**Aim: Have modern presidents done a good job leading America in a globalized world?**

**Topic: Modern Presidents and the globalized economy**

**Jimmy Carter: 1977-1981**

In 1976, people were still upset over the Watergate Scandal and the fact that President Ford pardoned Nixon. Jimmy Carter was a humble, devout Peanut Farmer from Georgia, and the Georgian Governor ran against Ford and defeated him. Although he was a very good person, as President, he had mixed results. Carter accomplished the most in foreign policy, making it his mission to try to bring world peace. In 1978, President Carter invited the leaders of Israel and Egypt to the Presidential Vacation Home of Camp David to work out a peace treaty – Egypt had been fighting Israel since Israel’s creation in 1948. Jimmy Carter got them to sign The Camp David Accords where the two countries agreed to not fight each other and Egypt agreed to recognize Israel. Carter also continued negotiations with the Soviet Union, signing S.A.L.T. II to continue to reduce nuclear tensions. He also signed a treaty with Panama returning the Panama Canal to them, but many saw this as a sign of American weakness. Carter also faced many crises in office. When Russia invaded Afghanistan, Carter refused boycotted the 1980 Olympics – the only time America did not participate in the Olympics. In 1979, there was a Revolution in Iran, and the revolutionaries took 66 Americans in the American Embassy hostage for 444 days. Carter only authorized one very poorly designed rescue mission that failed and was never able to negotiate their release (they were released the first day of the next President, Ronald Reagan’s Presidency). In addition, OPEC (**Organization** **of** **the** **Petroleum** **Exporting** **Countries, the main oil producing companies of the world**) stopped trading oil in order to raise prices, and America faced an energy crisis, with very high costs of fuel and gas (which was made worse by Carter’s economic policies of higher taxes and regulating prices). Many gas stations even ran out of gas. This led to America experiencing the economic phenomena known as stagflation – high unemployment and high inflation. In 1980, Jimmy Carter, now very unpopular, lost a landslide election (losing 44 states) to Republican Ronald Reagan. After his Presidency, Carter continued to fight for world peace, traveling around the world, using his political reputation and money to help and to build homes in poor areas.

**Ronald Reagan: 1981-1989**

**Part I: Ronald Reagan’s Domestic Policies and Spending**

President Reagan believed that the Federal government was too big and should not control the day to day lives of people, and he wanted to reduce its role in American life. He believed that individuals, businesses and local and state governments were better able to solve problems on their own than the federal government and should be less dependent on the federal government. He reversed the Presidential trend that had begun with President Franklin Roosevelt of relying on the Federal Government to solve all major problems; instead, Reagan rolled back much of the government’s spending on social programs and created tax cuts to help people take charge of their lives.

**Tax Cuts:** During the Carter Presidency, the United States economy experienced a decade of rising unemployment *and* inflation, known as [stagflation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stagflation). When Reagan defeated Carter and took office in 1981, Reagan tried to solve these problems through an economic policy known as **“supply-side economics”**: tax cuts for all but especially the wealthy and reduced business regulation. Reagan believed that this would stimulate the economy better than the government spending money; allowing businesses to spend more, thus hiring more people, and in turn, those workers will spend more. Reagan cut spending on education, welfare programs and job training programs to fund his tax cuts. Reagan’s economic policies became known as “Reaganomics.”

**Increased military spending:** While Reagan was against government spending, he realized the need to defeat the Soviet Union, and one of the main ways to do this was through increased military spending. Reagan also had to fight terrorism in Libya and around the world (as Americans began being targets of new Islamic Terrorism).

**Part II: Ronald Reagan’s Foreign Policies**

**Introduction:**

One of Ronald Reagan’s greatest accomplishments is putting America on the path to end the Cold War and defeat the Soviet Union.

To accomplish this, Reagan had three strategies:

**Strategy #1 – Increased Military Spending**

For the past decade, American Presidents used ***détente*** – a policy of reducing nuclear tensions against the Soviet Union. However, when Reagan took office, he instead decided to challenge the Soviet Union. He labeled Reagan dramatically increased American military spending; increasing America’s military army and nuclear weapons. Reagan even began a missile defense program known as “the Strategic Defense Initiative” but nicknamed “Star Wars” – the program would create a system of defense in space where missiles from space could intercept Russian missiles. Although “Star Wars” never truly came to be, the military spending in America made Russia increase its own military spending, but Russia’s economy was already weakening. This military spending and pressure from America put a great amount of pressure on the Russian Government.

