Words and Weapons

Reagan's anti-communist stance in speeches and defense policy

USH.C.8.2.B "Describe Reagan's anti-communist stance, as expressed in his Tear Down This Wall speech and defense policies (e.g., response to Communist aggression in Afghanistan and Grenada, Strategic Defense Initiative)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Reagan's claim about freedom, circle one U.S. action in Afghanistan and one in Grenada, and box SDI's goal. Use your marks to trace how his anti-communist stance appeared in words and policies.

A Wall, Two Conflicts, and a Proposed Shield

1 On June 12, 1987, President Ronald Reagan stood near the Berlin Wall in West Berlin. The wall divided the city and kept many East Germans from leaving for the West. Speaking before the Brandenburg Gate, Reagan challenged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" He argued that removing the barrier would show a real commitment to freedom and openness. The words were more than a call to change a city street. Reagan used the wall as a symbol of communist restrictions, and he publicly urged the Soviet Union to loosen its control in Eastern Europe.

2 Reagan's anti-communist stance also shaped responses far from Berlin. After the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the United States began helping Afghan fighters resist Soviet forces. Reagan expanded that support, including military aid, rather than sending U.S. troops into the war. In 1983, a violent coup on Grenada, a Caribbean island with a Marxist government and ties to Cuba, raised U.S. concerns. Reagan ordered an invasion, saying U.S. medical students needed protection and warning about communist influence. The two cases show different methods: aiding fighters against Soviet troops in Afghanistan and sending American forces into Grenada.

3 Another part of Reagan's strategy looked toward a possible nuclear attack. In 1983, he announced the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI, a research program to explore ways to stop incoming ballistic missiles. Its goal was to protect the United States and its allies from a missile attack, including one by the Soviet Union. Supporters saw a shield that might make Soviet missiles less threatening. Critics questioned whether the technology could work and feared it might increase tensions. SDI was active research, not an operational shield, when Reagan spoke in Berlin in 1987. His speech and policies paired public demands for freedom with military pressure and defense planning.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Reagan use the Berlin Wall to express his stance toward communist rule?

2. How did Reagan's response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan oppose Soviet power without sending U.S. troops into that war?

3. How did the invasion of Grenada reflect Reagan's anti-communist stance? Include the other reason he gave for the invasion.

4. How was SDI meant to counter a Soviet threat, and what had it not achieved by 1987?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word museum label explaining how Reagan's Berlin speech and two defense policies expressed his anti-communist stance. Compare the methods, and include one important limit or complication from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.8.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Reagan's claim about freedom, circle one U.S. action in Afghanistan and one in Grenada, and box SDI's goal. Use your marks to trace how his anti-communist stance appeared in words and policies. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Reagan use the Berlin Wall to express his stance toward communist rule?	**He called on Gorbachev to tear down the wall, using it as a symbol of communist restrictions and urging greater freedom in Eastern Europe.**
2	How did Reagan's response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan oppose Soviet power without sending U.S. troops into that war?	**He expanded U.S. support, including military aid, for Afghan fighters resisting Soviet forces.**
3	How did the invasion of Grenada reflect Reagan's anti-communist stance? Include the other reason he gave for the invasion.	**Reagan warned about communist influence on Grenada and sent U.S. forces there. He also said U.S. medical students needed protection.**
4	How was SDI meant to counter a Soviet threat, and what had it not achieved by 1987?	**SDI researched ways to stop incoming ballistic missiles, including Soviet missiles. It was not an operational shield by 1987.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Reagan's 1987 Berlin speech challenged Gorbachev to tear down the wall, turning a barrier into a symbol of limits on freedom. In Afghanistan, Reagan expanded U.S. military aid to fighters resisting Soviet troops rather than sending American troops. His Strategic Defense Initiative researched ways to stop incoming missiles, including Soviet missiles. Unlike his public demand in Berlin, these policies used support for armed resistance and defense planning. SDI was an active research program in 1987, not a working shield.

Accept any two defense policies if the label accurately connects each to Reagan's anti-communist stance and compares their methods with the speech. A valid complication may address SDI's research status, concerns about its feasibility, or Reagan's stated reason for protecting students in Grenada.