

Hello, fellow teacher!

Below is your reading passage; I hope it serves you well.

Print it out and it's ready to use. Or, if you want to differentiate for struggling students, use the highlight feature on the PDF to annotate what you want the kiddos to focus on.

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Warmest Wishes,
Joan

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U.S. HISTORY 21st Century
Summary & 10 Stimulus-Based
Multiple-Choice Questions



U.S. History Regents Review 2020

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Presidency of Barack Obama

Barack Obama was elected as the first African-American president in 2008 with a fully Democratic Congress. However, great divisions still were in place.

Financial Matters

Democratic control of Congress and the presidency helped some major policies to pass. First off, the ongoing financial disaster was addressed, including by use of a stimulus package to help reboot the economy. Dodd-Frank overhauled financial regulation, including the creation of a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the CFRB first proposed by then Professor Elizabeth Warren. This did not satisfy many that wanted a stronger national response to financial wrongdoing and the power of financial power brokers.

Health Care

President Obama is probably best known for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA; often nicknamed "Obamacare") passed in 2010. The law expanded healthcare coverage in various ways, including protecting those with pre-existing conditions that often led to denial of insurance and expanded government funded health insurance (Medicaid) to the poor. Many opposed it as too much regulation by the federal government and/or as unproductive as a whole, but major constitutional attacks mostly failed. The law continues to be a major dispute between the two major parties.

LGBT Rights

President Obama was also a big supporter of gay and lesbian rights. The "don't ask, don't tell" policy in the U.S. military was overturned by Congress, allowing open service in the military. Obama also supported the effort in the federal courts to protect gay and lesbians from discrimination, including supporting a constitutional right to same sex marriage. The Supreme Court declared in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) that same sex marriage is a constitutional right. There was a strong dissent in that case, reflecting the belief of many that "marriage" is only a matter between a man and a woman. Obama also supported the rights of trans individuals, which also led to controversy.

Foreign Affairs

After controversy arising from what was seen as President Bush's unilateral, American focused foreign policy, President Obama supported a more multinational approach. This included efforts to obtain agreements with Cuba and Iran as well as support of international efforts to fight climate change. Obama also supported international trade agreements including the Transpacific Partnership. He continued support of fighting in Afghanistan and his administration had his own controversies including its use of "drone strikes" (unmanned bombs) against people deemed "enemy combatants." During his presidency, the military also killed Osama Bin Laden.

The Courts

A series of mass shootings, especially those that occurred in schools, have in some fashion gone back to the 1990s (for example, Columbine in 1999). This has led to a push for major gun control legislation, but support of gun rights is strong enough that only limited efforts were passed at the national level. President Obama repeatedly made passionate speeches after shootings and supported new gun regulations.

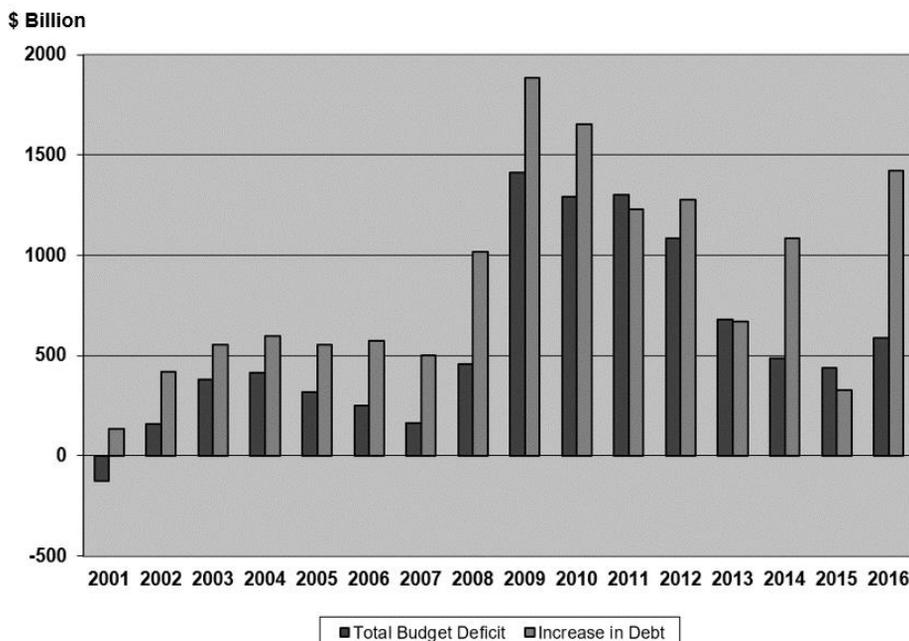
The Supreme Court in a pair of cases in 2008 and 2010 (both by 5-4 rulings) held that there is a constitutional right to own a gun. This underlines how control of the courts is an important matter and has led to major political battles in recent years. Obama nominated three justices (Sotomayor, Kagan and Garland), but a change in control of the Senate led the last pick, with potential to change control of the Supreme Court, to be denied a hearing. This was a major acceleration of the "battle for the courts."

Division

President Obama promoted a message of unity in part since the nation was so divided, including by "blue" (Democratic) and "red" (Republican) states. Race, a matter of controversy since our founding, continued to be a major matter of conflict. Multiple shootings of young black men particularly led to controversy. A movement, Black Lives Matter, arose to oppose unfair treatment by police. A black president did not solve such things, Obama himself targeted by "birthers," who questioned his very citizenship.

Political and racial divides would help make the 2016 elections a nasty one.

U.S. Total Budget Deficits vs. National Debt Increases



Sources: CBO, U.S. Treasury Direct

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