



# YOU DECIDE: PRESIDENTIAL DECISIONS

## ★ EDUCATOR GUIDE ★

Using an Educational Interactive to Explore Decision-Making in Grades 6-12



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## Learning with Educational Interactives

The use of educational interactives can be a highly effective way to engage students with content in a deep and meaningful way. For most students, digital natives who have grown up with technology, interactives are highly engaging and motivating. Using an interactive can not only increase students' enjoyment of learning, but has been shown to increase learning outcomes as well. Well-designed educational interactives require higher-level thinking skills, such as synthesis, application, and evaluation, as students choose, manipulate, create, evaluate, and otherwise interact with content to meet specific leaning objectives. Because students must apply skills and knowledge, explore possible outcomes, and think critically to achieve their objectives, they are engaged in active, rather than passive, learning. Educational interactives can also provide a way for students to practice decision-making skills and improve critical thinking and other 21st century skills in a low-risk environment. This low risk environment is particularly well-suited to practicing decision-making skills. Students can make a decision and receive immediate feedback, which allows them to see mistakes, explore other options, or weigh the consequences of decisions. Interactives can also promote collaborative learning through use in a small-group setting. Effective educational interactives guide students to actively engage with content on a higher order than memorization or passive listening, leading to improved learning outcomes and better attitudes toward the content.

**Find the Interactive**  
Visit [NatGeoEd.org/youdecide](http://NatGeoEd.org/youdecide).

## Interactive Overview

In *You Decide: Presidential Decisions*, students take on the role of president of the United States and make complex decisions based on real situations faced by President Gerald R. Ford during his 1974-1977 presidency. The interactive is structured in such a way that students follow a decision-making process based on the Stakeholder Consequences Decision-Making (SCDM) model. Students are given information and asked to identify the constraints and considerations of a decision, identify the consequences of that decision, assess the impact those consequences will have on stakeholders, and weigh those impacts.

### Learning Objectives

Students will:

- apply a specific decision-making process to make complex decisions;
- deconstruct a presidential decision;
- and acquire, analyze, and apply historical, geographic, and political information about the Ford presidential era.

hypothetical refugee crisis, and can then explore how President Ford handled a similar crisis during Operation Babylift at the end of the Vietnam War.

The interactive is based on three scenarios that took place during Gerald R. Ford's presidency: the signing of the Helsinki Accords, the condemnation of South African apartheid, and Operation Babylift. In the first two scenarios, students make decisions alongside President Ford. In the final scenario, students make decisions about a

### About the Answer Choices

Because this interactive stresses decision-making, most sections contain no right or wrong answers. Instead, students are asked to evaluate the responses and make a judgment call. In the sections on geographic and political constraints and considerations, ALL answers are plausible. There is no limit on the number of responses students can select, but they should be encouraged to think through which items are constraints and which are considerations, as well as which they feel are most important. Similarly, there are no right or wrong answers when evaluating how each stakeholder feels about the decision and how much weight the student feels should be given to that stakeholder's opinion. However, the questions about consequences to stakeholders do contain distractors—answer choices that are plausible but incorrect.

#### CHOOSE A SCENARIO

Each scenario explores decisions made during Gerald R. Ford's 1974-1977 presidency.

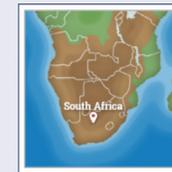


**HELSINKI ACCORDS**

In August 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed the Helsinki Accords, a major diplomatic agreement signed by almost all the countries of Europe and by the United States and Canada.

Would you have signed? Gather information to make your decision.

START



**SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID**

In a 1976 speech given by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to a group of African leaders in Lusaka, Zambia, President Ford's administration called on its ally South Africa to end the institutionalized system of racial segregation known as apartheid.

Would you have pressured South Africa to end apartheid? Gather information to make your decision.

START



**REFUGEE CRISIS**

Imagine a country—country X—in the Middle East. The country has fallen to an authoritarian regime that is killing ethnic minorities within the country. Refugees are streaming out of the country looking for somewhere safe to go.

