

Ronald Reagan DBQ

Directions: The following question is based on the accompanying Documents 1–7. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. This question is designed to test your ability to apply several historical thinking skills simultaneously, including historical argumentation, use of relevant historical evidence, contextualization, and synthesis. Your response should be based on your analysis of the documents and your knowledge of the topic.

Write a well-integrated essay that does the following:

- States an appropriate thesis that directly addresses all parts of the question.
- Supports the thesis or an appropriate argument with evidence from all, or all but one, of the documents AND your knowledge of United States history beyond/outside the documents.
- Analyzes a majority of the documents in terms of such features as their intended audience, purpose, point of view, format, argument, limitations, and/or social context as appropriate to the argument.
- Places the argument in the context of broader regional, national, or global processes.

To what extent did the presidency of Ronald Reagan restore the United States to economic prosperity and world leadership?

Document A

Nearly a year after he took office, the nation over which Ronald Reagan presides is in a gloomy mood. Americans are worried about the state of their country, anxious about inflation, which they do not expect to ease soon, and feel the pinch of recession they fear may linger for a year or more. Perhaps more important, 63% of the Americans surveyed say they see a real chance that a nuclear war will break out somewhere in the next five years... Despite these worries, however, Reagan, in a way that seems to defy the laws of political gravity, remains popular with his fellow citizens. He is seen by a majority as likable, hardworking, a strong leader who is well informed on domestic issues and a President who makes his own decisions and has sound economic ideas. Source: "America's Fretful Mood" *Time* magazine, December 28, 1981

Document B

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Median Household Income 1979-89 (constant 1990 dollars)

Year	Income
1979	\$29,634
1980	\$28,091
1981	\$27,425
1982	\$27,320
1983	\$27,581
1984	\$28,197
1985	\$28,688
1986	\$29,690
1987	\$29,984
1988	\$30,079
1989	\$30,468

Source: **American Almanac**, Page 445, table 696 (1993 ed.).

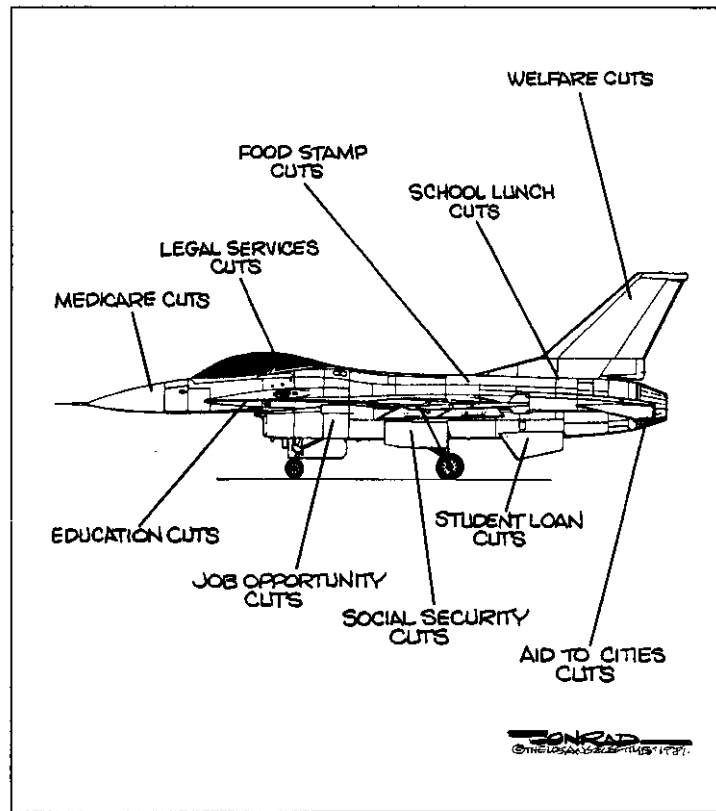
Document C

"Now, let me explain what the situation is and what's at issue. With our budget cuts, we've presented a complete program of reduction in tax rates. Again, our purpose was to provide incentive for the individual, incentives for business to encourage production and hiring of the unemployed, and to free up money for investment. Our bill calls for a 5-percent reduction in the income tax rates by October 1st, a 10-percent reduction beginning July 1st, 1982, and another 10-percent cut a year later, a 25-percent total reduction over 3 years....

There are deductions to encourage investment and savings. Business gets realistic depreciation on equipment and machinery. And there are tax breaks for small and independent businesses which create 80 percent of all our new jobs. This bill also provides major credits to the research and development industry. These credits will help spark the high technology breakthroughs that are so critical to America's economic leadership in the world....Our bill is, in short, the first real tax cut for everyone in almost 20 years. . . I've not taken your time this evening merely to ask you to trust me. Instead, I ask you to trust yourselves.

President Reagan Address to the Nation, August 3, 1981.

Document D



Paul Conrad in the *LA Times*, 1982

Document E

“And as we renew ourselves here in our own land we will be seen as having greater strength throughout the world. We will again be the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom. To those neighbors and allies who share our freedom, we will strengthen our historic ties and assure them of our support and firm commitment.... As for the enemies of freedom, those who are potential adversaries, they will be reminded that peace is the highest aspiration of the American people. We will negotiate for it, sacrifice for it; we will not surrender for it - now or ever....

When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail if need be, knowing that if we do we have the best chance of never having to use that strength....

The crisis we are facing does require, however, our best effort, and our willingness to believe in ourselves and to believe in our capacity to perform great deeds; to believe that together with God's help we can and will resolve the problems which now confront us. And after all, why shouldn't we believe that? We are Americans. God bless you and thank you. Thank you very much.”

Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural Address, 1981.

Document F

“To shape such an effective U.S. defense strategy and a meaningful negotiating posture, President Reagan's SDI needs to be redefined. We must show the Soviets both that we can deploy a strategic defense system soon and that we will negotiate over its deployment if they are willing to make stabilizing reductions in their offensive missile forces. In the event of Soviet unwillingness to accept such an arrangement, we would be in position unilaterally to achieve strategic security for ourselves. And because the SDI would not be accompanied by a massive deployment of disarming first-strike offensive U.S. systems, we would in no way increase our strategic threat to the Soviets. Either way SDI promises a genuinely stabilized nuclear equilibrium between the United States and the Soviet Union. It is time to act.”

A Star Wars Solution by Zbigniew Brzezinski in The New Republic, July 8, 1985, pp. 16-18.

Document G

“Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe. From the Baltic, south, those barriers cut across Germany in a gash of barbed wire, concrete, dog runs, and guard towers. Farther south, there may be no visible, no obvious wall. But there remain armed guards and checkpoints all the same—still a restriction on the right to travel, still an instrument to impose upon ordinary men and women the will of a totalitarian state. Yet it is here in Berlin where the wall emerges most clearly; here, cutting across your city, where the news photo and the television screen have imprinted this brutal division of a continent upon the mind of the world. Standing before the Brandenburg Gate, every man is a German, separated from his fellow men. Every man is a Berliner, forced to look upon a scar....

There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

President Reagan's Remarks at the Brandenburg Gate, 1987.