

PRESIDENT REAGAN & THE REAGAN REVOLUTION



Ronald Reagan, the 40th President of the United States, followed a unique path to the White House. After successful careers as a sports announcer, Hollywood actor, and television host, he turned to politics and was elected governor of California in 1966, serving eight years. He ran unsuccessfully for President in 1968 and 1976, but in 1980, during a time of U.S. economic trouble and foreign policy difficulties, he won the Republican nomination and defeated President Jimmy Carter in the general election.

When Reagan took office, public confidence in government was at its lowest since the Great Depression. Reagan largely succeeded in his goal of “making the American people believe in themselves again.” He called this the greatest accomplishment of his presidency. He was supremely popular as president because of his affable nature and easy way with people. In 1984, Reagan was reelected to a second term in a 49-state landslide.

His time became to be called “the Reagan Revolution” because conservative Republicans took control of government away from Democrats for the first time many years. Reagan and conservatives advocated for large tax cuts and argued that if taxes are lower for those earning a lot of money, the wealth will “trickle down” to all Americans because the wealthy will create jobs.

Reagan and the Republican Party also believed in transferring more government responsibilities to states rather than the Federal government. This is called Federalism. Reagan's administration introduced a practice of giving block grants, freeing state governments to spend the money at their own discretion. This is sometimes called “states' rights” or “decentralizing government” because it allows states to make decisions on issues different laws and policies. This greatly reduced the number and scope of government programs and regulations.

While in office, Reagan appointed judges and Supreme Court justices who exercised “judicial restraint”. Judicial restraint encourages judges to limit the exercise of their own power. It asserts that judges should hesitate to strike down laws unless they are obviously unconstitutional. It is sometimes regarded as the opposite of judicial activism. Reagan appointed both William Rehnquist and Antonin Scalia to the Supreme Court who exemplify the judicial restraint philosophy. He nominated another Robert Bork, but a speech by Senator Ted Kennedy in which he said “Bork's America is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters ... and schoolchildren could not be taught about evolution.” derailed Bork's nomination. However, Reagan also nominated Sandra Day O'Connor: the first female Supreme Court justice.

Reagan's time in office also saw a strengthening of America's military. The administration was steadfastly anti-communist, calling the Soviet Union an “evil empire” and ending 1970s détente. Reagan accelerated the massive buildup of the military including an invasion of Grenada, the first major overseas action by U.S. troops since the end of the Vietnam War. One of Reagan's controversial proposals was the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a system intended to make the U.S. invulnerable to nuclear missile attacks by the Soviet Union. It was nicknamed “Star Wars” because it was designed to vaporize missiles from space by way of a laser guidance system. However, it was incredibly expensive and by 1985, after billions of dollars but minimal results, Reagan's SDI was shut down.

During the eight years of his presidency, Reagan reshaped national politics and carried out his campaign promises to cut taxes and increase the defense budget, using the latter as leverage to negotiate significant arms control agreements with the Soviet Union. Despite some setbacks, including notable budget deficits, Reagan left office in 1989 with strong approval ratings. The Reagan Revolution continued after his presidency with the election of his Vice President George H. W. Bush.



Name _____

PRESIDENT REAGAN & THE REAGAN REVOLUTION

1. In what way was Reagan's path to the White House unique?
 - a. He was governor of California.
 - b. He ran for president unsuccessfully in 1976.
 - c. He was a Hollywood actor and TV host.
 - d. He was a conservative Republican.
2. Why did Reagan and conservative Republicans believe that tax cuts would help all Americans?
3. Which is an example of Reagan's support of Federalism?
 - a. The Department of Education making national policies from DC.
 - b. California allowing medical marijuana.
 - c. Abortion being legalized in America.
 - d. Income tax cuts for all Americans.
4. What is "judicial restraint" and which Supreme Court justices practiced it?
5. Which of Reagan's Supreme Court nominees was rejected?
 - a. Robert Bork
 - b. Sandra Day O'Connor
 - c. William Rehnquist
 - d. Antonin Scalia
6. Why do you think the Strategic Defense Initiative was controversial?
7. Which Cold War policy did Reagan move away from?
 - a. Glasnost
 - b. Détente
 - c. Containment
 - d. The Truman Doctrine
8. Which of Reagan's policies do you feel was most successful and why?

PRESIDENT REAGAN & THE REAGAN REVOLUTION

1. In what way was Reagan's path to the White House unique?
 - a. He was governor of California.
 - b. He ran for president unsuccessfully in 1976.
 - c. He was a Hollywood actor and TV host.
 - d. He was a conservative Republican.
2. Why did Reagan and conservative Republicans believe that tax cuts would help all Americans?

The yargued that the tax cuts would trickle down to all Americans and more jobs would be created.

3. Which is an example of Reagan's support of Federalism?
 - a. The Department of Education making national policies from DC.
 - b. California allowing medical marijuana.
 - c. Abortion being legalized in America.
 - d. Income tax cuts for all Americans.
4. What is "judicial restraint" and which Supreme Court justices practiced it?

Judicial restraint encourages judges to limit the exercise of their own power and strike down laws unless they are obviously unconstitutional and was practiced by both William Rehnquist and Antonin Scalia.

5. Which of Reagan's Supreme Court nominees was rejected?
 - a. Robert Bork
 - b. Sandra Day O'Connor
 - c. William Rehnquist
 - d. Antonin Scalia
6. Why do you think the Strategic Defense Initiative was controversial?

SDI was controversial because of how expensive it was and the fact that it was never successful.

7. Which Cold War policy did Reagan move away from?
 - a. Glasnost
 - b. Détente
 - c. Containment
 - d. The Truman Doctrine
8. Which of Reagan's policies do you feel was most successful and why?

Open to student opinion provided they support their answer with information from the reading.