

The Cold War

Part 3: Cracks in the Wall

TEACHER GUIDE

BACKGROUND

By the early 1970s, the balance of world power was changing. Where there once were two superpowers (the U.S. and the Soviet Union) now there were three. China, fresh off its cultural revolution, was demanding a role on the world stage. At the same time, dissidents were gaining momentum within the Soviet Block countries. The video “Cracks in the Wall” examines these events and the efforts by the U.S. to encourage democracy in Soviet Block countries.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask students to identify international events of the past year, and decide whether they have increased or decreased tensions between the U.S. and other countries. Discuss the response by the U.S. and other countries to these events.
2. Explain to students that in the past, events have been used to the advantage of some nations. Tell them about the Helsinki Accords, an agreement signed by 35 countries that demanded certain standards of human rights, including the freedom of movement of people and ideas. Then read the quote below by Henry Kissinger about the Helsinki Accords.

The Helsinki Accords

“It (the Helsinki Accords) gave us a legal standard and an international standard to which we could refer and it also gave people inside those countries a mechanism around which to rally.” - *Henry Kissinger, United States Secretary of State.*

3. Ask students to explain how the inclusion of freedom of movement of people and ideas in the Helsinki Accords was a blow to the Soviet Union. Ask them to think about how this may have increased or decreased tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.
4. Show the video “Cracks in the Wall.” Using the T-Chart located at <http://abcnewsclassroom.com>, have students categorize the events contained in the video as to whether they increased or decreased tensions during the Cold War. Note that it may not be clear whether a specific event increased or decreased tensions. In small groups, ask students to compare their T-Charts and discuss similarities and differences. Also have them discuss how U.S. foreign policy influenced those events.
5. Ask students to write an essay about one of the following topics: 1) What events, beginning in the 1970s, led to an easing of Cold War tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union?; or 2) How did U.S. foreign policy affect world events during the Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan administrations?

SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Grades 5-6

Understands shifts in international relations after World War II.

Grades 7-8

Understands events that led to an easing of Cold War tension from the 1970s to the early 1990s. (U.S. History)

Understands the origins and decline of the Cold War and its significance as a 20th Century event. (World History)

Grades 9-12

Understands the influence of U.S. foreign policy on international events from Nixon to Clinton.

See resources below for further information about standards.

Please visit <http://abcnewsclassroom.com> for additional lesson plans, teacher resources, and information about standards from Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).