

Reagan Pros and Cons

Directions: Determine which of the following would be considered a positive factor (*P*) and which would be considered a negative factor (*N*) in Ronald Reagan's presidency. Be prepared to defend your choices.

Foreign Policy

- _____ 1. Reagan challenged the Soviets to an arms race. When they could not keep up, their empire collapsed.
- _____ 2. Reagan stood up to communist expansion throughout the world, especially in the Western Hemisphere in Grenada, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.
- _____ 3. Constant military intervention in places like Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Grenada was done to prop up fascist military rulers who exploited their populations.
- _____ 4. At the Reykjavik Summit, Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev came close to an agreement to reduce intermediate range nuclear weapons significantly, but talks broke down over Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI); however, this summit opened the way to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (1987), which was the first treaty to reverse the arms race.
- _____ 5. SDI or the Star Wars plan was too expensive, would never work, and would increase tension with the Soviets.
- _____ 6. Reagan's insistence on calling the Soviets "evil" versus the "good" America was too simplistic and could be ridiculed.
- _____ 7. Reagan embarked on a peacetime military buildup that allowed for the success of the first Gulf War under George H. W. Bush.
- _____ 8. Reagan liberated Grenada from a communist-style government.
- _____ 9. Reagan should not be credited with causing the collapse of communism; it was the result of the enlightened thinking of Gorbachev, who foresaw his nation's economic decline and helped to change its policies effectively.
- _____ 10. Reagan abandoned détente, called the Soviet Union an "evil empire," and challenged the Soviets on the basis of moral superiority.
- _____ 11. Middle East policy was a failure when we were driven out of Lebanon and Reagan continued the decades-long State Department policy of accommodation with Arab despots.
- _____ 12. Congress cut off funding to the counterrevolutionary movement in Nicaragua. The Reagan administration illegally sold arms to Iran through the CIA to enable the administration to fund Contras seeking to overthrow Sandinista rule. Eleven administration officials, including Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, were convicted of crimes related to the scandal.
- _____ 13. Americans enjoyed eight years of unbroken peace during the Cold War.
- _____ 14. Reagan transformed the international order based on a bipolar world of western democracies versus communism.
- _____ 15. Communism was no longer a danger to the world. Presidents such as Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter suggested we should plan for and be able to live in a world where both communism and capitalist democracies could coexist.

Domestic Policy

- _____ 1. Reagan's tax policies raised revenues, leading to more government spending than ever before.
- _____ 2. Reagan's supply-side economic theories were derided and called voodoo economics by presidential challenger George H. W. Bush.
- _____ 3. Reagan helped Americans regain self-confidence and compared America to a "city on a hill," a beacon of hope for the entire world to look up to.
- _____ 4. Reagan's tax policies helped the rich while the rest of America suffered through economic stagnation. He created a false prosperity built on debt.
- _____ 5. Reagan created one of the longest economic booms in American history.
- _____ 6. Reagan lowered the top interest rate from 70 percent to 28 percent by the time he left office.
- _____ 7. Twenty million new jobs were created during Reagan's term in office.
- _____ 8. Under Reagan, the national debt nearly tripled, placing an enormous economic burden on future generations.
- _____ 9. The Republican Party became far too conservative as a result of Reagan, was no longer part of mainstream America, and was at odds with the majority of voters.
- _____ 10. Reagan restored the economy by using supply-side economics, under which he cut the budget and lowered taxes. This led to dramatic increases in the economy and included new investments and productivity, as well as a decrease in the deficit and a prosperous American economy.
- _____ 11. Reagan reduced the size of the federal government for the first time since the New Deal.
- _____ 12. Reagan may have had some charisma and a gift of communication, but many on the far left said that the United States was not exceptional and that Reagan's belief that the country was led America to intrude on other nations' affairs, creating problems rather than solving them.
- _____ 13. The only reason the federal government was reduced in size was because, with less tax money collected, government programs and spending had to be reduced.
- _____ 14. Reagan's Economic Recovery Act (1981) and the Tax Reform Bill (1986) resulted in reform.
- _____ 15. Reagan's war on drugs led to increased governmental intrusion into private lives and the loss of individual rights.