

12th History Cuban Classroom

Teacher: All right, my friends. Before we get started on today's activity, let's talk briefly about homework. Your packet, the current packet, I'm going to collect next week, because it has the instructions for "America in the World" part one. If you did "America in the World" part one, that essay a couple weeks ago, it will be no problem, because this is just a short addition to it. If you did not do "America in the World" part one, then you can do that one too [inaudible 00:00:25]. The directions for the addition are in your current packets, the one that says "New World Order" on it. This packet has those instructions. This one you'll give to me next week, Wednesday. Nod your head yes?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Okay, good. The new one I'm giving to you today because there's a reading I want you to do for Wednesday. Well, not reading. Crash course video notes. So we can get started.

This next unit is going to focus a lot on what was happening at home in the United States in the '50s, '60s, and going into the 1970s. This will be a topic which you know a lot about already. We're going to be talking about the Vietnam War, about Martin Luther King and the protests of the 1960s. This is a lot of fun. Interesting unit going on.

This packet, start off with your first set of notes for Wednesday. The other packet you'll give to me Wednesday, so you have a nice long stretch between now and then. Lots of days of no school and a weekend to get everything taken care of. Any questions? Thoughts?

[00:02:00] All right. In that case, let's get started on today's stuff. Today we're going to learn about the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the closest the world ever came to nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Some historians, myself included, would consider these thirteen days in October of 1962 to be the climactic events of the Cold War.

For this activity today, you have a packet that is just for today. When you've got yours, put your name on it. As we give these out, I need to tell you straight up, do not read ahead. It will ruin the activity if you read ahead. So follow along; I'll guide you through the packet as we go.

[00:04:00] Read the letter to the participants on the cover. This is an official memo from President Kennedy, designating who was going to be on this EXCOMM. As I mentioned before, it's important to the integrity of the activity ... It's a learning experience not to read ahead. Take a minute and read the cover.

When the Cuban Missile Crisis started, when the first hints came into the White

House that there was a problem, Kennedy pulled together this executive committee, the EXCOMM. There's a special group of advisors. The President regularly meets with national security advisors, people who will help him out on those issues, but in this case, he knew it was a special event, so he brought in a special committee. He included the regular national security advisors, but he also brought in some other people, like the special counsel, which is the lawyer for the White House. He also brought in his brother, the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, who was somebody he trusted. He brought in a few extra people to give him advice.

You are that executive committee now. No one here is going to play Kennedy. You're all going to be his advisors, giving him advice, telling him what you think should happen. There's another [inaudible 00:05:30]. All the documents in this roleplay are real primary sources from 1962. Some of them I have condensed. I took off parts that were extraneous. The overall character, the central elements, are there, intact. You are dealing with the real thing that Kennedy dealt with and his advisors dealt with at that time. If you want to look them up, they're all at the Kennedy Library, which is in Boston, and online. Any questions?

[00:06:00]
[00:08:00]

While you folks are reading, I'm going to be playing some Cuban music to get us in the mood. To start off, read documents one, two, and three, and complete the first decision page. Don't go beyond that.

There's most people finishing up here and starting to think about a decision. I'm going to point something out. What had happened in Cuba in the late 1950s?

Student: The overthrow.

Teacher: The overthrow by? Who becomes the leader of Cuba?

Student: Castro.

Teacher: Fidel Castro, right? Fidel Castro was openly communist, and the United States then becomes opposed to him. Many people who did not want communism in Cuba had fled to Florida, to the United States, so there's a strong anti-communist, anti-Castro Cuban population in Florida, even today. But especially right after the revolution that happened in Cuba, the Americans are opposed to Castro, so Castro turns of course to who for support?

Student: The Soviet Union.

Teacher: The Soviet Union. All of a sudden, just a few miles from Florida, from Miami, is this communist island. Americans are very opposed to this. What had just happened? Americans had done what? You guys said it over here. Americans had just done what with Cuba? What did you say at first? Bay of ...

[00:12:00]

Student: Pigs.

Teacher: Bay of Pigs, right? A group of anti-Castro Cubans had wanted to go back to Cuba and throw Castro out. The CIA had helped to train them. This was one of Eisenhower's projects. When Kennedy becomes President, he gives the project the green light. These guys go and they land in a place called the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. Does it go well?

Student: No.

