US Foreign Policy in Central America: Ronald Reagan and Christopher Dodd

By Ronald Nash

Grade Level: 10-12
Number of class periods: 3

Common Core State Standards:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5 Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text
W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence

Unit Overview
Over the course of three lessons the students will compare and contrast the justification of an anti-communist policy in Nicaragua outlined by President Ronald Reagan and the views of Senator Christopher Dodd who expressed a highly critical perspective of the US policy in Central America. The Reagan administration was determined to stop what it considered a full-fledged communist offensive in the region. In addition to an invasion of the small island of Grenada in October, 1983, the Reagan administration was in the process of authorizing support for various “freedom fighters” in Central America. Contrasts and comparisons will be drawn between two documents in-which the purpose and mission of US policy is outlined. Students will use textual analysis to draw their conclusions and present arguments as directed in each lesson. An argumentative essay, which requires the students to defend their opinions using textual evidence, will be used to determine student understanding.

Lesson 1

Objective
The students will read an abridged version of a speech delivered by Ronald Reagan entitled “Address to a Joint Session of Congress” and use the graphic organizer in order to facilitate a close reading of the text as well as to track their understanding on both a literal and inferential level. Student understanding of the text will be determined during classroom discussion and by examining the graphic organizers completed by the students.
Introduction

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 marked a decisive turning point in American foreign relations. The era of détente - when both political parties in the 1970’s supported a relaxation of tensions - had ended. Freedom emerged as the cornerstone of what became known as “the Reagan Doctrine”. “Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few; it is a universal right of all God’s children”, he declared in the 1985 State of the Union Address. “Our mission is to nourish and defend freedom and democracy...everywhere we can. We must stand by our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives”. In the early 1980s Central America as a vital battleground was unexpected. For decades the US had treated the region with benign neglect. But during Reagan’s first term in office, it became what Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick termed “the most important place in the world”. For the Reagan administration the effort to defeat Marxism in Central America evolved into the main front in the Cold War against Communist aggression.

Materials

“Address to a Joint Session of Congress” Ronald Reagan, April 27, 1983 (abridged)

Graphic Organizer: Document Analysis
Maps of Central America and the Caribbean
Political Cartoons: the Truman Doctrine and Falling Dominos

Procedure

At the teacher’s discretion you may choose to have the students do the lesson individually, as partners, or a small group of no more than 3 or 4 students.

1. Discuss the information in the introduction but don’t give too much away. Remember, we want the students to discover the meaning of text as they read.

2. Read the speech aloud to the students.

3. Decide if the text is at a level which is manageable for your students on an independent reading level. If it is, then let them do a close reading of the text and fill out the graphic organizer.

4. If the text level is too challenging then “share read” the speech with the students. Shared reading is done by having the students follow along silently while the teacher begins reading aloud. The teacher models prosody, inflection, and punctuation. The teacher then asks the class
to join in with the reading after a few sentences while the teacher continues to read along with the students, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English Language Learners (ELL). The students should now reread the speech and use the graphic organizer as they read. If you are having students work with partners or in groups let them negotiate what they think would be best to include on the organizer.

5. Students can brainstorm as partners or small groups but must complete their own organizer in order to complete the assignment.

6. Students now answer the critical thinking questions.

7. Class discussion. Have groups or individual students share both their important phrase choices and the answers to the critical thinking questions. Compare those with the responses from other groups. Remember to emphasis that they are to first use the author’s own words as evidence for their answers.
Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on Central America (excerpt)

April 27, 1983

...But in spite of... a flurry of stories about places like Nicaragua and El Salvador and yes some concerted propaganda ... many of us find it hard to believe we have a stake in problems involving those countries. Too many have thought of Central America as just that place way down below Mexico that can't possibly constitute a threat to our well-being. And that's why I've asked for this session. Central America's problems do directly affect the security and the well-being of our own people. And Central America is much closer to the United States than many of the world trouble spots that concern us. So, we work to restore our own economy; we cannot afford to lose sight of our neighbors to the south.

