

Analyzing Documents... *Ronald Reagan,*

"The Great Communicator," and the Conservative Resurgence

Skill: Appropriate Use of Relevant Historical Evidence

Historical thinking involves the ability to **describe and evaluate evidence about the past from diverse sources** (including written documents, works of art, archaeological artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary sources) and requires the students to pay attention to the content, authorship, purpose, format, and audience of such sources. It involves the capacity to **extract useful information, make supportable inferences, and draw appropriate conclusions** from historical evidence, while also noting the context in which the evidence was produced and used, recognizing its limitations and assessing the points of view it reflects.

Skill : Interpretation

Historical thinking involves the ability to **describe, analyze, evaluate, and construct diverse interpretations of the past**, and being aware of how particular circumstances and contexts in which individual historians work and write also shape their interpretation of past events. Historical interpretation requires analyzing evidence, reasoning, determining the context, and **evaluating points of view** found in both primary and secondary sources.

Skill: Historical Argumentation

Historical thinking involves the ability to define and frame a question about the past and to address that question through the construction of an argument. A plausible and persuasive argument requires a **clear, comprehensive, and analytical thesis**, supported by **relevant historical evidence** — not simply evidence that supports a preferred or preconceived position. In addition, argumentation involves the capacity to describe, analyze, and **evaluate the arguments of others** in light of available evidence.

From the Period 9 Content Outline:

Key Concept 9.1: A new conservatism grew to prominence in U.S. culture and politics, defending traditional social values and rejecting liberal views about the role of government.

- I. Reduced public faith in the government's ability to solve social and economic problems, the growth of **religious fundamentalism**, and the dissemination of **neoconservative** thought all combined to invigorate **conservatism**.
 - A. Public confidence and trust in government declined in the 1970s in the wake of economic challenges, political scandals, foreign policy "failures," and a sense of **social and moral decay**.
 - B. The rapid and substantial growth of evangelical and **fundamentalist Christian churches** and organizations, as well as increased political participation by some of those groups, encouraged significant opposition to liberal social and political trends.
- II. **Conservatives** achieved some of their political and policy goals, but their success was limited by the enduring popularity and institutional strength of some **government programs** and public support for **cultural trends** of recent decades.
 - A. Conservatives enjoyed significant victories related to **taxation** and **deregulation** of many industries, but many conservative efforts to advance **moral ideals** through politics met inertia and opposition.
 - B. Although Republicans continued to denounce "big government," the size and scope of the federal government continued to grow after 1980, as many programs remained popular with voters and difficult to reform or eliminate.

Key Concept 9.2: The end of the **Cold War** and new challenges to U.S. leadership in the world forced the nation to redefine its foreign policy and global role.

- I. The **Reagan administration** pursued a reinvigorated anti-Communist and interventionist foreign policy that set the tone for later administrations. **(WOR-7) (WOR-8)**
 - A. **President Ronald Reagan**, who initially rejected **détente** with increased defense spending, military action, and bellicose rhetoric, later developed a friendly relationship with Soviet leader **Mikhail Gorbachev**, leading to significant arms reductions by both countries.

Objective:

Analyze goals, issues, viewpoints, and policies in the Reagan Era (1980s) regarding the conservative resurgence as illustrated by the leadership of Ronald Reagan.

Directions:

Examine each Ronald Reagan quote/excerpt and complete your basic analysis by **highlighting the main idea of each excerpt**, explaining the historical context, POV and historical significance (what does it illustrate about the era). Some entries have been completed for you.

Analyzing Documents... *Ronald Reagan and Conservative Resurgence*

“Before I refuse to take your questions, I have an opening statement.”

Directions:

Examine each Ronald Reagan quote/excerpt and complete your basic analysis by **highlighting the main idea of each excerpt**, explaining the historical context, POV and historical significance (what does it illustrate about the era). Some entries have been completed for you.