Teacher: No! This is terrible. They get caught on the beach. They thought that the Cuban people would rise up. "We hate Castro and let's join these anti-Castro people." Instead, Castro sent the Army, and the crew was getting slaughtered on the beach. They called for help. They said, "Hey, our friends back at the CIA in the United States, come in with the Air Force and help us out here, so we don't all die on the beach!" And Kennedy decided?

Student: No.

Teacher: No. He let the whole thing fail. Which of course makes the Americans look weak vs. communism. Also makes Kennedy look very weak. It was a big embarrassment for him that this big project had gone so badly. In the end, Khrushchev looks at this, and what was noted in there, he says in the second paragraph, "There is an unabated anti-Cuban campaign in the United States." No kidding. We'd even sponsored this invasion of Cuba. We're pretty obviously against them.

For a long time, we were trying to assassinate Castro. We'd put a bomb inside his cigar and poisoned his wetsuit. He used to like to go swimming. We were pretty unashamedly anti-Castro. When the Russians meet with Kennedy and they talk about, "We know you're totally anti-Castro," they weren't kidding. We were.

[00:14:00] Talk to each other. What option do you recommend, and why?

[00:18:00] One more minute to finish writing on your reason why.

All right. There's not unlimited time here. There's pressure, because the days are passing. Advice to Kennedy. I know you guys are still kind of debating, so back in the corner, Caroline, what did you guys say?

Student: We think we should wait.

Teacher: Wait. So number?

Student: Five.

Teacher: Five. Just wait and see. It could get worse now.

Student: Yeah, but if we go and stop supplies from coming and go to their shores, won't that [inaudible 00:18:34] them?

Teacher: Literally poking the bear. You don't want to make more trouble, so just let's see what happens.

Student: Yeah.

Teacher: Okay. The food in my lunch bag is rotting, but I'll see what happens if I wait around another day?

Student: Yeah.

Teacher: Good. All right. What do you guys say?

Student: We said four and number two.

Teacher: Four and two. How's that going to work?

Student: First say, "Oh, we know you have it." We ask them nicely. If not, we kick their asses.

Teacher: Okay. So there's a "we know you've got it; take it out, or else we're going to come in and take it out for you." Okay.

Student: We also thought of a combination of number four, but I think if we just tell them to remove it, they're not going to remove it just because we say so. We could threaten to block their supplies but not actually do it yet, because they're scary.

Teacher: You'll start small, but you're going to ramp up. Not quite ramping up as seriously as these guys, but the next step for you would be a blockade. In the corner?

Student: Three.

Teacher: Three. Just put in the blockade. "You guys crossed the line. We're getting serious. No more stuff in Cuba." But not invade yet, not try and blow it up yet. What was [00:20:00] the first thing you said?

Student: I have children in the U.S.

Teacher: "You warmonger people over here, making trouble for your kids here," right? All right. You guys said?

Student: Three.

Teacher: Three. Blockade also. Same reasons, or anything else?

Student: Three is that they're announcing that we already know there's missiles, because why else would we blockade them?

Teacher: You're going to put in a blockade, you've got to say why, right? Okay. And?

Student: One and part of three.

Teacher: One and part of three. How does this work?

Student: We realized that three kind of contradicts one, so we put that we'd blockade Cuba, pending any further help from the Soviet Union. Then we invade Cuba and destroy the missiles and [inaudible 00:20:46] Castro.

Teacher: Cut out the cancer.

Student: We're tired of this cancer.

Teacher: The cancer of communism is invading the Western Hemisphere. We're not playing games here. Cutting you off, going in, getting rid of Castro, the whole nine yards. The modern Teddy Roosevelt, coming in with the Rough Riders and taking over the island. What do you guys think?

Student: Four.

Teacher: Four. Just announce no serious military action. Not like these guys over here. You're hesitant. You want to. You're more stridently anti-communist. Let's go get them.

Student: Denounce them!

Teacher: But your other teammates have decided that it's too ...

Student: We'll talk it out first.

Teacher: You'll talk it out first. All right. You are just like the real executive committee, or EXCOMM. There was dissension. Some people wanted more, some people wanted less. They argued with each other. Ultimately, they gave Kennedy some advice. He decided to institute a blockade. But he called it a quarantine, because a blockade officially, according to international law, is an act of war. He made a blockade, but he called it a quarantine. What is a quarantine, really?

