917 revolution from the founding of the USSR?

2. Which four republics formed the USSR in 1922?

3. What did delegates do on December 30, 1922, to establish the USSR?

4. Why does the passage say the 1924 constitution did not mark the USSR's birth?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence news brief dated December 30, 1922. Explain what changed that day, then contrast a right promised to the republics with the power held by the union government.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.3.2.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the date and actions that formally established the USSR, circle its four founding republics, and number one republic right 1 and one union power 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the passage distinguish the 1917 revolution from the founding of the USSR?	**The Bolsheviks took power in 1917, but the USSR was not formally established until 1922.**
2	Which four republics formed the USSR in 1922?	**The Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, and Transcaucasian Soviet republics.**
3	What did delegates do on December 30, 1922, to establish the USSR?	**They approved a Declaration and a Treaty establishing the union.**
4	Why does the passage say the 1924 constitution did not mark the USSR's birth?	**The union had already been formally established in December 1922; the constitution later developed its governing structure.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Today, delegates approved founding documents that turned several cooperating Soviet republics into the USSR. The new union says each republic may leave it. Yet the shared government controls defense and foreign relations, giving it power over decisions that affect every republic.

Accept shortened names for the four founding republics if the Transcaucasian republic is identified as one republic, not three. For the news brief, accept either defense or foreign relations as a union power.