Peace on Paper

How Allied negotiations shaped postwar Europe

USH.C.5.2.C "Explain the purpose of the Allied conferences at Yalta and Potsdam and how such negotiations would affect post-war Europe."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one purpose for each conference, circle two decisions about Germany, and write 1 and 2 beside two details that show how Allied disagreements could divide Europe.

Two Meetings, One Uncertain Peace

1 In February 1945, while fighting still raged, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin met at Yalta. Their urgent task was to plan what would happen after Germany's defeat instead of letting occupying armies make every decision alone. They confirmed plans to divide Germany, and its capital Berlin, into occupation zones controlled by the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and France. They also supported a new United Nations and pledged that liberated European peoples could choose their governments through free elections. These agreements offered a plan for peace, but the election pledge left room for disagreement over who would supervise voting.

2 By July 1945, Germany had surrendered, and Allied leaders gathered at Potsdam. President Harry Truman and Stalin attended; Churchill was replaced during the meeting by Britain's new prime minister, Clement Attlee. The leaders had to decide how to govern a defeated country, not just how to win a war. They agreed to disarm Germany and remove Nazi influence from its public institutions because they wanted to prevent another German war of conquest. Each occupying power would oversee its own zone, while the Allies intended to treat Germany as one economic unit. This arrangement made cooperation necessary even as disagreements grew.

3 At Potsdam, the Allies also set terms for reparations, payments for wartime damage. The Soviet Union would take most of its reparations from its own occupation zone, with some industrial equipment coming from western zones. Meanwhile, Soviet-backed governments tightened their grip on countries in Eastern Europe, despite the pledge at Yalta to allow free elections. Soviet leaders sought friendly neighbors as a shield against future attacks; Western leaders feared that Soviet control would deny people a real choice. With different aims and separate occupation zones, the Allies found it harder to govern Germany together. Their negotiations helped shape a Europe increasingly divided between Soviet and Western influence.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did the leaders meet at Yalta before Germany surrendered? Explain how one Yalta decision was meant to shape postwar Europe.

2. Why did the leaders at Potsdam agree to disarm Germany and remove Nazi influence? What future did they hope this would prevent?

3. How did events in Eastern Europe challenge the Yalta election pledge, and why did Soviet and Western leaders view the region differently?

4. How did the Yalta occupation plan and the Potsdam reparations terms make Allied cooperation in Germany important but difficult?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence advisory note from 1945 proposing a way to protect both Soviet security and free elections in Eastern Europe. Connect your plan to a Yalta pledge, a Potsdam decision, and one possible effect on postwar Europe.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one purpose for each conference, circle two decisions about Germany, and write 1 and 2 beside two details that show how Allied disagreements could divide Europe. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the leaders meet at Yalta before Germany surrendered? Explain how one Yalta decision was meant to shape postwar Europe.	**They met to plan for Germany's defeat before occupying armies made decisions alone. Their pledge of free elections was meant to let liberated Europeans choose their governments.**
2	Why did the leaders at Potsdam agree to disarm Germany and remove Nazi influence? What future did they hope this would prevent?	**They wanted to prevent another German war of conquest.**
3	How did events in Eastern Europe challenge the Yalta election pledge, and why did Soviet and Western leaders view the region differently?	**Soviet-backed governments tightened their grip despite the pledge of free elections. Soviet leaders wanted friendly neighbors for security, while Western leaders feared people would lose a real choice.**
4	How did the Yalta occupation plan and the Potsdam reparations terms make Allied cooperation in Germany important but difficult?	**The Allies planned separate occupation zones but intended to treat Germany as one economic unit. Potsdam's reparations terms also involved equipment from western zones going to the Soviet Union, requiring cooperation despite growing disagreements.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ask the United Nations to send Soviet and Western observers to elections in Eastern Europe. Together, they could check whether Yalta's pledge of free elections was being kept. The Allies should also enforce Potsdam's decision to disarm Germany, which could ease Soviet fears of another attack. If voters could choose freely, Eastern European governments might gain public trust. Soviet leaders might resist outside observers, however, and that dispute could deepen Europe's division.

Accept other feasible proposals that address both Soviet security and free elections, accurately connect a Yalta pledge and a Potsdam decision, and explain a plausible effect on Europe. For Question 4, students need not claim that separate zones made cooperation impossible.