COLD WAR CARD 1

President Reagan and the Cold War | Summary

Background:

The Cold War (1945 – 1991) was "fought" between the two major superpowers in the world remaining after World War II – The United States and the Soviet Union. The term "Cold War", when weapons are built up but not used, means something different from a "Hot War", when people fight against each other in armed combat or use missiles or bombs. While the Cold War never led to a direct armed conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, each superpower supported the armed struggles of pro-communist or pro-democratic groups in other parts of the world such as Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East. The Cold War led the United States military into combat in Korea, Vietnam, and Grenada.

As each side built up more and more nuclear weapons, the United States developed the idea of nuclear deterrence – the concept that neither side would use nuclear weapons against each other because each knew this would lead to the destruction of both the United States and the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, Soviet leaders, for most of the country's existence, believed they could win a nuclear war.

By the time President Reagan was elected, two anti-nuclear treaties had been signed between the United States and the Soviet Union.

These treaties were known as SALT I and SALT II (later re-named START by President George H.W. Bush). These agreements put ceilings on certain types of nuclear weapons but did not limit the overall nuclear weapons build up, did not involve dismantling existing nuclear weapons, and did not involve oversight of the treaties.

In 1981, while both the Soviet Union and the United States had the nuclear capacity to destroy the world, the Soviet Union had built up considerably more nuclear arms than the United States.

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Questions:

What was the Cold War? How did it affect people's lives? Do you or anyone you know remember it?

Questions students will seek to answer within the course of this unit:

- Why was the Cold War called a "Cold War?"
- Was it always cold?
- What does "winning the Cold War" mean?
- How could a country win a cold war?
- How did President Reagan hope to win the Cold War?
- Was President Reagan successful in winning the Cold War?

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