

**ELECTION OF 1980  
ANSWER KEY**

**Questions for Excerpts from 1980 Party Platforms on Taxation**

1. According to the Republican Party platform, who benefitted from reduced taxes, and why did the party believe it was essential to cut taxes? How did this plan differ from the Democratic Party platform's pledge on taxation?

**The Republican Party platform indicated that all members of society would benefit from reduced taxation. They argued that tax rate reductions are necessary to offset tax increases on "working men and women."**

**The Democratic Party platform was more specific as to increases and decreases in taxation, rather than emphasizing cutting taxes across the board as the Republican platform did.**

2. The two party platforms propose very different means of balancing the federal budget. What were they?

**The Republican Party platform proposed to balance the budget by cutting both taxes and spending. The Democratic Party platform proposed getting rid of tax loopholes and special-interest benefits to rebalance who was paying into the tax system.**

3. A key tenet of the Republican platform was "spending restraint," but little detail was offered about what the effects of this spending restraint might be. Why do you think the Republican Party platform did not offer more detail?

**Student must make a claim and support it with evidence. Answers should pay particular attention to what is and is not stated in the platform language.**

4. How were these two policies regarding taxation indicative of the parties' larger visions for the United States?

**The Republican Party platform aligned with their vision of more limited government, and the Democratic Party platform promoted a more active and centralized federal government.**

**Questions for Excerpt from Acceptance Speech**

1. How did Carter describe his vision for the future of the United States? Why might this vision appeal to voters in 1980?

**Carter argued for a future of peace built on wisdom and fairness, on both military and moral strength.**

**Student must make a claim and support it with evidence.**

2. President Carter warned of another possible future for the United States. What did that future look like and how did he suggest that the United States might meet that fate under a Republican controlled government?

**Carter argued that the alternate future is one of despair, surrender, and risk. He argued that proposals already offered by the Republicans would turn the United States in that direction.**

3. Carter drew a distinction between the “real world” and what he described as “a world of tinsel and make-believe.” What realities of life did Carter argue Reagan was ignoring in this “make-believe” world?

**Student should summarize what Carter described in the seventh paragraph of the excerpt beginning with “in their fantasy America.”**

4. Reagan won the election of 1980 in a landslide. He carried all but six states and won 489 electoral votes. What might be some reasons why so many Americans rejected Carter’s critique of Reagan’s conservative philosophy?

**Student should make a claim and support it with evidence from the text. Answers could make use of not only this speech but also Reagan speeches included in this lesson plan.**

**Questions for "A Strategy for Peace in the '80s"**

1. How did Reagan define his policy of "peace through strength"? How did he say this policy differed from those of previous administrations?

**Reagan said that "peace is made by the fact of strength,"—specifically, economic, military, and strategic strength.**

**He said this policy differed from those of previous administrations because they had used the phrase so much that it no longer had meaning. He said he would make the United States strong, not just say that the United States is strong.**

2. What ongoing international issues is Reagan likely referring to when invoking his "peace through strength" policy?

**Reagan was likely referencing the ongoing Cold War tensions.**

3. What did Reagan hope that history might say about his candidacy? Why do you think Reagan would want to be remembered in this way?

**Reagan said that he hoped he would be remembered positively rather than negatively: for hope, not fear; for confidence, not doubt; for fact, not fantasy.**

**Student must state a claim and support it with evidence.**

4. According to Reagan, how was peace made and how did he suggest that it disappeared? Do you agree with this policy? Explain.

**Peace is made through strength and lost through weakness.**

**Student must state a claim and support it with evidence.**

**Questions for Excerpt from First Inaugural Address**

1. When Reagan proclaimed that “government *is* the problem,” what did he mean? Cite evidence from his speech to support your answer.

**Reagan meant that government had gotten too big and was stopping people from being able to control their own lives.**

**Student can cite evidence from the second, fifth, and sixth paragraphs.**

2. According to Reagan, which “too long neglected” special interest group really mattered to American society? Why do you think Reagan claimed this group mattered the most?

**Reagan said that “we the people,” the average citizens of the United States, were the “too long neglected” special interest group.**

**Student must make a claim and support it with evidence from the text.**

3. Reagan argued that all Americans were included in his goal to improve the economy. What values “at the core of our system” did Reagan believe would be reinforced by including all citizens, and how would including all citizens be achieved?

**The values of idealism and fair play would be reinforced by including all citizens. This would be achieved by putting all Americans back to work and ending inflation for all Americans.**

4. What did Reagan argue is “the highest aspiration of the American people”? According to the speech, what was required to achieve that aspiration?

**Peace is the highest aspiration of the American people. Sufficient strength to defeat any nation that challenged American peace was needed to achieve it.**

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**Questions for “I think this is called a trickle-down turkey”**

1. Consider the placement of people in the cartoon. Why might cartoonist Bill Sanders have arranged the represented groups this way? What is implied by this arrangement?

**Student must demonstrate close reading skills and answer questions with evidence from the image. Answers should indicate what the people’s placement says about what they do and don’t have, as well as how they are interacting with each other.**

2. What do you think the turkey represents?

**Student should make a claim and support their answer with evidence from the cartoon.**

3. How does the traditional “Thanksgiving” image used here play on the Reagan/Bush 1980 campaign slogan of “Let’s Make America Great Again”? Why do you think the Pilgrim imagery might be effective? Explain.

**Student should make a claim and support their answer with evidence from the cartoon.**

**Answers should point to the stories and myths of the founding of the United States, including its founding principles.**

4. The figure carving the turkey is most likely meant to represent Ronald Reagan. In what way(s) does the allocation of turkey serve as a critique of “Reaganomics”?

**The figure carving the turkey is offering the largest pieces of the turkey to the largest people in the cartoon, likely suggesting that Reaganomics would only benefit those people who already had everything they needed.**