...The guerrillas are not embattled peasants, armed with muskets. They're professionals, sometimes with better training and weaponry than the government's soldiers. The Salvadoran battalions that have received U.S. training have been conducting themselves well on the battlefield and with the civilian population. But so far, we've only provided enough money to train one Salvadoran soldier out of ten, fewer than the number of guerrillas that are trained by Nicaragua and Cuba.

And let me set the record straight on Nicaragua, a country next to El Salvador. In 1979 when the new government took over in Nicaragua, after a revolution which overthrew the authoritarian rule of Somoza, everyone hoped for the growth of democracy. We in the United States did, too. By January of 1981, our emergency relief and recovery aid to Nicaragua totalled $118 million -- more than provided by any other developed country. In fact, in the first 2 years of Sandinista rule, the United States directly or indirectly sent five times more aid to Nicaragua than it had in the 2 years prior to the revolution. Can anyone doubt the generosity and the good faith of the American people?

These were hardly the actions of a nation implacably hostile to Nicaragua. Yet, the Government of Nicaragua has treated us as an enemy. It has rejected our repeated peace efforts. It has broken its promises to us, to the Organization of American States and, most important of all, to the people of Nicaragua.

No sooner was victory achieved than a small clique ousted others who had been part of the revolution from having any voice in the government. Humberto Ortega, the Minister of Defense, declared Marxism-Leninism would be their guide, and so it is.

The Government of Nicaragua has imposed a new dictatorship. It has refused to hold the elections it promised. It has seized control of most media and subjects all media to heavy prior censorship. It denied the bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic Church the right to say Mass on radio during Holy Week. It insulted and mocked the Pope. It has driven the Miskito Indians from their homelands, burning their villages, destroying their crops, and forcing them into involuntary internment camps far from home. It has moved against the private sector and free labor unions. It condoned mob action against Nicaragua’s
independent human rights commission and drove the director of that commission into exile.

The Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua turned out to be just an exchange of one set of autocratic rulers for another, and the people still have no freedom, no democratic rights, and more poverty. Even worse than its predecessor, it is helping Cuba and the Soviets to destabilize our hemisphere.

But let us be clear as to the American attitude toward the Government of Nicaragua. We do not seek its overthrow. Our interest is to ensure that it does not infect its neighbors through the export of subversion and violence. Our purpose, in conformity with American and international law, is to prevent the flow of arms to El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. We have attempted to have a dialog with the Government of Nicaragua, but it persists in its efforts to spread violence.

We should not, and we will not, protect the Nicaraguan Government from the anger of its own people. But we should, through diplomacy, offer an alternative. And as Nicaragua ponders its options, we can and will -- with all the resources of diplomacy -- protect each country of Central America from the danger of war.

Nicaragua's neighbors know that Sandinista promises of peace, nonalliance, and nonintervention have not been kept. Some 36 new military bases have been built. There were only 13 during the Somoza years. Nicaragua's new army numbers 25,000 men, supported by a militia of 50,000. It is the largest army in Central America, supplemented by 2,000 Cuban military and security advisers. It is equipped with the most modern weapons -- dozens of Soviet-made tanks, 800 Soviet-bloc trucks, Soviet 152-millimeter howitzers, 100 anti-aircraft guns, plus planes and helicopters. There are additional thousands of civilian advisers from Cuba, the Soviet Union, East Germany, Libya, and the PLO. And we're attacked because we have 55 military trainers in El Salvador.....Nicaragua, supported by weapons and military resources provided by the Communist bloc, represses its own people, refuses to make peace, and sponsors a guerrilla war against El Salvador.

President Truman's words are as apt today as they were in 1947 when he, too, spoke before a joint session of the Congress.....

At the present moment in world history, nearly every nation must choose between alternate ways of life. The choice is not too often a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

"I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.

"Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for
the world. Discouragement and possibly failure would quickly be the lot of neighboring peoples striving to maintain their freedom and independence."

The countries of Central America are smaller than the nations that prompted President Truman's message. But the political and strategic stakes are the same. Will our response -- economic, social, and military -- be as appropriate and successful as Mr. Truman's bold solutions to the problems of postwar Europe?

