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| Name: |  | Date: |  |

## Purpose

By now, you should be well versed in how to identify and categorize causes and consequences. In this activity, you’ll use your causation, contextualization, and claim testing skills to solve a historical problem. By combining these skills, you’ll begin to understand how historians, or in this case government officials, must think about causes and consequences in order to understand historical events or to solve real-world problems, some of which can be life threatening.

## Process

1. Your teacher will break the class into small groups (three to four students each) and hand out the “Top Secret” envelopes.
2. Your mission:

Imagine it is 1962. You are United States government officials working with classified information. Your task is to determine what crisis is threatening the safety of the American people. Once you break open the seal on your Top Secret envelope, examine each document carefully for clues. Work with your group to piece together this Cold War emergency situation. You may be asked to explain the crisis to the Commander in Chief, so get your facts straight!

1. You must read the “Top Secret” documents and work collectively to piece together the mystery crisis, determining the chronology and context.
2. Your teacher may present you with a series of guiding questions to help you.
3. Once everyone has finished reviewing the documents, your teacher will select one group to brief the Commander in Chief and map out the crisis on the board.
4. Your teacher may provide additional context for the crisis as one group presents to the Commander in Chief.
5. Now that you understand the full context of the crisis, your group will act (and think) like a member of President Kennedy’s national security team, known as ExComm (Executive Committee of the National Security Council). Your job as members of ExComm is to outline a series of consequences (both good and bad) for a number of proposed options on how to respond to this threat. This top-secret mission is of the gravest concern. The security of the entire nation (all 186.5 million Americans) is resting in your hands.
6. Your teacher will either hand out or have you download the Cold War Crisis worksheet and read the proposed options on how to respond.
7. Brainstorm with your ExComm team members about all of the consequences, both positive and negative, that could result from each option. You’ll list these consequences on the worksheet.
8. As a group, come to a consensus (agreement) on which option to choose, and then write a brief for the president’s consideration. Your brief must include the following information:
   * Which option did you choose and what are the consequences of taking this action (both positive and negative consequences)?
   * Two strong supporting reasons for the option you are proposing (why do the benefits, or positive consequences, outweigh the costs, or negative consequences?).
   * Acknowledgment that other groups might choose another option or course of action, and for each of the options not chosen, you must provide refutation of that course of action. That is, you must provide counterclaims with evidence to back up your position and explain why the other option is not advisable.
9. Be prepared to share your brief along with your supporting evidence with the class.
10. Your teacher may arrange a debate between groups or ask you to explain the consequences of this crisis.

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|  | **MEMORANDUM**  OCTOBER 16, 1962  Mr. President, John F. Kennedy  Commander in Chief  The White House |
| **ATTENDEES:** | |
| Vice President, Lyndon B. Johnson Secretary of State, Dean Rusk Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara  Secretary of the Treasury, C. Douglas Dillon Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy  Director of Central Intelligence Agency, John McCone  Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, George W. Ball Deputy Secretary of Defense, Roswell Gilpatric | Assistant Secretary of Defense, Paul Nitze  Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Maxwell D. Taylor Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Llewellyn Thompson  Special Counsel, Theodore Sorensen  Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, McGeorge Bundy  Former Secretary of State, Dean Acheson |
| **PURPOSE:** |  |
| This meeting calls together the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, hereafter referred to as ExComm, with the purpose of advising Commander in Chief, President John F. Kennedy, in the wisest course of action in the current Cuban-Soviet crisis with regard to the placement of missiles within range of the United States.  Options in brief:  The following recommendations are on the table for deliberation by this committee. The Commander in Chief’s immediate expectation is a full-scale evaluation of the costs and benefits of each option. President Kennedy is due to address the nation in six days’ time; therefore, time is of the essence.  **Option 1:** Launch an immediate airstrike to destroy the missile sites, followed by a full-scale land invasion of Cuba.  **Option 2:** Issue a blockade of Cuba to prevent any further imports from the USSR.  **Option 3:** Bring the issue to the United Nations for peaceful discussion.  **Option 4:** Make a deal with the USSR requiring the Soviets to remove their missiles from Cuba in exchange for US removal of its missiles from Turkey.  **Option 5:** Call for the use of nuclear weapons on Cuba and the Soviet Union. | |

| Option | Positive Consequences (Benefits/Advantages) | Negative Consequences (Costs/Risks) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Attack Cuba |  |  |
| 2. Blockade Cuba |  |  |
| 3. United Nations talks |  |  |
| 4. Make a deal to remove weapons |  |  |
| 5. Utilize nuclear weapons |  |  |

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|  | **Executive Committee of the National Security Council**  PROPOSAL FOR THE PRESIDENT  OCTOBER 1962 |
| Mr. President,  As Commander in Chief you bear a profound responsibility to protect the American people and maintain your role as leader of the Free World. We have weighed the options before us to manage the current crisis between the United States and Cuba. After careful consideration, we respectfully propose that you: | |
| |  | | --- | |  |   *In the space above:*   * *State your position and the consequences of taking this action (both positive and negative consequences)* * *Provide two strong supporting reasons for the option you are proposing (why do the benefits, or positive consequences, outweigh the costs, or negative consequences?).* * *You should acknowledge that other groups might choose another option or course of action, and for each of the options not chosen, you must provide refutation of that course of action. That is, you must provide counterclaims with evidence to back up your position and explain why the other option is not advisable.* | |