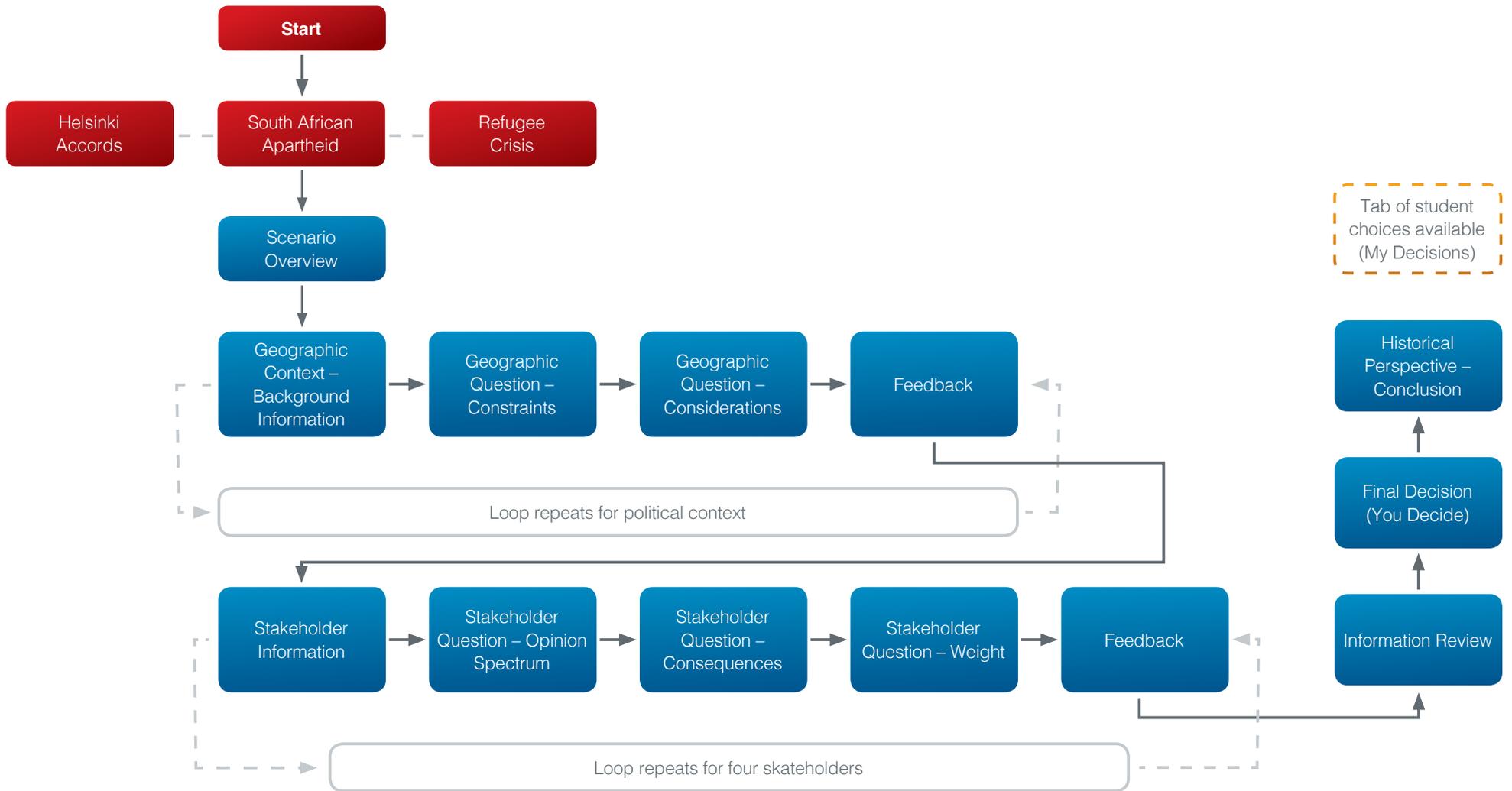
As POTUS, will you decide to take in these refugees? Their fate is in your hands.

START

Students can choose between three scenarios based on situations faced by Gerald R. Ford during his presidency.

**Structure and Flow of the Interactive**

Students can explore one, two, or all three scenarios during a session. Each scenario follows the progression in the diagram below. They can click on the National Geographic logo at any time to return to the start screen and then choose another scenario to play through.



