Period 8: Document Based Quesetion

**Directions:** This question is based on the accompanying documents. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. You are advised to spend 15 minutes reading and planning and 40 minutes writing your answer.

Write your responses on the lined pages that follow the question.

In your response you should do the following:

* State a relevant thesis that directly addresses all parts of the question.
* Support the thesis or a relevant argument with evidence from all, or all but one, of the documents.
* Incorporate analysis of all, or all but one, of the documents into your argument.
* Focus your analysis of each document on at least one of the following: intended audience, purpose, historical context, and/or point of view.
* Support your argument with analysis of historical examples outside the documents.
* Connect historical phenomena relevant to your argument to broader events or processes.
* Synthesize the elements above into a persuasive essay that extends your argument, connects it to a different historical context, or accounts for contradictory evidence on the topic.

**Question:**Evaluate the causes of the beginning of the Cold War between the US and the USSR from 1945 to 1950.

**Documents:**

Document 1

Joseph Stalin, February 6, 1945

Prime Minister [Churchill] has said that for Great Britain the question of Poland is a question of honor. For Russia it is not only a question of honor but of security. . . . During the last 30 years, our German enemy has passed through this corridor twice.

Document 2

Gallup Polls conducted in the United States

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **August 1945** |  |
| Do you think Russia can be trusted to cooperate with us after the war? |  |
| Yes | 54% |
| No | 3 |
| No opinion | 16 |
| **March 1946** |  |
| Do you think Russia will cooperate with us in world affairs? |  |
| Yes | 35% |
| No | 52 |
| No opinion | 13 |
| **July 1946** |  |
| As you hear and read about Russia these days, do you believe Russia is trying to build herself up to be the ruling power of the world, or is Russia just building up protection against being attacked in another war? |  |
| Ruling power | 60% |
| Protection | 26 |
| No opinion | 14 |
| **May 1948** |  |
| Do you think the United States is too soft or too tough . . . in its policy toward Russia? |  |
| Too soft | 69% |
| Too tough | 6 |
| About right | 14 |
| No opinion | 11 |

Document 3

George Kennan, State Department official, September 1946

I don’t think that we can influence them [the Soviets] by reasoning with them, by arguing with them, by going to them and saying, “Look here, this is the way things are.” I don’t believe that is possible. . . . If we can keep them maneuvered into a position where it is always hard and unprofitable for them to take action contrary to the principles of the United Nations and to our policies and where there is always an open door and an easy road to collaboration . . . I personally am quite convinced that . . . sooner or later the logic of it will penetrate their government and will force changes there.

Document 4

President Harry Truman, Speech to Joint Session of Congress, March 12, 1947

The peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. The Government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a number of other countries there have been similar developments. . . . At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

Document 5

V. M. Molotov, Soviet foreign minister, “The Task of Our Time: Unite Against the Enslavement of the People,” broadcast to the Russian people, November 6, 1947

Today the ruling circles of the United States and Great Britain head one international grouping which has as its aim the consolidation of capitalism and the achievement of the domination of these countries over other peoples. . . . Take, for example, the German question. If in the postwar period America and Britain had adhered to all the principles-let us say, for example, the democratic principles-of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences on the German question, which made possible and fruitful the collaboration of the great allies against Hitlerite Germany, with the aim of liquidating the remnants of fascism, then collaboration between the Soviet Union, the United States, and Britain would also today produce good results. But the United States and Britain have departed from these democratic principles and have violated the decisions jointly taken.

Document 6

David Low cartoon in the London Evening Standard, March 1948

Document 7

Testimony of Whitaker Chambers before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, August 3, 1948

For a number of years I had myself served in . . . an underground organization of the United States Communist Party. . . . Later . . . a member of this group . . . was Alger Hiss, who, as a member of the State Department, later organized the conferences at Dumbarton Oaks, San Francisco, and the United States side of the Yalta Conference. . . . The Communist Party exists for the specific purpose of overthrowing the Government; at the opportune time, by any and all means; and each of its members, by the fact that he is a member, is dedicated to this purpose. . . . Americans [must] recognize at last that they are at grips with a secret, sinister, and enormously powerful force whose tireless purpose is their enslavement.