...If Central America were to fall, what would the consequences be for our position in Asia, Europe, and for alliances such as NATO? If the United States cannot respond to a threat near our own borders, why should Europeans or Asians believe that we're seriously concerned about threats to them? If the Soviets can assume that nothing short of an actual attack on the United States will provoke an American response, which ally, which friend will trust us then?

....In summation, I say to you that tonight there can be no question: The national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble, and the safety of our homeland would be put in jeopardy.

We have a vital interest, a moral duty, and a solemn responsibility. This is not a partisan issue. It is a question of our meeting our moral responsibility to ourselves, our friends, and our posterity. It is a duty that falls on all of us -- the President, the Congress, and the people. We must perform it together. Who among us would wish to bear responsibility for failing to meet our shared obligation?

Ronald Reagan Speech to the Joint Session of Congress, April 27, 1983: Document Analysis

Important Phrases: Which are the most powerful phrases in the speech? Choose three phrases.

Phrase 1: ____________________________________________
Why is this phrase important or powerful?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
Phrase 2: ____________________________________________
Why is this phrase important or powerful?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
Phrase 3: ____________________________________________
Why is this phrase important or powerful?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Critical Thinking Questions: Examples from the text must be cited in answering these questions.

1) Why has President Reagan called for a Joint Session of Congress?
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_____________________________________________________________________________________
2) Why does Reagan believe that the Salvadoran soldiers should receive US assistance?
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_____________________________________________________________________________________

3) How does Reagan shift the focus of his remarks in the second paragraph? Why can’t anyone “doubt the generosity and good faith of the American people”?

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4) How has the Nicaraguan government responded to US actions in that country according to Reagan?

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5) What actions by the Nicaraguan government does Reagan cite as reasons to label them a “new dictatorship”?

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6) How are the Sandinistas “helping Cuba and the Soviets to destabilize our hemisphere”?

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7) What are the US goals and objectives for Nicaragua outlined in paragraphs seven and eight?

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8) Why does Reagan say that the “political and strategic stakes are the same in Central America as they were in postwar Europe”? 

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9) What implication is Reagan making by saying “if Central America was to fall”? How does the following illustration relate to paragraph 8? 

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10) What conclusion does Reagan offer as a justification for US action in Nicaragua? Why do you think that the last line in the speech is important to Reagan’s argument? 

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Lesson 2

Objective

The students will read the Democrat Party response to President Reagan’s Address which was delivered by Senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut and use the graphic organizer in order to facilitate a close reading of the text as well as to track their understanding on both a literal and inferential level. Student understanding of the text will be determined during classroom discussion and by examining the graphic organizers completed by the students.

Introduction

Widespread concern was expressed both within and outside the US over Ronald Reagan’s policy in Central America. Within the US there were fears of “another Vietnam” and that American troops could be engaged in fighting in the region. Reagan was also criticized abroad for treating Central America as a Cold War issue rather than seeing events in Latin America as a matter of deep seated economic and social ills. All of the critics charged that the US policy makers were only concerned with ousting the Sandinistas and did not fully consider what type of regime would follow in their place. The response by Christopher Dodd is a sweeping condemnation of the policies of President Reagan. Previously he and other Democrats had written critical pieces that outlined how the United States had intervened on behalf of corrupt dictators or interfered on behalf of US corporations with investments in the region.

Materials

Transcript of the Democrat response to the President’s Address delivered on network television April 23rd 1983 (abridged)

Graphic Organizer: Document Analysis

Political Cartoon: Now be a Good Fascist and Another Domino
Procedure

At the teacher’s discretion you may choose to have the students do the lesson individually, as partners, or a small group of no more than 3 or 4 students.

Discuss the information in the introduction but don’t give too much away. Remember, we want the students to discover the meaning of text as they read.

1. Read the speech aloud to the students.

2. Decide if the text is at a level which is manageable for your students on an independent reading level. If it is then let them do a close reading of the text and fill out the graphic organizer.

