

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Obama Visits Russia Hoping to "Reset" Tense Relations, 07/08/2009

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/july-dec09/russia_07-08.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.]

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. What was the Cold War? Which countries were involved?

2. What causes some countries to align with each other and others to have tense relations?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. What was the focus of President Obama's meetings in Moscow?

ANSWER

President Barack Obama visited Moscow this week for a two-day summit with Russian leaders that focused on resetting sometimes tense U.S.-Russia relations and renewing cooperation on issues such as nuclear arms reduction and the use of Russian airspace to move supplies into Afghanistan to help the war effort.

2. Who did President Obama meet with?

ANSWER

As part of the first U.S.-Russia summit in seven years, President Obama met with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

Mr. Putin is the powerful former president of Russia who still holds considerable sway within the government.

3. How did Mr. Obama end his visit?

ANSWER

President Obama ended his visit with a speech at the New Economic School in Moscow where he addressed his hopes for a "fresh start" in relations between the two nations noting that "America wants a strong, peaceful and prosperous Russia."

4. What is the name of the old arms treaty between the United States and Russia?

ANSWER

The two presidents spoke of a new arms control treaty to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1) which expires in December.

The START 1 treaty was proposed by former President Ronald Reagan in 1982. The landmark agreement resulted in the significant reduction of nuclear weapons by the U.S. and Russia.

5. Name at least one recent U.S. action that angered Russia?

ANSWER

The U.S. has supported the rights of the two countries in recent disputes with Russia, backing their interest in joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, which Russia disapproves of.

U.S.-Russia relations also hit a difficult point in 2008 when Georgia invaded the disputed territory of South Ossetia, prompting Russia to then invade Georgia. The U.S. supported Georgia in the dispute and sent humanitarian aid to the country.

6. What was the Cold War? When did it end?

ANSWER

The Cold War, fought between the Soviet Union and the United States, is so named because the two countries never engaged in any direct combat but battled for power and influence in different parts of the world from Cuba to Afghanistan.

The confrontation officially ended in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, paving the way for the United States to find new ways to cooperate.

The relationship cooled significantly during President George W. Bush's terms in office, as then-Russian President Putin took an assertive stance against the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. What do you think it means that President Obama went to Russia for special talks? Where else has he gone?

2. Why is important for the U.S and Russia to agree on nuclear disarmament?

3. Do you agree with President Obama's assertion that

"The future does not belong to those who gather armies on a field of battle or bury missiles in the ground... The future belongs to young people with an education and imagination to create. That is the source of power in this century."?

Why or why not? Do you think this applies to you?

4. If you were from Georgia or Ukraine how do you think you would interpret President Obama's words?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.