[00:22:00]

Student: A blockade.

Teacher: Of? When do we use this word?

Student: Disease.

Teacher: For diseases. For infections. When you bring your dog to Hawaii, you have to have a quarantine for your dog to make sure it's not going to bring in any new diseases. You have the quarantine for fruits and vegetables, that sort of thing. That's a quarantine, right? A blockade is something altogether different. But he called it a quarantine.

He also told the country what was going on. Let's see his address.

Video: Good evening, my fellow citizens. This government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military buildup on the island of Cuba. Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere.

[00:24:00] Only last Thursday, as evidence of this rapid offensive buildup was already in my hand, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko told me in my office that he was instructed to make it clear once again, as he said his government had already done, that Soviet assistance to Cuba, and I quote, "pursued solely for the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba," that, and I quote him, "training by Soviet specialists of Cuban nationals in handling defensive armaments was by no means offensive. And if it were otherwise," Mr. Gromyko went on, "the Soviet government would never become involved in rendering such assistance." That statement also was false.

Teacher: "That statement also was false." This is a nice political way of calling your enemies ...

Student: "You're lying."

Teacher: A liar. "You guys are lying to us."

Video: Acting, therefore, in the defense of our own security and of the entire Western Hemisphere, and under the authority entrusted to me by the Constitution as endorsed by the resolution of the Congress, I have directed that the following initial steps be taken immediately.

To halt this offensive buildup, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated. All ships of any kind bound for Cuba from whatever nation or port will, if found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons, be turned back.

It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet

Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.

I call upon Chairman Khrushchev to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations. I call upon him further to abandon this course of world domination, and to join in an historic effort to end the perilous arms race and to transform the history of man.

Our goal is not the victory of might, but the vindication of right. Not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved.

Teacher:
[00:26:00]

Very scary for Americans to turn on the television and hear you're going to have a presidential address. Everyone tunes in to see what President Kennedy is going to say. Then he tells us, "Hey, the Russians are putting nuclear missiles in our backyard." This is upsetting a serious balance here of who can strike first and how quickly and without warning. If you have been going to school your whole life and getting those messages about duck and cover and be careful about nuclear weapons and we're supposed to know when it's going to happen, and suddenly maybe we won't know, this is pretty unsettling, right? Americans were terrified when this first came out.

[00:28:00]

Read documents four and five. Complete the second decision. You'll notice that document four, at the top, this is the letter that Kennedy sent to Khrushchev. It's two pages. Then document five, Khrushchev sent a letter back. Take a look at these two letters.

[00:34:00]

Take another minute to read, and then we're going to talk about it.

Okay. I want you to take a look at Kennedy's letter first. We're going to point out a couple of things he says that are important. The first one connects directly to what we talked about in the last class. In the middle of the second paragraph there, he says, "Since I have not assumed that you or any other sane man would in this nuclear age deliberately plunge the world into war." Last class, we talked about the arms race and this idea of mutually assured destruction, and that the whole system works if everyone acts rationally and is sane. But Kennedy here is faced with the possibility now that maybe Khrushchev is not sane. So he's going to reiterate the point, like, "Hey, let's act like logical people here. Let's not get carried away."

On the other side, he makes an interesting case here, because some of you said we should just tell them, "Take the missiles out," and then threaten something else. Kennedy decided he wanted to do more than just demand. He puts in this blockade, called a quarantine, because he wants to do something. So he points out, at the very end of almost the last paragraph, he says, "The fact of this minimum response should not be taken as a basis, however, for any misjudgment on your

part." We're starting off small, but like you guys were saying, don't mess with us, we're serious here. We're just starting small because we don't want to go big, like you guys over here are ready to invade.

He's basically telling them, "Don't mess it up." He didn't promise what would happen next. He kept his options open.

[00:36:00]

If you flip over to Khrushchev's one, I love this letter. This is one of my favorite historical documents of all time. First off, imagine that we did this to you. Of course we can't do this. Just like you said. We can demand all we want, but of course they're not going to do it on the other side.

He accuses Kennedy of starting the problem. At the beginning of that second paragraph, he says, "In presenting us with these conditions, you, Mr. President, have flung the challenge at us." He went on television and told the world, "Kennedy is making this problem. Kennedy has started this."