Date/Place	Quote/Excerpt	Analysis
<p>June 1952 -- commencement address at Williams Woods College</p> <p>January 11, 1989 -- farewell address to the nation</p>	<p>"I, in my own mind, have always thought of America as a place in the divine scheme of things that was set aside as a promised land. It was set here and the price of admission was very simple: the means of selection was very simple as to how this land should be populated. Any place in the world and any person from those places; any person with the courage, with the desire to tear up their roots, to strive for freedom, to attempt and dare to live in a strange and foreign place, to travel halfway across the world was welcome here."</p> <p>"I've spoken of the shining city all my political life.... And how stands the city on this winter night? ... After 200 years, two centuries, she still stands strong and true to the granite ridge and her glow has held no matter what storm. And she's still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV: <i>He signed major immigration reform granting millions of illegal immigrants' amnesty. His view from 1952 to 1989 was consistent in that America was to set an example for liberty for the rest of the world. American exceptionalism, basically. This illustrates Cold War ideology that democracy and capitalism is superior to communism.</i></p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY): <i>The Puritan legacy in American culture is evident in these speeches (City Upon a Hill - "Model for Christian Charity" sermon, 1630, John Winthrop, Massachusetts Bay colony) as Reagan uses the symbolism to celebrate America.</i></p>
<p>October 27, 1964 nationally televised speech, later simply referred to as "The Speech," in support of candidate Barry Goldwater</p>	<p>"If all of this seems like a great deal of trouble, think what's at stake. We are faced with the most evil enemy mankind has known in his long climb from the swamp to the stars. There can be no security anywhere in the free world if there is no fiscal and economic stability within the United States. Those who ask us to trade our freedom for the soup kitchen of the welfare state are architects of a policy of accommodation.</p> <p>...You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We will preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we will sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children and our children's children say of us we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>
<p>January 7, 1970 -- interview with "Los Angeles Times"</p> <p>March 31, 1976 -- from his "To Restore America" speech</p>	<p>"Welfare's purpose should be to eliminate, as far as possible, the need for its own existence."</p> <p>"No one who lived through the Great Depression can ever look upon an unemployed person with anything but compassion. To me, there is no greater tragedy than a breadwinner willing to work, with a job skill but unable to find a market for that job skill. Back in those dark depression days I saw my father on a Christmas eve open what he thought was a Christmas greeting from his boss. Instead, it was the blue slip telling him he no longer had a job. The memory of him sitting there holding that slip of paper and then saying in a half whisper, 'That's quite a Christmas present,' it will stay with me as long as I live."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>

Date/Place	Quote/Excerpt	Analysis
<p>1980 -- during the 1980 presidential campaign</p> <p>July 17, 1980 -- from his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention</p>	<p>"A recession is when your neighbor loses his job. A depression is when you lose yours. And recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his."</p> <p>"[The Democrats] say that the United States has had its days in the sun, that our nation has passed its zenith.... My fellow citizens, I utterly reject that view."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>
<p>January 20, 1981 -- from his first inaugural address</p> <p>February 18, 1981 -- from his speech to Congress detailing his program for economic recovery</p> <p>August 15, 1986 -- in remarks to the White House Conference on Small Business</p>	<p>"It is not my intention to do away with government. It is rather to make it work -- work with us, not over us; stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it. This Administration's objective will be a healthy, vigorous, growing economy. "</p> <p>"[N]o arsenal or no weapon in the arsenals of the world is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women."</p> <p>"We don't have an option of living with inflation and its attendant tragedy....We have an alternative, and that is the program for economic recovery. True, it'll take time for the favorable effects of our program to be felt. So, we must begin now. The people are watching and waiting. They don't demand miracles. They do expect us to act. Let us act together."</p> <p>"[G]overnment's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>
<p>March 30, 1981 -- to surgeons as he entered the operating room following his assassination attempt</p> <p>Following surgery, his words to Nancy Reagan -- a line first attributed to boxing's heavyweight Jack Dempsey when he lost the title to Gene Tunney in 1926</p> <p>August 1984 -- joking, unwittingly, into an open mic just before a speech that was to be broadcast</p>	<p>"I hope you're all Republicans."</p> <p>"Honey, I forgot to duck."</p> <p>"My fellow Americans, I'm pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV: <i>A mentally ill man tried to kill the President in order to impress actress, Jodie Foster, with whom he was obsessed. The Reagan Era was dominated by Cold War foreign policy, especially in his first term.</i></p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY): <i>America's place in the world during the Reagan Era was as the post WWII superpower leading the battle against the spread of communism. Reagan had a good sense of humor and was able to put people's minds at ease during difficult situations. Although the bombing joke was criticized as inappropriate, few took him seriously so it didn't create a panic.</i></p>