Student Sample Response:

During World War II, Russia and the United States were allies, in order to combat their greater enemy Hitler. They worked together to eliminate the Nazis in Europe. However, to end World War II, the United States bombed the two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, without consulting Russia. Now the world was in shambles and Russia was angry with the United States. Using the historical thinking skill of contextualization, at the end of World War II, tensions are rising and Europe was destroyed, which made it more susceptible to communism and leads to tension in the USSR over capitalism or communism. The cold war was caused by dividing social issues, poor economics, and high political tensions. For example, European countries were devastated after World War II and had huge debts.

There were many social interactions that led to the beginning of the Cold War. For example, with the threat of communism spreading, the United States and several other nations formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In response to this, the Soviet Union and other communist nations made a rival alliance known as the Warsaw Pact. With all the European powers into one of these groups contributed to social divisions between countries. This alignment contributed to the rigid military standoff that took place during the Cold War. When the United States and England joined NATO, the agreed to go to the war to protect other countries. This angered the Soviet Union greatly. Propaganda also helped the cause of the Cold War. It attempted to discourage and show the horrors of communism while extolling the values of capitalism and democracy. In David Low’s cartoon, the purpose is to show how each country was losing their freedom because of communism. It shows how the USSR was trying to take over the other, weak countries. In Gallup Polls concluded in the U.S., the purpose is to show how the U.S. citizens feel about Russia. Throughout the years, the anti-Russia sentiments grew stronger. Lastly, Alger Hiss was accused of being a Soviet spy and was convicted of perjury. His case caused a great deal of controversy and forced Americans to become more alert. All these social issues heightened tensions between the USSR and the United States contributed to the war.

Economic hardships also influenced the beginning of the Cold War. After World War II, many European countries were poor such as Germany. Germany owed a lot of money for war reparations. Other Axis nations were obliged to pay for war reparations under the Paris Peace Treaties of 1947. Additionally the USSR also rejected the chance to participate in the new International Bank for Reconstruction and Development or World Bank. The purpose of this Bank was to help fund places that were destroyed by the war. In George Kennan, the State Department official’s statement’s intended audience is the United States’ government and citizens. He is telling them that the Soviets can’t be reasoned with and that they need to be in a situation that economically is unfavorable to go against the United Nations. On the other hand, the U.S. refused to give the USSR war reparations from West Germany because it claimed that Germany’s recovery was important for the recovery of Central Europe. With all the economic between the U.S. and USSR, high tensions grew, contributing to the start of the Cold War.

Along with social and economic factors, social tensions were extremely influential in causing the war. The USSR supported communism in numerous countries. They sponsored a communist coup in Czechoslovakia, supported Mao communists in China, and consented to North Korea attacking South Korea over the battle of communism. Since the U.S. didn’t support the spread of communism, it caused strong issues between the USSR and U.S. Truman’s containment policy stated that the U.S. wouldn’t let communism spread anywhere, even if it didn’t care about that area. The Truman Doctrine was a prime example of this containment policy. There was a communist-led uprising against the government in Greece and the USSR wanted some control in Turkey. However President Harry S. Truman asked for $400 million in economic and military aid to assist the “free people” of Greece and Turkey against totalitarian regimes. In President Truman’s speech to Joint Session of Congress, the point of view is from an anticommunist standpoint, that wished to prohibit its further expansion. He has witnessed the USSR attempt to force communism on the other European countries and he is stopping this from happening through his containment policy. The Marshall Plan was another example of Truman’s containment policy. Since Europe is falling apart, it is susceptible to communism, therefore Truman offers billions to Western Europe and USSR and its satellites to rebuild. Furthermore at the Yalta conference in the USSR, Russia agreed that there would be free elections in the liberated countries of Eastern Europe. However, the USSR broke this Yalta conference agreement because the elections in Eastern Europe weren’t fair, communists won. This greatly angered the United States. In the Testimony of Whitaker Chambers, the purpose is to show that communism overthrows government and that is shouldn’t be the way a country is run. This is why the U.S. made the USSR agree to fair elections. Lastly, an event known as the Berlin Airlift strengthened political tensions even more. The Soviets cut off U.S. access to Berlin, so Truman sent supplies to people there for 11 months and 60 bombers. With the U.S. ready for war, Stalin backed down. IN V.M. Molotov’s “The Task of Our Time: Unite Against the Enslavement of People,” the intended audience is the people of Russia. He is telling people that in the U.S. and Britian’s attempts to conserve capitalism, they have violated their own democratic principles, setting a poor example of their values for the rest of the world. Political tensions between the U.S. and the USSR pushed both countries to the brink of war.