Then you get down there, and he talks about quarantines. He says, "Quarantines exist. For example, on agricultural goods and products." He's calling him out on this one. He says, "You, yourself, know this." This is a blockade. You know it. You're lying. You're not supposed to be doing this. Straight up.

At the end of the next paragraph, he says, "You are no longer appealing to reason; you wish to intimidate us." He knows what Kennedy's up to. He's not going to buy it. It's a straight up challenge, right?

On the other side, this is great. In the very center of the other side, he says, "The folly of degenerate imperialism." "You are a has-been. You used to be a great country. You used to rule Cuba and the Philippines, and now you don't. You are a used-to-be country. You are falling down in terms of power, and this is just you grasping on to anything to make you look tough." Calling him a loser without calling him a loser. This is great.

Then at the very end of the other side, he says, "We will then be forced on our part to take the measures we consider necessary and adequate in order to protect our rights. We have everything necessary to do so." So just as Kennedy finished his letter by saying, "Don't mistake our small steps to be a sign of weakness," Khrushchev says, "Don't think we won't shoot back either."

[00:38:00]

Talk to each other. What about the second decision?

[00:40:00]

Thirty seconds. Finish your thoughts. Why are you going to do what you want to do?

Now the question page points out that the Air Force here, you've been talking to the Air Force generals that have been coming into these meetings, and they're

saying, "Now, we don't know if we can hit everything. We can try, but no guarantee we'll hit it all. We'll do our best."

Anyone still ready for the full invasion? Number one?

Student: Not anymore.

Teacher: No, not anymore. Nobody's getting ready to invade. Okay. Number two. A limited airstrike. Go in, try to get all the missiles, cross your fingers you get them all. Anyone for airstrikes? The military generals were all about this one at this time. They were really putting a lot of pressure on Kennedy. "Just go take care of it. Not do a full invasion, but let's at least get rid of the missiles."

Number three. Continue the blockade, but no military action. Three? No? Most of us, three. Why three?

Student: Because Khrushchev basically said, "You can do whatever you want, but we're going to [inaudible 00:41:52], so if we shoot at them or invade Cuba, they're going to ... "

[00:42:00]

Teacher: You're taking him seriously.

Student: Yeah.

Teacher: "Okay, we did the blockade already, let's just keep the blockade. We're not going to back off." We feel like, "We're more scared of you now, but hold the line."

All right, we have two teams who didn't like that idea. What did you guys say?

Student: Four.

Teacher: Four. Four is "do nothing now and see what happens. Take the blockade off and then just chill. Let's everyone take a step back and cool down." This is like when you have a fight with your friend in elementary school, and your teacher's like, "You go sit over there and chill out, and then we'll talk about it." Humans are not that different. Adults are not that different from children, right?

And you guys thought? Four. You were all ready to invade a couple days ago, and now everyone's in here like, "Oh, no, nothing, just sit and watch." I don't know if I want you as my advisor. You're pretty inconsistent. Or, as you were saying, you got new information, maybe?

Student: Yeah. [inaudible 00:42:57]

Teacher: Okay. Maybe you're good advisors. You're willing to change your mind, based on

new information.

What did Kennedy do? The blockade was continued. One ship arrived at the blockade lines. The American unit let them through. It was not carrying any weapons, so they let a ship through the blockade.

An American U2 spy plane was shot down over Cuba. They were flying around getting more pictures, and somebody down below fired a missile, and it shot down the plane. The American pilot died.

Student: Oh, lord, there we go.

Teacher: The top military leaders in Washington, talking to Kennedy, were furious. They said, "They shot first. We need to respond. You don't let somebody throw a punch and hit you in the face without at least doing something back." There's no turning the other cheek in this case, right? And Kennedy said no. He would not shoot back. He was very hesitant to believe that this was an official order from Khrushchev. He thought some 18-year-old kid down there running the missile station got trigger-happy and pressed the ... He didn't want to have a nuclear war start from what may have been a mistake, or something perhaps small. One plane gets shot down is different from nuclear annihilation of the world. He kind of figures, "Well, let's not go overboard yet." The military was furious.

[00:44:00]

The United Nations has got Adlai Stevenson, who'd run for President a couple times as a Democrat. He'd always lost and was generally thought of as sort of a weak character. This was his retirement job, in a way, was to go and be ambassador to the UN. Now he's got to go there and he's got to show the world that we're not making this whole thing up. This is perhaps in public life his finest moment. Let's see him at the United Nations.