## Using the Interactive in Different Settings

### Classrooms

*You Decide: Presidential Decisions* is an excellent companion to the social studies classroom, particularly any study of the Cold War era. All three of the scenarios in the interactive have some relationship to Cold War conflicts—tension in Europe, the Vietnam War, and the struggles between the United States and the Soviet Union for influence in Africa. Educators can also use the interactive as a focal point for learning about Cold War conflicts and the Gerald R. Ford era. Educators can take advantage of the level of engagement students generally experience with interactive materials to introduce students to other activities and research opportunities related to the Cold War, the Helsinki Accords, apartheid, and the Vietnam War. The scenarios chosen for this interactive also highlight the importance of human rights to President Ford, and can lead to discussions about the importance of human rights and how presidents can advocate for issues that are important to them. The focus on decision-making in this interactive also offers a way to introduce a powerful process that can be used in students' own decision-making, as well as to analyze the complexities inherent in decisions they may read about in historical context or in current events.

#### POLITICAL CONTEXT

During the era of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the two superpowers never fought each other directly. Instead they fought "proxy" wars in which each country would back a side in internal conflicts within other countries.

In the mid-1970s, Angola was just such a country. Angola had been left in a state of political turmoil after its colonizer, Portugal, withdrew from the country. The United States aided one side in the conflict, hoping to establish a pro-Western government in Angola, while the Soviet Union supported the Marxist regime they were fighting against. South Africa was a valuable ally for the United States in the conflict, even sending troops into Angola at one point.

By 1976, a civil war was brewing in Rhodesia. A main motivation in the fighting was the idea of majority rule that was sweeping across the region of southern Africa. The white minority, settlers from the time of colonization, controlled the government in Rhodesia. Black Africans wanted to re-establish their place in the government through majority rule. The United States wanted to help Rhodesia end the fighting through a peaceful transition to majority rule. They felt that this was the best path to prevent Soviet interference in the region. As in Angola, South Africa was a key ally in this effort.

While other southern African countries were moving toward majority rule, South Africa was firmly in the midst of apartheid. Though other countries in southern Africa were or had been ruled by a white minority, South Africa was a special case. The extent to which racial segregation was a part of the social and political fabric of the country was unprecedented. In South Africa, racial segregation was not only more extreme, but it was created and enforced through laws that forced black South Africans into homelands and stripped them of their citizenship.

Students analyze the political context in which presidential decisions are made.



Secretary of State Henry Kissinger giving a speech in Lusaka, Zambia in 1976

MY DECISIONS

Before students engage with the interactive, educators should introduce the interactive and its scenarios and provide support for any new concepts or vocabulary. Students can work through the interactive individually or in small groups, which encourages collaborative decision-making skills. Educators may also assign the interactive as homework and ask students to take a simple screenshot and print the "My Decisions" screen to inform a classroom discussion. No matter how students work through the interactive, discussing what they are learning and the decisions they make is key to encouraging deeper thought and to helping students understand how to apply this decision-making process to other situations.

### At Home

Students can play *You Decide: Presidential Decisions* independently at home as homework or as a self-selected learning activity. Parents or caregivers can play with students, pausing to discuss unfamiliar terms and concepts and using questions to encourage more thoughtful decision-making.

## The Role of the Facilitator

To benefit the most from using *You Decide: Presidential Decisions*, students must fully process and evaluate the information found in the interactive and make thoughtful decisions. Facilitators can encourage the deepest level of engagement with the content by challenging students to read and listen to all the available information in the interactive before making decisions. Having students take notes during play can help ensure that they are reading and analyzing the information they are given. Facilitators can also encourage more thoughtful decision-making by posing questions for students to discuss and explore as they work through the interactive.

## Interactive Play Setup

### Technology Requirements

*You Decide: Presidential Decisions* is a browser-based interactive that works on both Macs and PCs and is also optimized for use on tablets. Sound capabilities will enhance students' experience, as the interactive includes videos.

