After the Wall

How the Cold War's end changed world power

USH.C.8.2.C "Summarize the emergence of the United States of America and the shift in world power following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two events that weakened Soviet influence, circle the sentence that describes the change in superpower status, and mark one example of U.S. power with a 1 and one limit with a 2.

From Two Superpowers to One

1 For decades after World War II, two superpowers shaped world politics: the United States and the Soviet Union. They competed for allies, weapons, and influence without fighting each other directly. Germany showed the division clearly. Communist East Germany, backed by the Soviet Union, built the Berlin Wall in 1961 to stop people from fleeing to West Berlin. In November 1989, East Germany opened its border after months of public protests and growing pressure for change. Crowds crossed the wall, and people began tearing it down. Its fall signaled that Soviet control over Eastern Europe was weakening.

2 In 1990, East and West Germany reunited. Across Eastern Europe, communist governments lost power, and countries began choosing different political and economic paths. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had reduced Soviet interference in the region, but reforms did not hold the Soviet Union together. In December 1991, it dissolved into fifteen independent countries, including Russia. The Cold War's two-superpower rivalry ended. The United States did not become a new country in 1991; it emerged from this shift as the only superpower with military forces, a large economy, and alliances spanning the globe. Russia retained nuclear weapons, but its influence had diminished.

3 The change appeared in a crisis far from Berlin. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. The United States organized an international coalition, and the United Nations Security Council authorized the use of force if Iraq did not withdraw. In 1991, coalition forces drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait. This showed that the United States could lead a major military response with broad international support, rather than face a Soviet-backed rival. Yet its power was not unlimited: it needed partners, and conflicts elsewhere continued. After the Soviet collapse, world power shifted toward the United States, but other countries still shaped what happened.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the fall of the Berlin Wall signal a shift in power before the Soviet Union dissolved?

2. Explain how events in 1990 and 1991 ended the two-superpower rivalry.

3. Compare the United States' position in world politics before and after the Soviet collapse.

4. What does the response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait show about both U.S. power and its limits?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence museum label titled "A Turning Point" for visitors who think the Berlin Wall's fall immediately created a new United States. Use at least two dates to explain the sequence of events, the shift in world power, and one limit of U.S. power.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.8.2.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two events that weakened Soviet influence, circle the sentence that describes the change in superpower status, and mark one example of U.S. power with a 1 and one limit with a 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the fall of the Berlin Wall signal a shift in power before the Soviet Union dissolved?	**The wall's fall showed that Soviet control over Eastern Europe was weakening.**
2	Explain how events in 1990 and 1991 ended the two-superpower rivalry.	**Germany reunited in 1990, and the Soviet Union dissolved into independent countries in 1991. With the Soviet Union gone, the Cold War rivalry between two superpowers ended.**
3	Compare the United States' position in world politics before and after the Soviet collapse.	**Before the collapse, the United States competed with the Soviet Union for influence. Afterward, it was the only superpower, with a large economy, military forces, and global alliances.**
4	What does the response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait show about both U.S. power and its limits?	**The United States could organize and lead a major international military response, but it relied on partners and broad support.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A Turning Point: In 1989, the opening of the Berlin Wall showed that Soviet influence in Eastern Europe was weakening. After Germany reunited in 1990, the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, ending the two-superpower rivalry. The United States was not a new nation, but it now stood as the only superpower, with worldwide alliances and strong armed forces. Its leadership still depended on cooperation from other countries, as the effort to remove Iraq from Kuwait showed.

Accept different wording that correctly links the wall's fall, Soviet dissolution, and the emergence of the United States as the only superpower. Part 3 should distinguish increased U.S. influence from unlimited power.