**Strategy #2 – Support allies and enemies of the Soviets**

Ronald Reagan created the **“Reagan Doctrine” –** vowing both public support as well as military and money aid to people fighting against Communists around the world. Instead of “containment” – limiting the spread of Communism, Reagan wanted America to practice – “rollback” – getting rid of Communist Governments. He supported free governments and rebels fighting against Communism around the world. The two greatest examples are supporting the Mujuhadin rebels in Afghanistan against the Communist Government and the Contra rebels in Nicaragua Soviet (which led to the scandal known as **Iran-Contra** as to whether the administration was selling weapons to Iran to release hostages in Lebanon and then using that money for the contras), and the forcing of Soviet advisors from Angola – allowing for free elections in all of these countries.

Reagan most importantly supported the underground movements in the countries in Soviet controlled Eastern Europe. These groups wanted free elections and Reagan promised them his support; which encouraged them, and as the Soviet Union was weakening, these groups, urged on by President Reagan, got their free elections and took over the former Communist governments.

In July 2007, Poland erected a statue of Ronald Reagan. Lech Walesa, leader of Poland’s Democratic Party “Solidarity,” who won election against the Communists stated, “When talking about Ronald Reagan, I have to be personal. We in Poland took him so personally. Why? Because we owe him our liberty. This can't be said often enough by people who lived under oppression for half a century, until communism fell in 1989.”

**Strategy #3 – Hold firm until Russia concedes**

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev took over as the Soviet Secretary General (leader). Gorbachev wanted to end nuclear build-up, but so did Reagan, and Reagan refused to make any concessions (such as the Star Wars Program). Gorbachev, finally gave into the pressure, and the two met and began negotiating on Reagan’s terms, resulting in a great decrease in military production and the Soviet Union allowing free elections to its Satellite States; bringing the Cold War almost to an end.

**Results:**

The Russian General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev realized that Russia could not compete with the United States, and in Reagan’s second term, Gorbachev bowed to the pressure and began making many radical reforms and changes; agreeing to limiting development of military spending, nuclear weapons and most importantly dismantling (taking apart) **the Soviet Union; ending Russia’s Empire** and letting the Eastern European countries have control back and exiting from its areas of control around the world. Gorbachev then ended Communism in Russia and began replacing it with a democratic system. On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall, the great symbol of the Cold War and divide from Democratic West from Communist East, was torn down. On December 2-3, Gorbachev and new President George H.W. Bush met and declared the Cold War was over.

**President #1: George H.W. Bush: 1989-1993**

George Bush had served as Vice President under President Reagan. In 1988, Bush successfully campaigned on a promise to continue Reagan’s policies. He also promised to help the homeless and the poor, to improve education, and to step up the war on illegal drugs. Bush’s experience had mainly been in the area of foreign policy. Some critics believed that President Bush should have paid more attention to domestic matters like the economy.

**I. Domestic Policies Under Bush**

**a) The Recession:** Bush’s greatest challenge was to reduce the growing budget debt, which was costing U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars in interest payments. Some economists believe that this debt helped push the economy into a **recession** (an increase in unemployment and decrease in national spending and reduction) in 1990. Many companies went bankrupt and thousands of workers lost their jobs. As a result of the recession President Bush’s approval ratings dropped.

**b) Civil Rights and Civil Unrest**: President Bush promoted civil rights when he signed into law the **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**, guaranteeing rights and accessibility to disabled Americans. At the same time, many African Americans and other leaders from minority communities accused the Bush administration of doing little to help them. Bitterness boiled over into riots in Los Angeles and other critics when a jury found four policemen not guilty of beating **Rodney King**, an African American, even though the incident had been videotaped by a bystander.

**II. Foreign Policy Under Bush**

**a) The Invasion of Panama (1989)**:

President Bush acted against Panamanian dictator and drug-dealer **Manual Noriega**. He sent American forces to invade Panama, restore democratically-elected leaders, and bring Noriega to the United States to face drug charges. Noriega was convicted and sent to a U.S. Federal Prison.

**b) The Gulf War (1990)**:

The Gulf War was George Bush’s greatest foreign policy success. Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein ordered his army to invade Kuwait in August 1990. He captured Kuwait’s vast oil wealth and extended Iraq’s borders. Hussein refused a United Nations demand to withdraw from Kuwait.