Overall, several factors contributed to the causes for the Cold War. Social, economic and political factors immensely heightened negative feelings between the two countries. Following 1950, the U.S. continued to fight communism. McCarthyism was established and the Smith Act made it illegal to advocate or teach the overthrow of government by force or to belong to an organization with this objective. This act greatly discouraged communism. McCarthyism created fear of being convicted as a communist. The Korean war was fought by an integrated U.S. army when North Korea invaded South Korea over the 38th parallel. In the end, the war was a success because it stopped the spread of communism. The fight to end communism continued to be fought by the U.S. in the 1950s in order to preserve the governments of the world.

SCORING

Thesis – 1 point available

This essay receives 1 point for thesis. This essay’s thesis statement maintains that the Cold War was caused by divisive social issues, poor economic conditions, and high political tensions.

Analysis of documents – 3 points available

This essay receives 3 points for using and extending the analysis on 6 of the 7 documents, as follows. Document 6 establishes the content of the document by stating that it shows the USSR trying to take over countries and extends the analysis by establishing the historical context of propaganda and the fear of communism’s spread. Document 2 is presented by showing the rising fear among Americans of communism, and extended analysis exists when the student establishes the poll’s purpose. Document 3 is analyzed with the presentation of Kennan’s ideas and contains extended analysis with the intended audience presented accurately. The student correctly includes Truman asking for money to assist the “free people” of Greece and Turkey from Document 4, and establishes the historical context of the document with discussion of the containment policy. The student introduces Document 7 in the next to last paragraph in reference to the assertion that communism overthrows governments, and establishes the historical context of the document in relation to the falling of Eastern European governments. The student analyzes Document 5, Molotov’s perspective on the US and Britain; this sentence purporting to provide purpose is simply the document’s content (thus is not awarded the extended analysis point for purpose), but the student does establish the historical context of document 5 with the statement regarding the Soviets and the US on the brink of war during the Berlin Crisis. Though the topic and resolutions surrounding the Yalta Conference are brought forth at the end of paragraph 4, the student does not analyze the content of Document 1 (Stalin’s perspective on Poland).

Analysis of outside examples to support thesis/argument – 1 point available

This essay receives 1 point for analysis of outside examples. There are a number of outside examples in this essay, with clear connections to the thesis established. These include NATO, the Warsaw Pact, the Alger Hiss case, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The Truman Doctrine and its foundation for the containment policy is well grounded, as well as Yalta. The Marshall Plan and an in-depth explanation of how the Berlin Crisis was responded to are also clearly explained. Rounding out the extraordinary amount of outside information in this essay is the discussion of communism’s movement into China, Korea and Czechoslovakia.

Contextualization – 1 point available

This essay receives 1 point for contextualization. At the beginning of the essay, for example, the student discusses increased tensions at the end of the WWII alliance with Russia through the bombing of Japan without Soviet knowledge. This establishes one of the major issues that sets the stage (context) for the question: post-war Cold War mistrust.

Synthesis – 1 point available

The essay receives 1 point for synthesis, by establishing a unique counter-argument to the student’s main argument. In paragraph three, the student argues that the Soviets could not be reasoned with, as proposed by Kennan, and then proceeds to illustrate the counter-argument: that the US was unreasonable by refusing Soviet reparations derived from Germany.

 Score – 7/7