Reform and Unrest

Trace the intended and unintended effects of Soviet reforms.

TOT.C.9.8 "Examine Gorbachev's attempt to reform the Soviet Union, including the effects of perestroika and glasnost."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what Gorbachev hoped each reform would do, circle its effects, and draw an arrow between one reform and an effect it helped produce.

Changing the Soviet Union

1. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev took power in a Soviet Union struggling with slow growth and shortages. State planners set production targets, but factories often had little reason to make useful goods efficiently. Gorbachev wanted to strengthen socialism, not end the Soviet Union. He called his economic restructuring *perestroika*. New rules gave some state factories more control over decisions and allowed private cooperatives, including restaurants and small workshops. Leaders hoped these changes would increase output and give shoppers more choices. Yet old planning rules remained alongside new freedoms, leaving managers unsure which orders to follow.

2. Another reform, *glasnost*, meant greater openness in public life. Officials eased censorship, and newspapers reported problems that earlier leaders had hidden. After the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, officials initially withheld information, but later public discussion of the disaster showed both the demand for openness and its limits. Citizens also spoke more openly about corruption and past government violence. In 1989, voters could choose among competing candidates in some elections for a new national legislature. Public criticism helped people challenge officials, but it also weakened trust in leaders who had claimed that the system worked well.

3. Neither reform worked in isolation. As economic changes disrupted familiar supply systems, shortages persisted or worsened, and many families faced long lines for basic goods. Openness made those hardships harder to hide and gave people space to demand faster change. In several Soviet republics, movements sought greater self-rule or independence, drawing on grievances that reached beyond Gorbachev's reforms. Conservative officials tried to seize power in August 1991, but their coup failed. By December, the Soviet Union had dissolved. The reforms did not cause that collapse alone, but their unintended effects helped reshape the struggle over the country's future.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How was perestroika meant to improve production, and what problem limited its success?

2. How did glasnost change public discussion, and what effect did that have on trust in Soviet leaders?

3. Why did the effects of perestroika become harder for leaders to hide as glasnost expanded?

4. What evidence suggests Gorbachev's reforms contributed to the Soviet breakup but did not cause it alone?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are advising Gorbachev in 1989. In 80 to 100 words, propose one adjustment to perestroika and one to glasnost, predict a possible benefit and an unintended risk, and support your advice with two details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Reform and Unrest

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.9.8

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what Gorbachev hoped each reform would do, circle its effects, and draw an arrow between one reform and an effect it helped produce. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How was perestroika meant to improve production, and what problem limited its success?	**It gave some factories more control and allowed private cooperatives to increase output and choice, but remaining planning rules left managers unsure which orders to follow.**
2	How did glasnost change public discussion, and what effect did that have on trust in Soviet leaders?	**Eased censorship let people discuss hidden problems and criticize officials. This criticism weakened trust in leaders who had said the system worked well.**
3	Why did the effects of perestroika become harder for leaders to hide as glasnost expanded?	**Shortages persisted or worsened, while greater openness allowed people to report those hardships and demand change.**
4	What evidence suggests Gorbachev's reforms contributed to the Soviet breakup but did not cause it alone?	**The reforms brought economic disruption and more open demands for change, but independence movements also drew on grievances beyond the reforms.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1989, I would let factories keep more control but set clear supply contracts before changing the old planning rules. Managers might then produce more goods without losing access to materials. I would also protect newspaper reports about shortages while requiring officials to publish their responses. Public scrutiny could expose failing policies sooner and help leaders correct them. Still, as the debate after Chernobyl showed, greater openness might deepen distrust. People in the republics might use the same freedom to press demands that economic improvements alone cannot settle.

Accept other plausible reform adjustments if students explain a benefit and an unintended risk using at least two accurate passage details. Responses should distinguish the reforms' effects from the older grievances that also shaped events.