# Choices Under Pressure

Compare the goals and effects of Carter and Reagan policies

**USH.C.8** "Analyze the rationale and impact of foreign and domestic policies of the late 20th century. Evaluate the foreign and domestic policies, as well as the legacy of President Jimmy Carter. Examine the economic challenges of the 1970s..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two Carter policies and two Reagan policies. Circle a problem each policy addressed, then give each policy and its result or limitation a matching number.

### Presidential Choices in Changing Times

1 In the late 1970s, Americans faced stagflation: prices rose while growth slowed and unemployment stayed high. Oil shortages made the problem visible in long lines at gas stations. A 1973 oil embargo by Arab oil producers had exposed U.S. dependence on imported fuel before Jimmy Carter took office. Carter urged conservation and backed efforts to develop other energy sources, but these steps could not quickly end high prices. His response asked Americans to accept short-term limits for long-term security. Economic frustration helped weaken public confidence in his leadership, even as the oil crisis showed why energy policy mattered.

2 Carter also tried to protect U.S. interests through diplomacy. In 1978 he brought Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin together at Camp David. Their agreements paved the way for the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty, although they did not settle the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After Iran's 1979 revolution, militants seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held Americans hostage. Carter's 1980 rescue mission failed, and eight U.S. service members died. That year he declared that an outside power's attempt to control the Persian Gulf would threaten vital U.S. interests. The hostage crisis damaged confidence in his presidency.

3 Ronald Reagan entered office in 1981 promising a different approach to economic troubles and Soviet power. His administration cut taxes and reduced some regulations, arguing that businesses would invest and create jobs. Critics warned that tax cuts could deepen federal deficits, which grew during his presidency. When striking air-traffic controllers defied an order to return to work, Reagan fired more than 11,000 of them, signaling a hard line toward a federal union. He also increased defense spending and proposed a missile defense system called the Strategic Defense Initiative. Supporters saw strength; critics questioned its cost and feasibility. Both presidents faced trade-offs between security, prosperity, and public trust.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Carter favor energy conservation, and why might voters have judged that policy harshly?

2. How do the Camp David agreements show both an achievement and a limit of Carter's diplomacy?

3. What different threats to U.S. interests were reflected in the Iran hostage crisis and the Carter Doctrine?

4. Choose one Reagan policy in the passage. Explain its goal or message and one concern or consequence linked to it.

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short museum label comparing one Carter policy and one Reagan policy from the passage. Explain each policy's goal and a result or limitation, then argue which offered the better balance of goals and costs.

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## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two Carter policies and two Reagan policies. Circle a problem each policy addressed, then give each policy and its result or limitation a matching number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Why did Carter favor energy conservation, and why might voters have judged that policy harshly? | **The oil embargo and shortages exposed dependence on imported fuel, so Carter sought long-term energy security. Conservation could not quickly end high prices during stagflation.** |
| 2 | How do the Camp David agreements show both an achievement and a limit of Carter's diplomacy? | **They paved the way for the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, but they did not settle the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict.** |
| 3 | What different threats to U.S. interests were reflected in the Iran hostage crisis and the Carter Doctrine? | **The hostage crisis involved Americans held at the U.S. embassy in Iran. The Carter Doctrine warned against an outside power trying to control the Persian Gulf.** |
| 4 | Choose one Reagan policy in the passage. Explain its goal or message and one concern or consequence linked to it. | **Reagan's tax cuts were intended to encourage investment and job creation, but critics warned they could deepen federal deficits, which grew during his presidency.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Carter urged energy conservation to reduce U.S. dependence on imported fuel. That goal addressed a real weakness exposed by the oil embargo, but conservation could not quickly end high prices. Reagan cut taxes to encourage businesses to invest and create jobs. His approach offered a more immediate change in policy, yet federal deficits grew during his presidency. I think Carter's policy offered the better balance because it addressed a long-term security problem without relying on tax cuts that could increase deficits.

Accept other passage-supported Reagan policies and reasonable evaluations in the final label. Students should distinguish a policy's intended goal from its observed result or stated limitation.