3. If the text level is too challenging then “share read” the speech with the students. Shared reading is done by having the students follow along silently while the teacher begins reading aloud. The teacher models prosody, inflection, and punctuation. The teacher then asks the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while the teacher continues to read along with the students, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English Language Learners (ELL). The students should now reread the speech and use the graphic organizer as they read. If you are having students work with partners or in groups let them negotiate what they think would be best to include on the organizer.

4. Students can brainstorm as partners or small groups but must complete their own organizer in order to complete the assignment.

5. Students now answer the critical thinking questions.

6. Class discussion. Have groups or individual students share both their important phrase choices and the answers to the critical thinking questions. Compare those with the responses from other groups. Remember to emphasis that they are to first use the author’s own words as evidence for their answers.

7. Possible extension activity for AP classes: read the editorial by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Richard Aregood entitled “Dangers”. Complete the graphic organizer in order to facilitate a close reading of the text. How does the argument made by Aregood complement/supplement the argument that was presented by Dodd?

Transcript of the Congressional response to the President’s Address delivered on network television
April 23rd 1983 (abridged)

While there’s no unanimity in Congress on Central America, tonight I’m speaking for the many Americans who are concerned about our ever deepening involvement in the military conflict in that part of the world.

I’m pleased to note that the President this evening was willing to recognize an economic and political dimension to the problems in Central America, including the possibility of negotiations. Regrettably...his statement tonight demonstrates, the fundamental view continues to emphasize military problems and the search for military solutions. In the months and years that follow this evening, after the applause has faded and the ringing phrases are forgotten, Americans will have to live with the choices we make in this fateful time of decision....In the past, we as a nation have learned painfully that the truth is never as simple as some would paint it. Charts and statistics can be used or misused to prove any side of a case. And speeches can sound very good without being very right.

So first of all, let me state clearly that on some very important things, all Americans stand in agreement. We will oppose the establishment of Marxist states in Central America. We will not accept to see the creation of Soviet military bases in Central America. And, we will not tolerate the placement of Soviet offensive missiles in Central America - or anywhere in this hemisphere. Finally, we are fully prepared to defend our security and the security of the Americas, if necessary, by military means. All patriotic Americans share these goals. But many of us in Congress...disagree with the President because we believe the means he has chosen will not fulfill them.

Those of us who oppose the President’s policy believe that he is mistaken in critical ways. To begin with, we believe the Administration fundamentally misunderstands the causes of conflict in Central America. We cannot afford to found so important a policy on ignorance - and the painful truth is that many of our highest officials seem to know as little about Central America in 1983 as we knew about Indochina in 1963.

I've lived with the people in this region. Let me share some facts with you about Central America...Most of the people there are appallingly poor. They can't afford to feed their families when they're hungry. They can't find a doctor for them when they're sick. They live in rural shacks with dirt floors or city slums without plumbing or clean water. The majority can't read or write; and many of them can't even count.

It takes all five Spanish-speaking countries of Central America more than a year to provide what this nation does, or produce what this nation does, in less than three days. Virtually none of even that meager amount ever reaches the bulk of the people. In short, a very few live in isolated splendor while the very many suffer in shantytown squalor. In country after country, dictatorship or military dominance has stifled democracy and destroyed human rights.
If Central America were not racked with poverty, there would be no revolution. If Central America were not racked with hunger, there would be no revolution. If Central America were not racked with injustice, there would be no revolution. In short, there would be nothing for the Soviets to exploit. But unless those oppressive conditions change, the region will continue to seethe with revolution –with or without the Soviets...Instead of trying to do something about the factions or factors which breed revolution, this Administration has turned to massive military buildups at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. Its policy is ever-increasing military assistance, endless military training, and further military involvement. This is a formula for failure. And it is a proven prescription for picking a loser. The American people know that we have been down this road before - and that it only leads to a dark tunnel of endless intervention.

Tonight the President himself told us that things were not going well in Central America. But for this the President cannot blame Congress. We have given him what he has asked for. Seven hundred million in economic and military assistance has been delivered or is on its way to El Salvador since Ronald Reagan came to office, all at his request and all with Congressional approval. One of every five Salvadoran soldiers fighting for its government was trained right here in the United States. American soldiers are there now training Salvadoran army units which are employing modern weapons built in American factories.