Student: We have a video of it?

Teacher: We do. They all have headsets, and there's a delay and everything, because there's translators behind. We'll speak in English, and then we wait for the guy to translate to Russian, for the Russian guy to understand. Then he speaks in Russian, and then we wait. So you'll see that everyone here is used to waiting a minute before they answer.

Do they know a little of each other's language?

Student: Yeah.

Teacher: Yeah, they do. At least some. ... I'll plug it in. This is Adlai Stevenson, talking from the beginning.

Video: Let me ask you one simple question: do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the USSR

[00:46:00] has placed and is placing medium and intermediate range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no? Don't wait for the translation: yes or no?

Mr. Stevenson, would you continue your statement, please? You will receive the answer in due course, do not worry.

I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over, if that's your decision. And I'm also prepared to present the evidence in this room.

Teacher: This is like two kids fighting on a playground, right? But it's adults with nuclear missiles behind them. This is great. "I am prepared to wait until hell freezes over." What a great way of calling each other out. Then he brings out the satellite photos. In the room, this is broadcast around the world on television, this conversation that they're having. Essentially, the United States shows the Russians started this. "The Soviet Union made this problem for the world. They put the missiles there first. We're not making this up just to instigate some fight. You've been lying about this."

They've said over and over, "We're not doing anything offensive in Cuba." Even here, he was like, "I'm not going to answer your question. It's rude to be asking me this kind of thing and accusing us of this bad deal." Then Stevenson says, "Here's the proof, everybody. They are lying." A major public relations win. A lot of countries in the world have been on the side of the Soviet Union, saying, "Look, Kennedy is this super-anti-communist guy who's trying to start a war." Then they see it, and they realize, "The Russians have been lying to us. Kennedy's trying to protect the world." Public opinion in the world shifts. It's a really big deal in the world for Kennedy.

Student: Mr.?

Teacher: Yeah?

Student: Were the people in the video laughing?

Teacher: Yeah. Or like, "Oh my god, did you hear what he said?"

Student: It was so scary.

Teacher: Yeah. That's great. Meanwhile, the Soviets continue to set up the missiles in Cuba undercover, increasing pace. They've also begun unpacking and assembling some bomber planes that were packaged up. In the US, the military is amassing troops in Florida and Louisiana to prepare for a massive invasion. They're getting ready for option one. The nuclear force is on high alert. Everybody's ready. The planes are in the air, flying, with nuclear weapons loaded up, ready to get the alert to turn and head for Russia.

[00:48:00]

Around the world, people have begun holding 24-hour prayer sessions and rallies

for peace. The Pope is out there at St. Peter's Basilica on a balcony, 24 hours a day, praying with people for peace. Same deal is happening pretty much everywhere on earth.

Read documents six, seven, eight. We're going to pause, because we don't have a lot of time left. Look to document six. October 26th, Khrushchev sends a letter to Kennedy with an offer of a deal. If you flip, document seven I want you to skip. It's not essential. Document eight is October 27th. It's the next day. Khrushchev sends another letter with a different offer. Read those two, and then do the third decision.

[00:50:00]

Most of us have finished reading. There's two letters with two different offers. What's the offer in the first letter?

Student: Better than the second one.

Teacher: You find it better. What is the deal, the offer that's in the first letter, October 26th? What will the Americans do, and what will the Russians do?

Student: The Americans say that they won't attack Cuba.

Teacher: The Americans promise never to invade Cuba. And in return, the Soviets will?

Student: Take out the [inaudible 00:57:11].

Teacher: Take out the missiles. It's a trade. Everyone gives up something, everyone gets something that they want. But then a day later, on the 27th, a new letter comes in, which says?

Student: You have to take out your weapons too.

Teacher: Ah! Not only do you have to promise not to invade Cuba, but you also have to take out missiles from Turkey. Turkey is one of our NATO allies, still is. They're right on the border with the Soviet Union, and like Khrushchev says, "The soldiers there are looking at each other over the border, and here the Americans have put nuclear missiles in Turkey."

