A Divided Europe

Ideology, division, and containment after World War II

USH.C.6.1.C "Evaluate ideological factors that contributed to the Cold War, identifying differences between the Soviet and American political and economic systems, including the concept of an Iron curtain..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one political and one economic contrast, circle the explanation of the iron curtain, and number two U.S. actions meant to contain Soviet influence.

Different Visions for Europe

1 In 1947, leaders in Washington and Moscow imagined sharply different futures for Europe. In the United States, voters could choose among competing parties, and private businesses usually decided what to produce. In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party held political power, and state planners directed much of the economy. American leaders feared that Soviet control would shut out competitive elections and private enterprise. Soviet leaders feared that capitalist powers would threaten their communist system and security.

2 After World War II, Soviet troops remained in much of Eastern Europe, where Soviet-backed governments took power and opposition parties were suppressed. Moscow viewed these governments as a shield against another invasion from the west. Many Americans saw them as evidence that the Soviet Union was expanding its influence. In 1946, Winston Churchill described an "iron curtain" descending across Europe. His phrase pictured the political divide that restricted contact between Soviet-dominated countries and the West, not a single metal barrier.

3 The United States responded with containment, a strategy meant to stop Soviet influence from spreading to additional countries rather than overthrow every communist government. In 1947, President Truman asked Congress to aid Greece and Turkey, arguing that help could resist outside pressure and armed movements. The Marshall Plan, announced later that year, offered economic assistance to rebuild European economies. U.S. leaders hoped stronger governments and jobs would make communist movements less appealing. These choices used aid and diplomacy rather than direct war with the Soviet Union.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did political power differ in the two countries, and why did that difference create tension?

2. How did the economic systems differ, and what did each side fear about the other's system?

3. Why was "iron curtain" a useful name for the division Churchill described?

4. How were aid to Greece and Turkey and the Marshall Plan both examples of containment?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence briefing to a 1948 U.S. senator about a fictional European country under pressure from a Soviet-backed neighbor. Contrast the two systems, explain how an iron curtain could emerge, and recommend one containment action that does not involve war.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one political and one economic contrast, circle the explanation of the iron curtain, and number two U.S. actions meant to contain Soviet influence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did political power differ in the two countries, and why did that difference create tension?	**Americans could choose among competing parties, while the Soviet Communist Party held power. U.S. leaders feared Soviet influence would end competitive elections.**
2	How did the economic systems differ, and what did each side fear about the other's system?	**U.S. businesses usually made production decisions, while Soviet state planners directed much of the economy. Americans feared losing private enterprise; Soviet leaders feared threats from capitalist powers.**
3	Why was "iron curtain" a useful name for the division Churchill described?	**It suggested a barrier between Soviet-dominated countries and the West that restricted contact, even though it was not a single metal wall.**
4	How were aid to Greece and Turkey and the Marshall Plan both examples of containment?	**Both used assistance to resist the spread of Soviet influence without direct war: aid to Greece and Turkey addressed pressure and armed movements, while the Marshall Plan supported European recovery.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Senator, the fictional country of Belvar faces pressure from a Soviet-backed neighbor. The American system allows competing parties and private firms, while the Soviet system concentrates power in one party and relies on state planning. If Belvar's leaders silence opposition and restrict contact with western countries, an iron curtain could divide it from the West. I recommend economic aid to strengthen Belvar and reduce support for Soviet influence without starting a war.

Accept historically sound explanations in students' own words. For the briefing, look for an accurate political and economic contrast, a figurative use of iron curtain, and a nonmilitary containment proposal.