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<p>May 17, 1981 -- from a speech at Notre Dame University</p> <p>1982 -- in a speech to Britain's Parliament</p> <p>June 1987 -- in his famed speech near the Berlin Wall</p> <p>September 25, 1987 -- remarks in Arlington, Virginia</p>	<p>"The years ahead will be great ones for our country, for the cause of freedom and the spread of civilization. The West will not contain Communism; it will transcend Communism. We will not bother to denounce it, we'll dismiss it as a sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written."</p> <p>"It is the Soviet Union that runs against the tide of history.... [It is] the march of freedom and democracy which will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history as it has left other tyrannies which stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people."</p> <p>"Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"</p> <p>"How do you tell a Communist? Well, it's someone who reads Marx and Lenin. And how do you tell an anti-Communist? It's someone who understands Marx and Lenin."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>
<p>October 5, 1981 -- in an address to the National Alliance of Business</p>	<p>"The size of the federal budget is not an appropriate barometer of social conscience or charitable concern."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV: <i>Conservatives believed that many issues such as poverty or homelessness are best served by communities and organizations rather than the government. Reagan's point of view is that the Government is not the solution to problems and conservatism was not the absence of caring.</i></p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY): <i>The role of government - politics and power - was debated between liberals and conservatives. Reagan conservatives did not believe that decreasing federal government in regards to social issues or welfare was not an indication that Americans didn't care about each other.</i></p>
<p>October 13, 1982 -- in an address to the nation on the economy</p>	<p>"I have a special reason for wanting to solve this [economic] problem in a lasting way. I was 21 and looking for work in 1932, one of the worst years of the Great Depression. And I can remember one bleak night in the thirties when my father learned on Christmas Eve that he'd lost his job. To be young in my generation was to feel that your future had been mortgaged out from under you, and that's a tragic mistake we must never allow our leaders to make again."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>
<p>March 8, 1983 -- in a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals</p>	<p>"Let us beware that while they [Soviet rulers] preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination over all the peoples of the earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world.... I urge you to beware the temptation ..., to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of any evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong, good and evil."</p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>

Date/Place	Quote/Excerpt	Analysis
<p>March 23, 1983 -- addressing the nation about his proposed Strategic Defense Initiative, later to be known as "Star Wars"</p>	<p><i>"I call upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace, to give us the means of rendering those nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete."</i></p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>
<p>September 5, 1983 -- in a televised speech following the Soviets' downing of a Korean airliner</p> <p>June 6, 1984 -- at the D-Day Commemoration in Normandy, France</p> <p>May 31, 1988 -- in his address to students at Moscow State University</p>	<p><i>"And make no mistake about it, this attack was not just against ourselves or the Republic of Korea. This was the Soviet Union against the world and the moral precepts which guide human relations among people everywhere. It was an act of barbarism born of a society which wantonly disregards individual rights and the value of human life and seeks constantly to expand and dominate other nations."</i></p> <p><i>"We will always remember. We will always be proud. We will always be prepared, so we may always be free."</i></p> <p><i>"Freedom is the right to question and change the established way of doing things. It is the continuous revolution of the marketplace. It is the understanding that allows to recognize shortcomings and seek solutions."</i></p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>
<p>November 13, 1986 -- in his first public statement about the allegations of secret arms-for-hostages negotiations with Iran</p> <p>March 3, 1987 -- from a televised address in which he admitted to the findings of the Tower Commission</p>	<p><i>"In spite of the wildly speculative and false stories of arms for hostages and alleged ransom payments, we did not -- repeat did not -- trade weapons or anything else for hostages nor will we."</i></p> <p><i>"A few months ago, I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that's true, but the facts and evidence tell me it is not."</i></p>	<p>Historical Context or POV:</p> <p>Historical Significance (THINK THEMATICALLY):</p>

