

United States History and Government
Content-Specific Rubric
Thematic Essay—August 2005

Theme: Cold War

Following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in a conflict that became known as the Cold War. The Cold War created problems that the United States addressed with specific actions. These actions had varying degrees of success.

- Task:** Identify *two* problems faced by the United States during the Cold War and for *each*
- Explain how the problem led to conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union
 - Describe *one* action taken by the United States in response to the problem
 - Evaluate the extent to which the action taken was successful in solving the problem

You may use any Cold War problems from your study of United States history. Some suggestions you might wish to consider include the postwar economic upheaval in Western Europe (1945–1947), Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe (1945–1948), threat of Communist takeover in Greece (1947), Soviet blockade of Berlin (1948), nuclear arms race (1950s–1970s), placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba (1962).

Scoring Note: This thematic essay has a minimum of *six* components (*three* aspects [the problem, an action, and the extent of success of the action] for each of *two* problems).

Score of 5:

- Thoroughly develops *all* aspects of the task evenly and in depth by identifying *two* problems faced by the United States during the Cold War, explaining how each problem led to conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, describing an action taken by the United States in response to the problems, and evaluating the extent to which the action taken was successful in solving the problems
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information), e.g., for *Berlin blockade*: the United States avoided direct confrontation by implementing the airlift; when the Soviets saw that their land blockade was not successful, they ended it rather than risk all-out war by shooting down the supply planes; or for *threat of Communist takeover in Greece*: if successful in controlling Greece and Turkey, the Soviet Union would achieve a long-term national goal of acquiring warm-water seaports; the intent of the Truman Doctrine was expanded into other containment programs such as the Marshall Plan
- Richly supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details, e.g., for *Berlin blockade*: Berlin lies many miles within the Soviet sector of Germany; for nearly a year, British and American airplanes flew thousands of missions to Berlin, dropping off supplies; or for *threat of Communist takeover in Greece*: Soviets wanted control of the Dardenelles and the Strait of Bosphorus; Congress voted \$400 million in military and economy aid to Greece and Turkey
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Score of 4:

- Develops *all* aspects of the task but may do so somewhat unevenly by discussing some aspects of the task more thoroughly than others
- Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information), e.g., for *Cuban missile crisis*: the Soviet Union was using Cuba to antagonize the United States about a number of different issues; the United States was concerned about protecting the safety of the United States and had developed a new long-range missile system to defend itself against the Soviet Union
- Supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details, e.g., for *Cuban missile crisis*: United States blockade successfully turned back several Soviet ships; as a result, the Soviets removed their missiles from Cuba
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Score of 3:

- Develops *all* aspects of the task with little depth *or* develops *at least four* aspects of the task in some depth
- Is more descriptive than analytical (applies, may analyze, and/or evaluate information), e.g., for *nuclear arms race*: the arms race was a power struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States; *or* for *Berlin blockade*: Berlin is located within the Soviet-occupied portion of Germany; *or* for *Cuban missile crisis*: the United States placed a naval blockade around Cuba
- Includes some relevant facts, examples, and details, e.g., for *communist threat in Greece*: Truman Doctrine *or* United States gives millions of dollars in military and economic aid; may include some minor inaccuracies
- Demonstrates a satisfactory plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that may be a restatement of the theme

Note: If *at least three* aspects of the task have been thoroughly developed and the response meets most of the other level 5 criteria, the overall response may be a level 3 paper.

Score of 2:

- Minimally develops *all* aspects of the task *or* develops *at least three* aspects of the task in some depth
- Is primarily descriptive; may include faulty, weak, or isolated application or analysis, e.g., for *threat in Greece*: this action was pretty successful in solving the problem
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some inaccuracies
- Demonstrates a general plan of organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion

Score of 1:

- Minimally develops some aspects of the task
- Is descriptive; may lack understanding, application, or analysis
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, or details; may include inaccuracies
- May demonstrate a weakness in organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion

Score of 0:

Fails to develop the task or may only refer to the theme in a general way; *OR* includes no relevant facts, examples, or details; *OR* includes only the theme, task, or suggestions as copied from the test booklet; *OR* is illegible; *OR* is a blank paper

Following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in a conflict known as the Cold War. As a result of subsequent tensions, the United States had problems to deal with, including the post-war economic upheaval in Western Europe and the blockade of Berlin. In response, the United States took actions to rectify the situation as carefully as possible to prevent a serious, deadly confrontation that could result in total annihilation.

One problem that occurred immediately after the war was the economic problems experienced by all of Europe, with war damage and military expenditures. First of all, this would place a hindrance on the world economy, but the US concern was more motivated to contain the problem and threat of communism that appealed to economically-weak nations, such as France and Italy. Such a conflict of political ideals—communism vs. democracy—resulted in a conflict between the US and the USSR. To avoid another full-out war, Secretary of State Marshall proposed the Marshall Plan to provide relief to any European nation that requested it, so that the economy would function and there would be no need to resort to communism. The Marshall Plan was somewhat successful in

preventing economic bankruptcy, but only in the Western European nations that accepted it. The Eastern European nations on the other hand were forced to refuse aid by Soviet influence due to such close proximity.

Another problem that the United States had to deal with was the Soviet Blockade of Berlin. Under the terms of the Yalta Agreement late in World War II, Germany and Berlin were to be divided among the Allied powers— Britain, France, US + Soviet Union. However, there was a major geographic problem — divided Berlin was ^{located} 110 miles inside the Soviet zone of occupation and to prevent any democratic help, the Soviet-controlled roads and rail lines leading to Berlin were blockaded, with no supplies able to get in. The United States avoided direct confrontation by implementing the Berlin airlift, flying and dropping supplies in Berlin to sustain the troops and civilians surrounded by the unrelenting Soviet Union. For nearly a year, the U.S. showed its determination to break the intent of the Soviet ground blockade by continuing this expensive airlift of supplies. This airlift also created a dilemma for the Soviet Union — give up the blockade and accept defeat or shoot down planes and escalate the confrontation. The Soviets chose to end the blockade. This meant the US

action was highly successful, but the Berlin situation continued to be a problem. The blockade and airlift prompted the US to form NATO.

As seen in these two examples of Cold War crises, the United States was forced into an insurmountable dilemma that it needed to solve diplomatically, effectively, and quickly. The solutions placed into effect, although not completely successful, were useful in following the U.S. policy of containment of communism without open conflict.