

WORLD HISTORY READERS

Level 6 - 6

The Cold War

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Who Rules the World?

These days, the world is ruled by the community of countries joined by the United Nations. Some countries have more influence and power than others, but no one country rules over the rest.



Hatshepsut Temple,
Egypt

In the past, things were different. The most powerful country often ruled over the rest and sometimes built an empire.

The Ancient Egyptians did so, then the Neo-Assyrians,

the Persians, the Greeks, and later the Romans. In the 19th century and part of the 20th, the British ruled. After World War II, the world remained for a while without a global ruler.



The Roman Empire



The United Nations
Headquarters in New York City

The Cold War

After World War II ended in 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) began to compete to rule the world. There were never any direct battles between the two superpowers. However, they opposed each other in self-contained wars in several

places of the world. They were also in a continuous political, commercial, and cultural struggle.

This long battle for power was known as the Cold

War. It lasted from shortly after the end of World War II in 1945, until 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union.



A communist poster
from the Soviet
Union



A US stamp
representing
the radio
transmissions
of the Voice of
America



A poster from World War II,
when the US and the USSR
were allies

The United States and the Soviet Union had great economic and political differences. The US was a democracy, believing in personal freedom as well as in freedom in the economy and the press.



A Soviet stamp showing Lenin and workers



A Soviet soldier carrying the communist flag

The USSR was a state exclusively governed by the communist party. It had a planned state economy and much control over its people.

The Cold War was as much a war to create an empire as an ideological war to impose beliefs on other countries.



A US stamp of 1960 showing the Statue of Liberty

The Atomic Bomb

At the end of World War II, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The world became aware of the deadly power of this type of bomb. Every country wanted to possess an atomic bomb, especially the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union did not want the United States to be the only nuclear power.



Two missiles ready to be launched from a military base

Once both superpowers had nuclear bombs, they had a new problem. Either of them could use their deadly bombs against the other at any time. They had enough nuclear weapons to destroy each other. This possible event was known as Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). And it was indeed a “mad” idea.



The most powerful Soviet atomic bomb

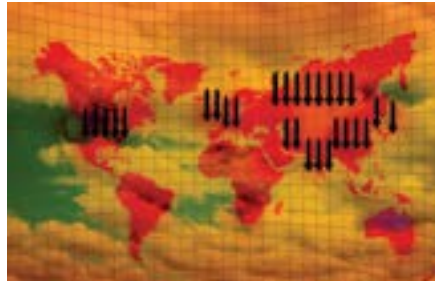


An atomic cloud over a city

How the Cold War Was Fought

Besides building up their military forces, both countries used other tactics to win the war.

First, there were many proxy wars around the world including wars in Greece,



A world map showing nuclear missiles in various countries



A miniature spy camera during the Cold War

Korea, Afghanistan, and Vietnam. Instead of fighting each other directly, the US and the USSR used third parties to do the fighting for them. Second, there was a psychological war with speeches, movies, and books promoting the advantages of each side. Third, there were also spies working across borders to prevent unexpected actions and threats. Finally, there was the space race, in which each country tried to go further into outer space.



A secret underground bunker—a place to hide in case of a nuclear bomb



The Rest of the World

As the Cold War developed, most countries in the world took sides. Most of the countries of Western Europe and Japan aligned themselves with the US.



An Indonesian stamp dedicated to the Non-Aligned Movement

The USSR aligned with many Eastern European

countries which adopted a communist regime such as Poland, East Germany, Ukraine, and Czechoslovakia. The USSR also tried to get other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to align with it.

Some countries in the developing world decided that they would not align with any of the superpowers. They declared themselves neutral. These countries founded the Non-Aligned Movement.



The "socialistic" (communist) world between 1919 and 1991



The US Army Station in Germany

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was the Cold War “cold”?
 - (a) It started in Siberia.
 - (b) It started in winter.
 - (c) There was no direct fighting between the US and USSR.
 - (d) It started using poison gas.
2. The US and the USSR...
 - (a) had different ideas about freedom.
 - (b) had different ideas about government.
 - (c) wanted to impose their own ideas on other countries.
 - (d) All of the above
3. How was the Cold War fought?
 - (a) By wars in the USSR
 - (b) Through cultural weapons such as radio, TV, books, etc.
 - (c) By setting off nuclear bombs
 - (d) All of the above
4. The US and the USSR feared... the most during the Cold War.
 - (a) invasion of their territories
 - (b) commercial power
 - (c) atomic bombs
 - (d) the culture of the other side
5. The space race was an important way to show...
 - (a) power to the rest of the world.
 - (b) the technology for missiles.
 - (c) atomic bombs.
 - (d) political issues.
6. Where did the USSR put nuclear weapons?
 - (a) Mexico
 - (b) the US
 - (c) Greece
 - (d) Cuba
7. Who did communist China become allies with during the Cold War?
 - (a) The Soviet Union
 - (b) The United States
 - (c) Both the US and the USSR
 - (d) Neither the US nor the USSR
8. The Vietnam War was...
 - (a) started in China.
 - (b) won by the US.
 - (c) long and deadly.
 - (d) All of the above
9. When did the USSR collapse?
 - (a) 2013
 - (b) 1980
 - (c) 1924
 - (d) 1991
10. Who were some of the leaders of the USSR during the Cold War?
 - (a) Eisenhower and Stalin
 - (b) Brezhnev and Gorbachev
 - (c) Kennedy and Khrushchev
 - (d) Nixon and Reagan

Glossary

- **align** to match or be in line with; to give support to a person or state
- **allegiance** loyalty or commitment for a ruler, country, group, or belief
- **ally** to join or cooperate by political agreement
- **atomic bomb** a bomb that uses explosive nuclear power
- **collapse** to break down; to fail
- **communism** a political and economic system in which the major productive resources of the country are owned by the state
- **missile** a rocket that can travel long distances through the air
- **nuclear** related to the energy that is made when the center of an atom is divided
- **overthrow** to remove a leader from power, using force
- **pledge** to make a serious promise
- **proxy war** fighting between groups or smaller countries that represent the interests of larger powers
- **regime** a government
- **spy** a person who secretly tries to find information about a person, country, etc.
- **superpower** a country with great political and military control

Key 1. (c) 2. (b) 3. (d) 4. (b) 5. (a) 6. (d) 7. (c) 8. (c) 9. (d) 10. (b)