[00:58:00] These particular missiles are called Jupiter missiles. They were getting old, and they were going to get removed anyway pretty soon. But there's a danger in doing this kind of a trade. What happens if you take the deal, and then a year later, Khrushchev puts some missiles back in Cuba again, and this time he says, "All right, we'll take the missiles out if you give us West Berlin"? Then he turns around another year or two later and he does the same thing. He says, "All right, this time we'll take them out if you give us South Korea." There's a danger in taking these

kind of deals.

Also, it's weird that he sent two letters with two different deals. Could be a couple things. One, it could be that he's not in charge anymore. At some point overnight, his generals or other people in the Soviet Union took power, basically told him, "You're not in charge anymore. We're running the show. You're going to continue talking as if you are the leader, but ... " If the hardliners in the Soviet Union have taken over, it's a lot more dangerous now. This would be like if those generals who wanted Kennedy to go to war right from the start had taken over. It's a more dangerous situation.

Or it could be Khrushchev is scared, and he's trying to find something that Kennedy will take. "Sent this letter, I haven't heard anything back, let me try something else. Let's see what else he'll do." He's just fishing around. We don't know. There's no hotline yet to call him up and talk to him.

[01:00:00] What are you going to do? You've got to be creative. If you can't solve the problem, the sun may not come up tomorrow.

There was not unlimited time. You have two minutes to make up your minds.

Student: Do they still use letters right now?

Teacher: It's sent electronically. But it's still formalized. [crosstalk 01:03:17]

[01:04:00] Student: Do they text each other? Like, "Hey ... "

Teacher: Let's hear some thoughts. How many of you are going to take the first deal? Send them a letter, "We take the first deal." Pretend like the second letter got lost in the mail or something. Who would take the first deal? Anybody? No one on the first deal.

How about take the second deal? Why do a lot of people take the second deal? Why the second deal? Why not the first deal?

Student: The first deal is all about honesty.

Teacher: What do you mean, all about honesty?

Student: The second deal sounds more fair.

Teacher: You guys were saying something similar, right? Why is the second deal fair but the first one's not? Nice and loud, because they're cutting grass over there.

Student: Because we're not really [inaudible 01:04:58]

Teacher: You've got to say that a little louder. I'm old.

Student: Because if we have the missiles [inaudible 01:05:16] ... Like he said, ours are right next to them. Theirs [inaudible 01:05:21] miles away, but [inaudible 01:05:25].

Teacher: Khrushchev makes a good point. We're more likely to get them to accept the deal if it seems more fair. Does anyone else who wants to take the second deal have any other thoughts as to why?

Who's decided that the time for negotiating is over, there's no more chance of this, we're going to have nuclear war, we'd better shoot first? You're ready for the end of the world, [Veer 01:05:51]?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: You guys [crosstalk 01:05:53] are also on to this. You were saying, too, it's time just for war. Enough talk.

Spoiler alert: we didn't have nuclear war. It didn't turn out that way. Here, at the end of this day, Kennedy has to make this choice about what to do. His advisors, like you guys, were split. He went and he talked to the person he trusted absolutely the most, his younger brother, Robert Kennedy. The two of them went and they sat down and they decided that they were going to publicly take the first deal, and secretly take the second.

Student: Whoa!

Teacher: Kennedy sent an open letter to Khrushchev. He said, "We promise not to invade Cuba. You take your missiles out." In the middle of the night, his younger brother, Robert Kennedy, who was only young thirties, I think, at the time, went to the Russian embassy. Late at night, he went in the back door so people would not see him going there. He met with this guy at the embassy. It was not the ambassador who had originally contacted them about this, about meeting privately. At first, Kennedy and his advisors were like, "Who is this guy? Is it some random person making himself up to sound important, like it's a total distraction?" They did some research on him. They found out this low-ranking Soviet official had been one of Khrushchev's buddies in World War II. They had fought side by side. Just like Kennedy trusts his brother the most, this one guy, who actually wasn't that important in the Soviet government, was one of Khrushchev's old buddies, was the guy he trusted the most.

[01:08:00] Bobby Kennedy and this guy, Khrushchev's friend, meet in the middle of the night. Bobby Kennedy says, "We'll do the second deal also, but it has to be a secret. You can never tell that we made this deal. We're going to wait. We're not going to take the missiles out of Turkey right away. We'll do it a few months from now, so it

doesn't seem like it was a deal." Secretly take the second deal. The guy on the other side of the table, across from Bobby Kennedy, says, "All right. We're sane people." Just like [Da-som 01:08:17] said, "We love our children too." Like you were saying, "We have kids too. We'll make the deal."

