Peace Has Costs

How wartime policies changed under President Harding

USH.C.4.1.B "Describe the transition from wartime to peace under the Harding Administration, including the demobilization of drafted soldiers, federal budget cuts, and amnesty for political prisoners."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about drafted soldiers returning to civilian life, circle details about federal spending cuts, and box details about imprisoned antiwar speakers to track three parts of the shift to peace.

After the Uniform Came Off

1 In 1921, a former soldier might trade an Army uniform for work clothes, while a federal clerk counted the cost of keeping an office open. The United States had fought World War I, but peace did not arrive in one step. Most drafted soldiers had already left military service before Warren G. Harding became president in March 1921. The government had begun sending troops home after the 1918 armistice, during Woodrow Wilson's presidency. Under Harding, the country still had to manage the results of that rapid demobilization: veterans sought jobs and services, and the smaller peacetime Army needed fewer people and supplies.

2 A smaller military was only one part of the shift. Wartime federal spending had been enormous, and Harding called for lower spending in peacetime. In 1921, he signed the Budget and Accounting Act, which created a central budget process and the Bureau of the Budget. Its first director, Charles Dawes, pressed federal agencies to limit expenses. Harding's administration worked to cut federal spending, including costs tied to the wartime military buildup. These cuts reflected a choice to run a leaner government, but they also required officials to decide which services to fund as veterans returned to civilian life.

3 Peace also raised a question about people imprisoned for opposing the war. During the conflict, the federal government had prosecuted some antiwar speakers under the Espionage Act. Eugene V. Debs was imprisoned for a 1918 speech criticizing the war and the draft. In December 1921, Harding commuted Debs's sentence, allowing him to leave prison on Christmas Day. A commutation can reduce or end the remaining punishment without erasing a conviction; it is not a pardon. Harding also granted clemency to other wartime prisoners. These steps toward amnesty eased some wartime penalties, but did not undo the earlier prosecutions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the timing of demobilization shape the transition Harding inherited rather than began?

2. How did the smaller peacetime Army connect to Harding's goal of cutting federal spending?

3. How did the 1921 budget law help Harding shift federal spending toward peacetime levels?

4. How did Harding's treatment of Debs move away from wartime policy, and what did it leave unchanged?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 1922 newspaper brief of 70 to 100 words explaining how the move to peace affected a returning veteran, a federal budget worker, and an imprisoned antiwar speaker. Connect all three to Harding's choices, and explain one limit of what those choices changed.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.4.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details about drafted soldiers returning to civilian life, circle details about federal spending cuts, and box details about imprisoned antiwar speakers to track three parts of the shift to peace. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the timing of demobilization shape the transition Harding inherited rather than began?	**Most drafted soldiers had left military service before Harding took office. His administration dealt with their return to civilian life and the needs of a smaller Army.**
2	How did the smaller peacetime Army connect to Harding's goal of cutting federal spending?	**A smaller Army needed fewer people and supplies, allowing the administration to reduce costs tied to the wartime military buildup.**
3	How did the 1921 budget law help Harding shift federal spending toward peacetime levels?	**It created a central budget process and the Bureau of the Budget, whose director pressed agencies to limit expenses.**
4	How did Harding's treatment of Debs move away from wartime policy, and what did it leave unchanged?	**Harding commuted Debs's sentence, ending his imprisonment for an antiwar speech, but the commutation did not erase his conviction.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A veteran looking for work might see peace differently from a budget worker studying agency costs. Most drafted troops were released before Harding took office, but his administration dealt with their return while pressing agencies to spend less. A budget worker faced a new central budget process, even as veterans needed services. Harding also commuted Eugene V. Debs's sentence, freeing an antiwar speaker. These choices moved the country away from wartime policies, yet they did not erase Debs's conviction or make the needs of returning soldiers disappear.

Accept briefs that connect demobilization, federal budget cuts, and relief for wartime political prisoners to the shift to peace. Students should not claim that Harding began demobilization or that commuting Debs's sentence erased his conviction.