**The Persian Gulf War**

The Persian Gulf War was fought in 1991. Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein and U.S. President Bush each took the opportunity to present their nation’s point of view. As you might expect, the two leaders had major differences in the ways they viewed the dispute.

**Directions:** Read/research your assigned leader and complete the chart below. Then, with your partner, compare the point of view of each leader.

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| **Points of View** |  |  |
|  | **George Bush** | **Saddam Hussein** |
| 1. Why did Iraq invade Kuwait? |  |  |
| 1. What caused the Gulf War? |  |  |
| 1. What were the actions of the U.S. and Iraq before and during the Gulf War? |  |  |
| 1. What were the results of the Gulf War? |  |  |

Discuss the differing points of view.

Who was giving the most “accurate” description of the causes of the Gulf War? Why?

Should the U.S. have been involved in the Middle East? Why?

Point of View – Saddam Hussein

“We had just finished an 8 year war with Iran. This meant that my country, Iraq, owed a massive amount of money to many Arab nations and that included Kuwait. These nations were now asking for the money to be repaid. How ungrateful the Arab nations were! Iraq had defended them against Iranian Islamic fundamentalism.”

“Kuwait is actually a part of Iraq. I also accuse Kuwait of stealing Iraqi oil by sliding its drills into our oil pipelines. I accuse Kuwait of stealing 2.5 billion barrels of oil from us. This allowed Kuwait to produce more oil than OPEC allowed. Oil prices plunged from $20/barrel to $13/barrel in only 6 months. Every time the price of oil decreased by a dollar, Iraq lost a billion dollars. As I said in a speech, ‘They…have stabbed Iraq with a poison dagger. Iraqis will not forget…. O God Almighty, be witness that we warned them.’ In summary, I accuse the government of Kuwait of: 1) intruding on Iraqi territory 2) stealing our oil and 3) destroying our economy. This is the same as if Kuwait declared war on us.”

“The cause of the Gulf War was that the United States wanted an excuse to attack Iraq. This would cause Arab nations to look to the U.S. for defense and not Iraq. With these military ties to the U.S., OPEC nations would be afraid to raise the price of oil or limit oil production lest the U.S. not support them in case of an attack by Iran. In my journal I wrote, ‘I led my country [against] an aggression launched by 33 countries led by the U.S., which waged war against Iraq.’ The United States was the aggressor, the instigator, of the Gulf War.”

“Before the war, I had to close our border in order to keep thousands of foreigners from leaving Iraq or Kuwait. I did say that as a result of war that “thousands of Americans would be wrapped in sad coffins” but I still wanted to give peace a chance. I told President Bush that I would free all foreigners in Iraq and Kuwait if the U.S. would promise to withdraw its forces from Saudi Arabia and that economic sanctions against Iraq be lifted. But I was not going to ‘beg before anyone.’ I did threaten to attack Israel because my country was prepared to fight a war rather than get out of Kuwait.”

“Yes, we lost. But I still ran our government in Iraq. I had to accept UN weapons inspection teams and there were still economic sanctions by the U.S. The real tragedy is that hundreds of thousands of children died of disease due to these sanctions.”

Point of View – George H. W. Bush

“I knew that Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was a danger to American security. This invasion couldn’t be tolerated. For example, if Hitler had been stopped early on, World War II might been avoided. I would not allow Saddam Hussein to reap the rewards for his unprovoked military action against another country.”

“This wasn’t just a U.S. response – the United Nations and the international community of nations agreed with us. We formed a coalition of nations to fight Iraq, if necessary. The UN Security Council passed a resolution ordering Iraq out of Kuwait. Hussein ignored the resolution.”

“Stability in the Middle East is of great importance. 53% of the world’s oil reserves are in the Middle East. The two biggest oil producers are Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. These nations are our allies. Saudi Arabia informed us of their fear that Iraq would invade their country just as it had invaded Kuwait. The coalition of nations was formed to protect the important interests in the unstable Middle East. We had to ensure a steady supply of oil.”

“We tried peaceful means first. We placed economic sanctions on Iraq but they weren’t working. The leader of Kuwait spoke before the UN General Assembly and told of the “rape, destruction, and terror” inflicted on his country by Iraq. He visited me the next day and I promised the United States would help. Therefore, I stood by the UN resolution calling for the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait. I also prepared for the worst – I ordered the buildup of U.S. military forces in the Persian Gulf and ordered 400,000 troops to Saudi Arabia. The UN authorized “all necessary means” including military force to force Iraq to comply with the UN Resolution. They gave a deadline of January 15, 1991. Armed with this, I again tried peaceful means to resolve the crisis. I proposed a meeting, hoping that Saddam Hussein would come to his senses and withdraw. But he would not.”

“Instead, Saddam announced that he would never leave Kuwait. He said: ‘We will show the world that America is a paper tiger.’ The war was quick and relatively painless. It was a popular war in the U.S. Iraq was defeated and Kuwait was liberated. To prove that this was truly a war only to stop Iraqi aggression, we allowed Saddam Hussein to remain in power. However, he had to accept UN weapons inspections.”