They publicly take the first deal. They secretly take the second deal. The world did not know about it for many, many, many years, until these documents were declassified years after the fact. We did not know.

What's the outcome? Did we ever invade Cuba?

Student: No.

Teacher: Nope. As promised, we never invaded Cuba. We put sanctions on there, refused to do business with them. We tried to get our friends to not do business with them. When did the sanctions on Cuba end? When?

Student: Last year.

Teacher: Last year! Obama finally said, after some 60 years or something of having these sanctions that are not getting rid of Castro ... Castro's still alive. Now his younger brother's in charge. Fidel Castro's retired, because he's old. Never changed communism in Cuba. They still have it there. Even if the Soviet Union fell apart, Castro's still in charge. Obama said, "Fine, but this is it. We've tried this for years and years and years. It's not working. We're going to give up on the sanctions. We'll sell them all kinds of American stuff. We'll put Costco in Havana, and then the people will love capitalism."

We're just opening up now, and thus the beginnings of business related to Cuba. We'll see what happens. Fidel Castro and his younger brother, Raul Castro, who's in charge now, are both very old. I don't know what's going to happen. Things will change sometime in the near future. In your lifetime, you'll see things change in Cuba. I don't know. A few years.

[01:10:00] They did take their missiles out of Cuba. In fact, they left them there for kind of a long time. We didn't realize until many years later how long they had left them there. But they did eventually take them all out. We took our missiles out of Turkey, as promised, and we never had to go to war. We got away with it. We walked up very much to the brink, and we didn't have to go to war. What do you think?

Ms. [Ko-ah-chee-ga-la 01:10:10] loves to give this assignment after she talks about the Cuban Missile Crisis. What grade would you give Kennedy, if you could give him a report card on his handling of the crisis?

Student: A.

Teacher: He gets an A?

Student: A plus.

Teacher: An A plus. No nuclear war. He gets an A plus. Who wants to say he gets an A, he did a good job? How about a B? Could have been better, but pretty good.

Student: I'm thinking a B minus.

Teacher: B minus. [inaudible 01:10:38] How many people would say a C? This is only a mediocre job as leader of the free world. Anyone with a D? Barely passing? D? Anyone F, like, "He flunked. He just messed this up. No nuclear war, but ... " We're at least going to give him a passing grade on handling the crisis.

If there was going to be a crisis like this in the future, who would you want to be the President running the show?

Student: Donald Trump.

Student: Not Trump.

Student: Not Donald Trump.

Teacher: [crosstalk 01:11:07] Why not? Anyone running that you would trust?

Student: Ben Carson.

Teacher: Ben Carson. You'll take Ben Carson.

Student: No.

Teacher: Not Ben Carson? Ever since the Cuban Missile Crisis, this has been one of the tests that people have in their mind. Who would I trust in a crisis like this?

[01:12:00] There's an interesting side story. After the fact, it came out that Kennedy had just recently read a book that was popular at the time, called The Guns of August. It was a famous historian in America who did a lot of research on World War I. I forget her name now, sorry, but she wrote this book called The Guns of August, which was about August of 1914, when the first World War started. About how the leaders of Germany and France and the other countries in Europe had sort of plunged themselves into war because they wouldn't stop their original plans. Their plans had said, "On this day we'll do this. On this day we'll do this, because on day 30-something, we'll win." For them, they were so entrenched in their "now we must do this next," or "they did this, so we must respond" that they wouldn't stop.

Kennedy had this in mind, and he said World War I could have been avoided if the leaders had been willing to stand up to the military generals and say, "No, we're not going to go through with your plans you've been working on for so long. We're going to negotiate. We're going to try and stop this peacefully." Kennedy made the military leaders in America furious, but he avoided something that he had just read about happening years before. A good example of the lessons of history.

Knowing what America has done, dealing with the Cold War and with Russia and dealing with the Cuban Missile Crisis, your job is to add to your original essay final thoughts. Directions are on your packet. You also have a reading to do for when we start our next topic. I'll see you tomorrow very briefly, but I'll see you for class class on Wednesday. Until then, have a good weekend. Good job solving the Cuban Missile Crisis.