Alabama in Motion

How work and trade changed Alabama after the Civil War

SS24.4.16a "Describe how industry, trade, farming, and the rise of Populism changed Alabama after the Civil War and shaped its economy and communities in the late 1800s."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one change in each area: industry, trade, farming, and Populism. Circle words that show how each change affected Alabama's economy or communities.

New Work, New Voices

1 After the Civil War, Alabama's economy began to change. Near Birmingham, workers dug coal and iron ore from the ground. Factories used these materials to make iron and steel. People moved to Birmingham for jobs, and the town grew into a busy city. Railroads carried factory goods to buyers in other places. This trade brought money into Alabama and connected its towns to markets beyond the state.

2 Farming still shaped life for many Alabamians. Many families grew cotton to sell, rather than food to eat. After slavery ended, some farmers rented land and paid the owner with part of their crop. This system was called sharecropping. When cotton prices fell, families often owed more money than they earned. Merchants in small towns sold seeds and supplies on credit, so farm debt affected whole communities.

3 In the 1890s, many Alabama farmers wanted changes. Some joined the Populist movement, which called for fairer railroad rates and better chances to borrow money. Lower shipping costs could help farmers earn more from their crops. Populists also tried to give struggling farmers a stronger voice in government. Black and white farmers joined the movement, but racism and unfair elections limited its power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did new industries change Birmingham and Alabama's economy?

2. How did railroads change trade for Alabama towns?

3. When cotton prices fell, how did sharecropping affect farm families and small-town merchants?

4. How did Populists try to change farmers' earnings and their voice in government?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are writing a note to an Alabama family deciding whether to keep farming or seek work in Birmingham in the 1890s. In four sentences, compare how two changes from the passage could affect their choice, and explain which path you would choose.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 4 · SS24.4.16a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one change in each area: industry, trade, farming, and Populism. Circle words that show how each change affected Alabama's economy or communities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did new industries change Birmingham and Alabama's economy?	**Iron and steel factories offered jobs, helping Birmingham grow into a city.**
2	How did railroads change trade for Alabama towns?	**Railroads carried factory goods to buyers elsewhere, connecting towns to new markets and bringing money into Alabama.**
3	When cotton prices fell, how did sharecropping affect farm families and small-town merchants?	**Families could owe more than they earned from cotton. Merchants sold supplies on credit, so farm debt affected them too.**
4	How did Populists try to change farmers' earnings and their voice in government?	**They called for fairer railroad rates and better borrowing options to help farmers earn more, and they sought a stronger voice for farmers in government.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Cotton prices can fall, and sharecroppers may end up owing money to merchants. Factories near Birmingham offer jobs making iron and steel. Railroad trade brings buyers for factory goods, so those jobs might help our family earn money. I would look for work in Birmingham because farm debt could make it hard to pay for our needs.

Accept different choices in Part 3 if the four-sentence note compares at least two changes from the passage and explains how those changes affect the family's decision.