To get the most out of the interactive experience, we recommend that you have the following technology:

- On a PC: Windows 8.1+ operating system; IE 11+, Chrome 48+, Firefox 45+ browser
- On a Mac: OSX 10.10+ operating system; Chrome 48+, Firefox 45+, Safari 7+ browser
- On Tablets: iOS version 8+ or Android version 4.0+
- Multiple computers or tablets with Internet access (one per student or one per small group if playing collaboratively); Internet browsers, open to the *You Decide: Presidential Decisions* interactive

### Setting Up for Independent Play

One way to use this interactive is to have students complete a scenario for homework or during downtime in class. Each scenario will require about 30 minutes, and one scenario per session is recommended. Students cannot save their work and return to the interactive, so be sure to plan sufficient time for students to work through a scenario. The activities in the Before Play section of this guide can be used to provide support for vocabulary, geography, and historical context before students begin using the interactive. To encourage students to read carefully and think through their choices, have them take notes on their decisions as they play. Ask them to note any unfamiliar vocabulary words, as well as any questions they have about the content. These can be used as a starting point to discuss each scenario as a class or in a small group. Students can also take a simple screenshot and print out their “My Decisions” screen when they have completed a scenario.

### Setting Up for Small Group Play

Having students work in small groups to complete a scenario encourages collaborative problem-solving. Organize students into groups of two or three and provide each group with a computer. The activities in the Before Play section of this guide can be used to provide support for vocabulary, geography, and historical context before students begin using the interactive. Ask students to note any unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts and any questions they have about the content. They can also take a simple screenshot and print out their “My Decisions” screen as a reference for class discussion. Completing one scenario per session is recommended. Plan about an hour for each scenario, including a brief focus period before students begin and 15 to 20 minutes for discussion after game play. Students cannot save their work and return to the interactive, so be sure to plan sufficient time for students to work through a scenario. Groups can all work on the same scenario or different groups can play different scenarios. Both approaches should result in rich classroom discussion.

### Setting Up for Whole Class Play

If students will be using the interactive individually within a classroom or large group setting, each student will need their own computer. Completing one scenario per session is recommended. Each scenario should take about 50 minutes to complete, with a brief focus period before play and a 15 to 20 minute discussion following play. Students cannot save their work and return to the interactive, so be sure to plan sufficient time for students to work through a scenario. The activities in the Before Play section of this guide can be used to provide support for vocabulary, geography, and historical context before students begin using the interactive. Have students note any unfamiliar vocabulary words or concepts, as well as any questions about content. Students can also take a simple screenshot and print out their “My Decisions” screen as a reference for class discussion.

## Background Information and Vocabulary

Scenario one is based on the Helsinki Accords. The Helsinki Accords were signed in 1975 by the United States, Canada, the Soviet Union, and most European countries. The accords

### Key Geographic Locations

Angola	Europe	Southeast Asia	Western Bloc
Balkans	Rhodesia	Southern Africa	Zambia
Eastern Bloc	Saigon	South Vietnam	

### Vocabulary

Allied powers	Cold War	humanitarianism	refugee
Allies	constraint	human rights	segregation
apartheid	decolonization	institutional	Soviet Union
Axis	demographics	majority rule	stakeholder
Baltic states	discrimination	political boundary	territory
border	fall of Saigon	political geography	Vietnam War
civil rights	homelands	proxy war	World War II

were designed to reduce Cold War tensions in Europe and covered a range of issues, including territorial borders, cooperation among countries, trade, and human rights.

Scenario two centers on the Ford administration’s decision to speak out against the apartheid practiced by ally South Africa. Apartheid was an institutionalized and legislated form of racism in South Africa. President Ford’s Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, spoke out against apartheid at a speech in Zambia in 1976.

The third scenario presents a hypothetical refugee situation, but the feedback for each decision-making section includes considerations and decisions made by the Ford administration during a similar situation—Operation Babylift. Operation Babylift was a \$2 million operation to rescue South Vietnamese orphans during the fall of Saigon in 1975.

The decision-making strategy used in the interactive—based on the Stakeholder Consequences Decision-Making (SCDM) model—encourages students to consider the complexities of the decisions made in these three scenarios by presenting the geographic

**NATO ALLIES – OPINION**

Slide the arrow to rate how strongly NATO allies felt the Helsinki Accords should be signed.

INFORMATION

MY DECISIONS

STRONGLY FOR

STRONGLY AGAINST

Students weigh the importance and influence of stakeholders in a presidential decision.