Now the President asks for an even greater commitment. His requests for El Salvador alone will bring the total aid to that country during his term to more than $1 billion. One billion dollars to counter a rebel army that, according to all reports, does not exceed 7,000 guerrillas. That means you are paying $140,000 in hard-earned tax dollars for each one of those guerrillas we are trying to defeat. While your tax dollars have been pouring into El Salvador, the money skimmed off by that nation's very rich is leaving the country. For every dollar we've sent in, more than a dollar has gone out - to numbered accounts in Zurich or to buy stocks on Wall Street. It raises the question of why we should invest in the future of El Salvador when the wealthiest citizens of that country are investing in Swiss banks.

What return have we received for all we have spent? The army in El Salvador has been reluctant to fight –and is led by an officer corps working a nine-to-five shift with weekends off. Land reform has been abandoned. At least 30,000 civilians have been killed and the majority of them have been victims of the Government's own security forces. American nuns and labor advisors have been murdered -and the judicial system is so intimidated that it cannot even bring accused murderers to trial. For those 30,000 murders, confirmed by our own Embassy, there have been fewer than 200 convictions. American dollars alone cannot buy military victory - that is the lesson of the painful past and of this newest conflict in Central America. If we continue down that road, if we continue to ally ourselves with repression, we will not only deny our own most basic values, we will also find ourselves once again on the losing side. It is folly, pure and simple, to pursue a course which is wrong in principle -in order to wage a conflict which cannot be won.

After 30,000 deaths, after hundreds of millions of dollars, with the ante going up, with no end in sight, with no hope for any change, real change, the time has come for a different approach. Yes, we are fully prepared to be involved in Central America. But the question is the nature and quality of our involvement. We must offer an alternative policy that can work.
First, we should use the power and influence of the United States to achieve an immediate cessation of hostilities in both El Salvador and Nicaragua. Already in both countries too many people have died. It is time for the killing to stop. Second, the United States should use all its power and influence to work for a negotiated political settlement in Central America....In El Salvador, the rebels have offered to negotiate unconditionally. Let us test their sincerity. We certainly have the leverage to move the Government to the bargaining table. On his recent trip to that very Catholic region, the Pope lent the moral force of his office to such a step. It is practical and realistic to expect, that if we support it, these talks can get underway. And every major ally of ours in the region - Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia - is anxious for such a step to be taken and has offered...to make the arrangements.

Those same nations have volunteered to bring Nicaragua into negotiations - and Nicaragua has agreed to talk. Instead, as we know from the present accounts, press accounts, this Administration is conducting a not-so-secret war inside that country.....No one in this Congress or this country is under the delusion that the Sandinista government is a model democracy or a force for stability. But the insurgents we have supported are the remnants of the old Somoza regime - a regime whose corruption, graft, torture, and despotism made it universally despised in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas may not be winners, but right now we are backing sure losers. We are doing for the Sandinista Marxists what they could not do for themselves. We are weakening the very groups inside Nicaragua which believe in a free and democratic society. And that is the sad irony of this Administration's policy.

Third, we must restore America's role as a source of hope and a force for progress in Central America. We must help governments only if they will help their own people. We must hear the cry for bread, and schools, work, and opportunity that comes from campesinos everywhere in this hemisphere. We must make violent revolution preventable by making peaceful revolution possible. Most important, this approach would permit the United States to move with the tide of history rather than stand against it. For us, the stakes are diplomatic, political, and strategic. But for the people of El Salvador, life itself is on the line. I have been to that country and I know about the morticians who travel the streets each morning to collect the bodies of those summarily dispatched the night before by Salvadoran security forces - gangland-style - the victim, a person on a bended knee, thumbs wired behind their back, a bullet through the brain.

