Two Paths to Change

Causes and consequences of two revolutions in 1989

TOT.C.9.9 "Describe the causes and impact of the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia and the Christmas Revolution in Romania, including the trial and execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a cause of each uprising and circle a turning point in each. Write 1 and 2 beside two effects in each country to help you compare their outcomes.

Revolution in Two Neighboring Countries

1. In November 1989, students marched in Prague to commemorate students persecuted by Nazi occupiers fifty years earlier. Police beat demonstrators, and anger at the violence brought larger crowds into the streets. Many Czechoslovaks also resented Communist Party control, censorship, and limits on travel and speech. Actors and students helped organize demonstrations, while workers joined a general strike. Faced with huge, mostly peaceful protests, Communist leaders gave up their exclusive hold on power. In December, opposition leader Václav Havel became president. The Velvet Revolution earned its name because the change of government happened with little bloodshed.

2. In neighboring Romania, Nicolae Ceaușescu ruled through a feared secret police and harsh restrictions on daily life. Food and heat shortages deepened public anger. In December 1989, officials tried to remove a pastor in Timișoara, sparking protests that spread beyond the city. Security forces fired on demonstrators, yet crowds kept growing. When Ceaușescu spoke to a crowd in Bucharest, people jeered instead of cheering. As protests spread and parts of the army stopped supporting him, he and his wife, Elena, fled on December 22. They were soon captured. Romania's uprising became known as the Christmas Revolution.

3. On December 25, a military tribunal quickly tried Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu on charges that included genocide. The proceedings offered little chance for a defense, and both were executed by firing squad that day. A new government took power, but Romania's transition was violent: hundreds died during the December uprising, including many after the couple fled. In Czechoslovakia, opposition leaders negotiated a peaceful transfer of power; in Romania, armed conflict and the collapse of Ceaușescu's rule brought sudden change. Both revolutions ended Communist one-party rule, but their paths and immediate human costs differed sharply.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did police violence help turn the November march in Prague into a movement that changed the government?

2. How did government actions and public anger help turn the protests in Timișoara into a wider uprising?

3. What happened to Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu after they fled, and what does their trial show about Romania's transition?

4. How did the political outcomes and human costs of the two revolutions compare?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90 to 110 word museum label titled “Two Paths to Change.” Explain how a cause led to a turning point in each country, then compare a political outcome and a human cost. Include what happened to Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu and why their trial matters to the comparison.

ANSWER KEY

Two Paths to Change

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a cause of each uprising and circle a turning point in each. Write 1 and 2 beside two effects in each country to help you compare their outcomes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did police violence help turn the November march in Prague into a movement that changed the government?	**Police beat demonstrators, bringing larger crowds into the streets. Growing protests and a general strike pressured Communist leaders to give up their exclusive hold on power.**
2	How did government actions and public anger help turn the protests in Timișoara into a wider uprising?	**Food and heat shortages and harsh restrictions had already fueled anger. An attempt to remove a pastor sparked protests, and the uprising spread even after security forces fired on demonstrators.**
3	What happened to Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu after they fled, and what does their trial show about Romania's transition?	**They were captured, quickly tried by a military tribunal with little chance to defend themselves, and executed on December 25. The rushed trial was part of Romania's abrupt, violent transition.**
4	How did the political outcomes and human costs of the two revolutions compare?	**Both ended Communist one-party rule. Czechoslovakia's transfer of power was largely peaceful, while hundreds died during Romania's uprising.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Two Paths to Change: In Czechoslovakia, anger over censorship and police attacks brought growing crowds into Prague's streets. A general strike increased pressure, and Communist leaders surrendered their monopoly on power. In Romania, shortages and repression fueled protests in Timișoara. After security forces fired on demonstrators, the uprising spread and parts of the army withdrew support from Ceaușescu. Both countries ended one-party rule, but the human costs differed. Czechoslovakia's transfer was largely peaceful; hundreds died in Romania. A rushed military trial gave Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu little chance to defend themselves before their execution, showing how violent and abrupt Romania's change was.

Accept other passage-supported causes and turning points if the student explains their connection. For the museum label, look for accurate comparisons of political change and human cost, including the rushed trial and execution of both Ceaușescus.