## Activities (Before, During, and After Play)

### Before Play

- Assign small groups of students background reading on some key topics: the Cold War, apartheid, war in Angola, and the Vietnam War. Have each group do a three-minute presentation on their topic. During each presentation, ask students in the audience to write down questions to ask the group.
- Place students into small groups and assign each group a few vocabulary words. Have each group find a definition and additional context for each word. Then challenge them come up with a fun way to “introduce” the word to the class.
- Have students locate the key geographic locations on a map. Ask students to predict the topics in the interactive using the vocabulary terms and the mapped locations. Next, give students the main topic for each scenario and have them work in groups to create a web connecting the locations and the vocabulary they think pertains to each scenario. Point out that some vocabulary could pertain to more than one scenario. When students have finished their webs, use them to preview the interactive.
- This interactive asks students to evaluate constraints and considerations in each scenario. Help students to distinguish between these two concepts by offering this example: Imagine you are shopping for a new bookshelf. You have one wall that the bookshelf can go on, and it is four feet wide. Four feet is a constraint on your decision, because a bookshelf larger than four feet will not fit in your space. Your room is painted blue with white trim. You really want to have a white bookshelf. White is a consideration, not a constraint, because you COULD put a red bookshelf in the room, although you would prefer a white one. Ask students to work in small groups to come up with other examples of constraints and considerations. Have groups share some of their examples with the class, and discuss if and how they exemplify the concepts.

### During Play

- Have students write down what they see as the steps of the decision-making process as they work through the interactive. Discuss the steps and how they might be applied to students’ own decision-making or to analyzing current events.
- As students work through the interactive, have them list any questions they have about the choices they are offered. Give them time to research and discuss these choices before returning to work through the interactive again.
- Have students take notes as they read the information in the interactive. They can refer to their notes when evaluating their choices in each scenario.
- Create a word wall with vocabulary words related to the interactive and their definitions. Have students refer to the wall if they are unsure what a word means. If they are unsure of a word that isn’t on the wall, they should pause their interactive activity to define the word and add it to the wall.
- Remind students of the difference between constraints and considerations. When students get to the first section on constraints and considerations, ask questions to help them

distinguish between the two concepts. Ask: *Which things are set and can’t be changed? Which things are “deal-breakers”? Which things does the president need to consider but wouldn’t keep him from making a certain decision?*

- Circulate throughout the room and pose questions as students work through the interactive.

### Discussion Questions

- Do you have any questions about the content you read? Are those questions important in helping you make this decision?
  - What is your goal with this choice?
  - What are your available options?
  - Which options do you think are the best? Why?
  - Which choices can you link directly to the information given?
  - Which choices can you infer from the information given?
  - Why do you consider this a consideration or constraint?
  - How will this choice inform your final decision?
- Discuss with students the possible responses to the questions found in the interactive. Explain that for the geographic and political constraints and considerations, ALL answers are plausible. Students should evaluate the responses and select those that they feel are most important. Note that there are no right or wrong answers in these sections. Explain that, similarly, there are no right or wrong answers when evaluating how each stakeholder feels about the decision and how much weight the student feels should be given to that stakeholder’s opinion. However, the questions about consequences to stakeholders do contain distractors—answer choices that are plausible but incorrect.

### GEOGRAPHIC CONSTRAINTS

Constraints are limitations that you must work within. Which geographic constraints related to South African apartheid do you think were the most important?

You may choose more than one. Click the Information tab to review the information about this topic.

demographics within South Africa

South Africa’s strategic location within southern Africa

homeland borders within South Africa

southern Africa’s regional dynamics

South Africa’s border with Zambia

Students weigh the most important geographic constraints.

**After Play**

- Divide students into small groups and have each group represent one of the stakeholders from the interactive. If students have only worked through one scenario, just assign the stakeholders from that scenario. Have them write an editorial urging the president to take the action that makes most sense for that stakeholder. Ask students to use specific examples of how the decision will affect them in their argument.
- Have each student or group of students take on the role of a stakeholder from the same scenario within the interactive and debate another stakeholder with a different view of the issue.
- Have students work in small groups to apply the decision-making strategy they have learned to a different presidential decision.
- Have students work in small groups to apply the decision-making strategy they have learned to a current event. Have them gather as much information about the current event as possible and write a brief for the president or other decision-maker, advising him or her to make a specific decision. Their brief should include specific information from their research to support their recommendation. Encourage students to identify reliable sources on which to base their recommendation.