We recoil at such an image, for our association with criminals such as these is not America's tradition. In other, brighter days we have stood for the aspirations of all of the people who are part of the American. Two centuries ago, our nation raised the light of liberty before the world - and this entire hemisphere looked to us as an example and an inspiration. In this Capitol building, from which I speak tonight, men like Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and Abraham Lincoln once spoke of an America leading the world to progress and human rights - and people everywhere listened with hope to those words. There is no greater or larger ideal than the one which was forged here in the early days of this Republic. That ideal of liberty is our greatest strength as a nation; it is a powerful and peaceful weapon against tyranny of any kind anywhere in this hemisphere.

We can take the road of military escalation. But the real - what we really don't know - what the next step will be, where it will lead or how much it will cost. This much, however, we do know. It will mean greater violence. It will mean greater bloodshed. It will mean greater hostilities. And, inevitably, the day will come when it will mean a regional conflict in Central America.
When that day comes - when the "dogs of war" are loose in Central America, when the cheering has stopped - we will know where the President's appeal for more American money and a deeper American commitment has taken us. Thank you, and good night.
Transcript of the Congressional response to the President’s Address delivered on network television April 23rd 1983 (abridged)

Important Phrases: Which are the most powerful phrases in the Congressional response? Choose three phrases.

Phrase 1:_____________________________________________________________________________

Why is this phrase important or powerful?
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Phrase 2:_____________________________________________________________________________

Why is this phrase important or powerful?
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_____________________________________________________________________________________

Phrase 3:_____________________________________________________________________________

Why is this phrase important or powerful?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Critical Thinking Questions: Examples from the text must be cited in answering these questions.

1) What does Dodd regret about Reagan’s speech? Why?
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2) What are the points of agreement that Dodd emphasizes?

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3) How does Dodd point out that the Reagan policy is “mistaken”?

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4) What does Dodd say are the “facts” about life in Central America? What don’t American policy makers understand about Central America? Why does Dodd reference “Indochina in 1963”?

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5) How does Dodd contrast Central America and the US in paragraph 6? How is another contrast used in the rest of the paragraph?

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6) According to Dodd, what has the administration followed as a policy instead of addressing social and economic issues? What 3 factors have the Soviets exploited in Central America?

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7) How does Dodd confront the “blame” issue that Reagan had introduced in his speech?

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8) According to Dodd, how has military aid been utilized in El Salvador? What has been the result of this? Cite specific examples.

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9) What were the first two alternative policies that Dodd proposed to counter the Reagan initiatives for Central America?

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10) Who were the insurgents that the US supported? How does this result in a “sad irony”?

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11) How does Dodd describe his third policy option?

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12) How does Dodd use his personal experience to build this part of his argument? What images of death does he also employ here?

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13) In the final analysis, where will military intervention take the US according to Dodd?

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To hear the various official spokesmen tell it, we in the United States are in great danger, surrounded by toppling dominoes that only massive heaps of money and arms can support. But in the last week alone, there have been two remarkable stories about how our government comes to those conclusions. It all seems to have a lot more to do with public relations than it does with politics.

The first came when Nicaragua announced that it was prepared to sign the Contadora peace plan. That sounded like great news, because the U.S. has been pressuring Nicaragua to accept the plan. We even asserted that acceptance would make Nicaragua a democracy, and stop the subversion we’ve been claiming it promotes among its neighbors. As a bonus, it would also mean that the countries of the region had solved their own problems. Contadora is made up of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama. Its 21 peace principles now have been informally approved by Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

But, in a complete backflip, the Reagan administration now says it wants changes before we can accept the very same treaty we’ve been pushing on the Nicaraguans. It turns out we were assuming the Nicaraguans wouldn’t go for it. They fooled us, and now we need an excuse to continue to try and overthrow their government. The message is clear, even if the policy is inconsistent. This American government will not be satisfied until it gets what it wanted all along. The only way the Sandinistas can satisfy us is to resign from the government, leave their own country and turn it over to our Somocista thugs. All that stuff about regional solutions was so much eyewash.