When all attempts at negotiating a peaceful solution failed, American and United Nations coalition forces launched air attacks against Iraq. For weeks, allied bombers and missiles pounded away at Iraq with deadly accuracy. In early 1991, coalition ground forces invaded Kuwait and Iraq. Saddam Hussein’s forces set fire to oil wells in Kuwait in an act of environmental terrorism. However, a few days after the invasion began; Hussein gave in and agreed to withdraw all Iraqi troops and to pay damages to Kuwait. President Bush declared a cease-fire.

**President #2: William Jefferson Clinton Presidency: 1993-2001**  
 Clinton captured the White House with just 43% of the popular vote (thanks to Ross Perot running as a third party and splitting the Republican vote). In 1998, when his sexual affair with a White House intern came to light with charges of **perjury** (lying under oath), **obstruction of justice** (crime of interfering in the work of police, investigators and other government officials), and **abuse of power**, Clinton became the second president to be **impeached** by the House. He was found not guilty in the Senate and apologized to the nation. However, thanks to a growing economy (from a growing housing market because low interest rates, less requirements for banks and the **Fair Housing Act** – which forced banks to lend to people who normally can’t have mortgages), Clinton left office at the end of his second term with unprecedented popular approval ratings because in the 1990’s the United States enjoyed the longest period of economic growth in its history.

**I. Domestic Issues:**

**a) Working with a Republican Congress:** Although Democrats won the Presidency in 1992, the Republicans handedly won the House of Representatives in 1996. The President and Republicans both at times worked together and butted heads over important issues:

1. **Health – Care Reform:** In 1993, Clinton presented to Congress a health – care reform plan that would ensure health insurance for all Americans. Republican critics of the plan complained it was too expensive, complex and would limit choice in health care. In 1994, Congress rejected Clinton’s plan.
2. **Welfare Reform:** Republicans successfully created laws to regulate the welfare system.
3. **Balanced Budget:** Republicans successfully created a national budget (spending plan) that would be balanced (spend only as much as it received in taxes).
4. **Supreme Court Nominations:** Clinton’s nominations of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer made him the first Democratic President in 26 years to name a Supreme Court justice.
5. **Impeachment:** In 1998, a special prosecutor accused President Clinton of several offenses, including lying under oath about his relationship with a White House Intern Monica Lewinsky. On December 19, 1998, the House impeached (placed on trial) President Clinton on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice. The Senate acquitted (found not guilty) the President two months later.

**II. Foreign Issues**

**a) The Former Yugoslavia:** Tensions between ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia led to war in Bosnia in the early 1990’s. The United States helped win an agreement between the two sides in 1995. In 1998, violence erupted in Kosovo, where Serbian forces massacred ethnic Albanian civilians. A brief bombing campaign NATO forced the Serbs to withdraw. Many Serbian leaders then were arrested for war crimes and tried.

**b) Latin America**: In 1994 President Clinton ordered U.S. troops to lead a multinational force in Haiti to restore a legitimate government after years of dictatorships and unrest. During the rest of the decade millions of dollars to aid was promised to Haiti by many countries but little has been sent due to the continuing lack of stable government in that area.

**President #3: George W. Bush Presidency: 2001-2009**

In the 2000 election, Texas Governor George W. Bush ran as the Republican candidate, in one of the closest presidential races in history, Florida emerged as the key state. The Florida vote was so close a recount of ballots was ordered by law. The election ended when the Supreme Court ruled to discontinue the recounts (***Bush v. Gore, 2000)***.

**Domestic Issues**

**a) Cutting Taxes:** Bush gained congressional approval or tax cut. Most taxpayers received rebates of $300, which Bush argued would jumpstart the faltering economy. The tax cuts helped to avoid recessions during the 9-11, stock market and travel industry recoveries.

**b) Educational Reforms**: On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law a major educational reform bill called **No Child Left Behind**. The plan called for increased students and teacher accountability and targets funds for improving schools. Critics have said that it does not accomplish what it needs to do to improve American education.

**c) Patriot Act (2001):** President Bush asked Congress to pass the **Patriot Act**, which was drafted in response to the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon greatly increases the authority given to the federal, state, and local police agencies to investigate crime. They also created the **Department of Homeland Security** to coordinate national security agencies) Critics argue that this law gives the government too much power and is taking away the civil rights of citizens.