**Discussion Questions**

- What type of site is it (.com, .gov, .org, .edu)?
- Are there any obvious errors or misspellings?
- Is the site user-friendly and appropriate for the topic? Do the links work?
- What is the main purpose of the site? (to inform? persuade? recruit?)
- Who is responsible for this content (person or organization)? What are their credentials?
- Does the site have an obvious bias?
- Is it easy to tell fact from opinion on this site?
- Does the site document sources?
- Can you corroborate the information from this site?

- Have students go back and review the scenarios again. Ask them to work in small groups to list some other ways the president could have decided the matter besides yes or no. For example, the president could have decided to apply sanctions to South Africa instead of just addressing apartheid rhetorically. Or the president could have designated less money for Operation Babylift. Have students create a continuum or scale similar to the ones for stakeholders' opinions in the interactive. Have them list the solutions they came up with on a spectrum between a yes or a no. For example, the president designating a smaller budget for Operation Babylift would be closer to a no. Ask: *Where does the president's actual decision rank on that spectrum? Do you think it represents a compromise? Why or why not?*
- Encourage students to reflect on what they have learned and on the decisions they made.

**Discussion Questions**

- How do you feel about the choices you made?
- Did you agree or disagree with President Ford's choice(s)? Why?
- What role did the "greater good" play in the presidents' decision-making? In yours?
- How might your thinking and choices have been different if you did not have historical knowledge of the effects of the decision(s)?
- What theme tied the scenarios together? Explain your reasoning.
- Are all presidential decisions a simple yes or no? Explain.

**Wrap-Up**

Have students write a paragraph reflecting on how what they have learned will affect their own decision-making in the future. Assess students' paragraphs for evidence of an understanding of the decision-making process.

**Extending the Learning**

Have students track the news for current presidential decisions and share them with the class. Have them identify stakeholders that will be affected by these decisions. Ask students to evaluate all sources of information before sharing with the class.

**MY DECISIONS**

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**GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT**

- **Geographic Constraints:** autonomy of the Baltic states
- **Geographic Considerations:** existing boundaries between European countries

**POLITICAL CONTEXT**

- **Political Constraints:** opinion of the American public
- **Political Considerations:** wishes of NATO allies

**STAKEHOLDER 1 - NATO ALLIES**

- **NATO Allies - Consequences:** new markets in eastern Europe
- **NATO Allies - Weight:** little weight

**STAKEHOLDER 2 - EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

Students evaluate information and make decisions throughout the interactive to inform their final decision.

## Appendix

### Connections to National Standards

#### National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Curriculum Standards

- Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments

#### National Geography Standards

- Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of places

#### National Center for History in the Schools History Standards

- Historical Thinking Standard 5: The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making
- U.S. History Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)—Standard 2: How the Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics

#### College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- D2.Civ.3.6-8. Examine the origins, purposes, and impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements.
- D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
- D2.His.14.6-8. Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.
- D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- D2.Civ.3.9-12. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.
- D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

#### Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1  
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1  
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1  
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### Connections to Skills

#### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Themes

- Global Awareness

#### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Student Outcomes Learning and innovation Skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration

#### Critical Thinking Skills

- Understanding
- Applying
- Analyzing
- Evaluating

### For Further Exploration

- National Geographic Education: Collection—Gerald R. Ford: [NatGeo.org/geraldford](http://NatGeo.org/geraldford)
- Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum: <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov>
- Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation: <http://geraldrfordfoundation.org/>
- DeVos Learning Center at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum: <http://devoslearningcenter.org/>
- National Geographic Channel: Gerald R. Ford: A Test of Character: <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/galleries/gerald-r-ford-a-test-of-character/at/gerald-and-betty-2107416/>
- National Geographic Education: Stakeholder Consequences Decision Making: <http://nationalgeographic.org/file/stakeholder-consequences-decision-making/>

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Visit [NatGeoEd.org/geraldford](http://NatGeoEd.org/geraldford) to find the full collection of educational materials.