The second story is about as chilling. The senior Latin American analyst of the Central Intelligence Agency resigned. He had done a report on Mexico that wasn’t frightening enough. William J. Casey, head of the Reaganisti at the CIA, bounced it back to him. Its analysis of the economic and political problems of Mexico were not close enough to the administration’s Cold War assumptions. Casey, according to a New York Times story, wanted the report to portray the problems as threatening the internal stability of Mexico and endangering by extension the security of Central America and the United States. The analyst said he had no data to justify that conclusion, so Casey had it rewritten by someone with a greater flair for fiction. The analyst then quit.

There’s a danger all right, but it’s not that the Red Army is taking Spanish lessons. It’s the same danger we faced unsuccessfully in Vietnam, when CIA data were cooked and molded to match the Johnson administration’s assumptions. Ignoring the facts so the president’s men can contentedly view the entire hemisphere as a backdrop for a ‘B’ movie about the Red Menace is bad enough on the face of it. After all, Latin America has long been accustomed to American policy that makes no sense from their perspective.
The great danger is that we’ll believe our own hogwash, and start pushing our neighbors around for reasons we ourselves have created. If we do that, there’s a pretty good chance that we will have ourselves created a Red Menace where there wasn’t one before. That way, we lose. Politicians can then amuse themselves arguing about who lost Guatemala (or Costa Rica or Mexico), and threaten people who disagree. But our soldiers will be dying for the sake of the argument. And we will be far worse off than we would have been if we had stuck with the facts.
US Foreign Policy in Central America: Ronald Reagan and Christopher Dodd

By Ronald Nash

Name-__________________________________ Period-________ Date-________________________________

Transcript of the Richard Aregood editorial “Dangers”

**Important Phrases:** Which are the most powerful phrases in the editorial? Choose three phrases.

Phrase 1:________________________________________

Why is this phrase important or powerful?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Phrase 2:________________________________________

Why is this phrase important or powerful?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Phrase 3:________________________________________

Why is this phrase important or powerful?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

**Critical Thinking Questions:** Examples from the text must be cited in answering these questions.

1) What is the tone of Richard Aregood’s first paragraph? Which words best demonstrate this tone?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

2) What claims had US policy makers made for the Contadora Plan? Which countries were involved in the plan?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

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3) What “backflip” has the Reagan administration made regarding the treaty according to Aregood?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

4) Why has the senior Latin American resigned according to Aregood?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

5) In paragraph 5, what does Aregood see as the “danger”?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

6) In the last paragraph, what is the view expressed by Aregood regarding the Reagan policy in Central America?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Lesson 3

Objective
Ronald Reagan and Christopher Dodd had different ideas about how the US should engage with other nations in foreign policy. Choose the person whose methods and message you found to be the most convincing. Write an essay that argues your point of view in support of one of the documents and refutes the arguments made in the other. It is important that you use evidence (quotes and ideas) taken directly from the two primary sources. Clearly cite this evidence in your essay.

Introduction
Civil Rights

Materials
“Address to a Joint Session of Congress” Ronald Reagan April 27, 1983 (abridged)

Transcript of the Democrat response to the President’s Address delivered on network television April 23rd 1983 (abridged)

Graphic Organizer: Compare and Contrast

Procedure (Instruction and Assessment)
This assignment may be an in-class essay in order to have students write under a time limit as they will be required to do from time to time or it may be given as a take home essay.

1. Discuss the information in the introduction.

2. The students should have the two completed assignments from lessons 1 and 2 as well as copies of both the speech and Congressional response. They will be referencing them in order to write their essay.

3. The students will write an argumentative essay that addresses the following “Choose the point of view whose message you found to be the most convincing.” The students must use textual evidence from both documents in making their arguments. It is important that the students not only provide evidence as to why they choose a particular speech, they must also refute arguments made in the speech that they did not choose in order to strengthen their position.
Compare and Contrast: Ronald Reagan and Christopher Dodd

Ronald Reagan and Richard Dodd had different ideas about how the US should engage with other nations in foreign policy. Choose the person whose methods and message you found to be the most convincing. Write an essay that argues your point of view in support of one of the documents and refutes the arguments made in the other. It is important that you use evidence (quotes and ideas) taken directly from the two primary sources. Clearly cite this evidence in your essay.