**d) Financial Crisis:** In 2007, there was a **collapse of the banking system** due to banks giving too many mortgages in the 1990’s and early 2000’s, people then not being able to pay their mortgages back, and then the banks foreclosing on their homes (taking them away). Major banks collapsed, credit (loans) froze, spending decreased, unemployment rose and the economy entered into a **recession (known as The Great Recession).** To help get America out of the recession, President Bush passed **TARP** – (Troubled Asset Relief Program) to **“bail out”** (save the banks by giving them money). This helped to slow the recession down, but America still had a lot of recovery to do.

**e) Social Security:** Costs of social security are increasing and President Bush tried to push to reform social security and to privatize it more (to take more financial burden off of the government). However, a split Congress voted not to.

**II. Foreign Issues**

**a) War on Terrorism:** Bush focused largely on foreign policy after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Bush called the attacks “acts of war” and committed the country to a campaign against terrorists. American forces attacked military sites and terrorists training camps in Afghanistan, overthrew the Taliban government (which gave safety to Al-Queda and Osama Bin Laden) and created a Democracy. Bush urged Americans not to “expect one battle but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen.” We continue to fight against rebel members of the Taliban and Al-Queda to keep Afghanistan democratic.

**b) War in Iraq**: In late 2002 and early 2003, the Bush Administration warned Saddam Hussein (leader of Iraq) to eliminate Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Hussein claimed not to have any WMD. The United Nations sent an inspection team, which reported little success in finding these weapons. The United States worked to gain UN support for an invasion of Iraq. Failing to gain this support, a small number of countries led by the United States and Great Britain attacked Iraq in March 2003. More than 200,000 American troops were sent into that area. Saddam Hussein was overthrown and executed by the Iraqis, and a democracy was created. Bush declared an official end to the war on May 1, 2003, yet the fighting has continued and President Bush authorized a “surge” (increase) in troops in 2007.

**c) Other Nations**: The Bush Administration remained concerned with North Korea and Iran’s development and possible use of nuclear power. These problems still exists today. President Bush was also the President who has given the most aid to Africa, and when Europeans did not want to increase their involvement, helped to bring them along to help rebuild African Nations and deal with the growing AIDS problem.

**President #4: President Barack Hussein Obama (2009-2017)**

Barack Hussein Obama defeated John McCain in the 2008 election by a significant margin to become America’s first African American President.

**Domestic Policies**

**a) ObamaCare** – The Affordable Health Care Act was created by President Obama and important Democratic leaders to help provide health care for all Americans. The main provisions of the plan are to: all Americans must have and all businesses must provide health care and are taxed if they don’t, Americans of lower income can receive government help to pay for health care and you may stay on your parents’ healthcare until you are 26. Obamacare was taken to the Supreme Court over if it gave the Federal Government too much power to **mandate** (order) that all Americans must have healthcare, but the Supreme Court ruled it Constitutional because the government can tax. However, it is also controversial because it will cost the government approximately 3 trillion dollars, raise input costs for businesses and premiums (payments) for insurance.

**b) Stimulus Package –** to help America get out of the “Great Recession” President Obama and Congress passed the **American Recovery Act** (otherwise known as **The Stimulus Package).** This plan was to spend close to 900 billion dollars (and to increase government debt) to stimulate (spark) economic growth, help businesses (such as **the Car Company Bailout –** giving American car companies money so they don’t collapse) and help people spend (increase welfare payments). While America is out of the Great Recession, unemployment is still above normal, President Obama has increased the American debt (amount we owe to businesses and other countries by 8 trillion dollars) and over 47 million Americans are on some form of **entitlement (welfare) program.**

**c) Other issues:** President Obama is a big supporter of gun control and gay rights. He continuously pushes Congress to pass gun reform laws and encouraging states to legalize gay marriage. Obama was also the first President to mention gay rights in an inaugural address (in his second when he won re-election). He has also used his executive power (although to what extent he is allowed to is controversial) using executive actions to expand **amnesty programs** (granting legal status to illegal immigrants).

**Foreign Policies**

**a) Nuclear Proliferation and Nobel Peace Prize** – President Obama wants America and other countries to reduce the amount of nuclear weapons we have. He won a Nobel Peace Prize in his first year in office for giving speeches encouraging world Nuclear Proliferation (reduction).

