Power and Trust

Reagan's policies, the Cold War, and public confidence

USH.C.8.2 "Analyze the presidency of Ronald Reagan and the rise of the conservative movement in American politics. Identify the economic and domestic policies of the Reagan Administration known as "Reaganomics" featuring tax cuts and less regulation..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two domestic policies, circle three actions against communism, number the events of 1989 and 1991, and star the detail that could damage public trust.

Reagan's Choices and Their Aftermath

1. In the 1980 election, Ronald Reagan drew support from a growing conservative movement that favored smaller federal government, lower taxes, and a stronger military. As president, he cut income tax rates and reduced some business regulations, arguing that private investment would create jobs. His administration also fired more than 11,000 striking federal air-traffic controllers in 1981 after they refused an order to return to work. This hard line signaled that Reagan would confront unions even while promising to limit government.

2. Reagan's anti-communism shaped policy abroad. His administration increased aid to Afghan fighters resisting Soviet occupation and sent U.S. troops to Grenada in 1983 after a violent Marxist power struggle. Officials also cited the safety of Americans there. Reagan proposed the Strategic Defense Initiative, a plan to develop defenses against nuclear missiles. At Berlin's divided border in 1987, he urged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall," making the barrier a test of political change.

3. The Berlin Wall opened in 1989, months after Reagan left office. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, ending the Cold War and leaving the United States as the only superpower, though many people and events shaped that outcome. Reagan's reputation also faced a test: officials secretly sold arms to Iran and diverted proceeds to rebels fighting Nicaragua's government despite congressional restrictions. Reagan said he had not known about the diversion. Investigations left many Americans questioning his oversight and honesty, even as others still admired him.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the response to the controllers' strike complicate Reagan's message about government?

2. How did aid in Afghanistan and the Strategic Defense Initiative pursue the same goal in different ways?

3. Why would it be inaccurate to credit Reagan alone for the U.S. position after the Soviet collapse?

4. How could Iran-Contra change some Americans' view of Reagan's leadership?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label arguing how Reagan-era policies shaped U.S. power. Use one domestic and one foreign policy detail, then explain one limit to Reagan's influence and how Iran-Contra complicates your claim.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two domestic policies, circle three actions against communism, number the events of 1989 and 1991, and star the detail that could damage public trust. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the response to the controllers' strike complicate Reagan's message about government?	**Reagan called for smaller government, but his administration used federal authority to fire more than 11,000 striking workers.**
2	How did aid in Afghanistan and the Strategic Defense Initiative pursue the same goal in different ways?	**Both opposed Soviet power. Aid supported fighters resisting Soviet occupation, while the initiative proposed defenses against nuclear missiles.**
3	Why would it be inaccurate to credit Reagan alone for the U.S. position after the Soviet collapse?	**The Wall opened and the Soviet Union collapsed after Reagan left office, and many people and events shaped the outcome.**
4	How could Iran-Contra change some Americans' view of Reagan's leadership?	**The secret arms sales and diversion of money could make Americans question his oversight and honesty.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Reagan-era policies sought to strengthen U.S. power through private investment at home and resistance to Soviet influence abroad. His income tax cuts reflected the first goal, while aid to Afghan fighters served the second. The Berlin Wall opened after he left office, so he cannot receive sole credit for the Cold War's end. Iran-Contra complicates this record because secret arms sales and diverted money raised questions about his oversight.

Accept supported arguments that connect a domestic policy and an anti-communist action to U.S. power. Students should distinguish Reagan's presidency from later events and explain why Iran-Contra raised concerns about his leadership.