**b) Winding down Iraq and Afghanistan** – Over the course of his Presidency, Obama has withdrawn soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan and is giving control of the war against insurgents (rebels) to their governments. Critics claim that leaving too early can destabilize (lose control) of the progress we made.

**c) “Arab Spring” --** In 2010-2011, there were protests and revolutions across the Arab nations against dictatorship governments. President Obama supported revolutions in Egypt and Libya, however let the Europeans lead more, but we did enforce the “no fly zone” (areas to limit the dictator armies). Critics claim that because we did not lead from the front (or even support the dictators) radical Islamist government took control after the revolutions and they did not create pure democracies.

**d) War on Terror** –President Obama’s greatest success was approving the Black Ops mission to kill Osama Bin Laden when he was finally found (although it is important to note that the hunt for Bin Laden started under the George W. Bush Presidency). However, Obama’s greatest failure came on September 11, 2012, terrorists attacked American embassies in Libya and Egypt resulting in the deaths of several Americans, including our Ambassador. This was a failure of the White House and State Department to protect our embassies, react to the situation and to stop terrorism. The State Department and White House are being investigated for covering up this failure. Currently, we are part of a coalition fighting against the terrorist organization ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) but are not forcefully leading the coalition.

**President #5: President Donald J. Trump (2017 – Present)**

President Donald Trump defeated former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a controversial election: President Trump won the electoral college in a landslide but lost the popular vote to Clinton by three million votes.

Two years into his Presidency, President Trump has instituted more conservative policies and taken a more aggressive and America-first foreign policy approach.

**Domestic Policies**

1. **Tax Plan:** President Trump and the Republican Congress passed a tax plan focused on supply-side economics. It included tax cuts for all economic classes but focused the business class; reducing the corporate tax from 35% to 21% to help businesses create more jobs (the economy has since seen a good increase in American production and a historic decrease in unemployment (including historic lows for Hispanics and African Americans). The tax plan also removed the **ObamaCare** tax mandate which is part of President Trump’s campaign pledge to dismantle Obamacare for more private sector alternatives.
2. **De-Regulation:** President Trump has rolled back many of the Obama-era regulations on businesses, especially in the coal and energy sectors to help businesses expand and create capital investments.
3. **Hard-stance on illegal immigration**: President Trump has promised to build a wall and expanded the power of ICE and Homeland Security to enforce immigration laws and deportations.

**Foreign Policies**

**a) Renegotiating Treaties:** President Trump is the process of **renegotiating NAFTA** and **Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)** to make them more favorable for American businesses and workers; trying to reduce outsourcing (sending jobs and factories overseas). He is also adding **tariffs (taxes on imports)** to protect American industries from cheaper products in foreign countries they can’t compete with. He also is in the process of removing America from the Iran Nuclear Deal, which gave Iran billions of dollars to try to delay their nuclear program, but didn’t have enough oversight.

**b) War on Terror** – President Trump allowed the American military and our allies to be more aggressive against ISIS, and have so far significantly reduced their presence and influence in Iraq and Syria. ISIS has lost 98% of its territory including its capitol city.

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| **President** | **Domestic Issues**  *-- Should these issues be judged as a success or failure? Why?* | **Foreign Issues**  *Should these issues be judged as a success or failure? Why?* | **Final Grade**  *What Murrow Grade (E-U) would you give this President? Why?* |
| **Jimmy**  **Carter** |  |  |  |
| **Ronald Reagan** |  |  |  |
| **George H.W. Bush** |  |  |  |
| **William Jefferson Clinton** |  |  |  |
| **George W. Bush** |  |  |  |
| **Barack Obama** |  |  |  |
| **Donald Trump** |  |  |  |

**Writing Task #1: Rank the 7 Modern Presidents in order from best to worst and explain/justify your ranking in one paragraph:**

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**Explanation:**

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**Writing exercise #2:**

**Complete the Presidential Action Essay**

Theme: Presidential Actions:

**United States presidents have taken actions that have had a significant effect on United States foreign or** domestic policies.

**Task:** Identify ***two***presidential actions that have had significant effects on United States history and for ***each:***

* Describe the historical circumstances surrounding the action
* Discuss the impact of the presidential action on the United States foreign policy or on American society