Borders and Balance

How expansion sharpened the debate over slavery

SS24.US1.11b "Develop an argument to show how the causes and consequences of the Texas Revolution and Mexican-American War escalated sectional tension in the debate over slavery and expansion."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline causes of the Texas Revolution and Mexican-American War, circle consequences, and number two places where an event increased sectional tension over slavery.

When New Land Raised Old Questions

1. In 1835, settlers in Mexican Texas rebelled against Mexico's government. They objected to tighter control from Mexico City, including limits on local self-rule. Slavery also mattered: many settlers from the United States held enslaved people, while Mexico had restricted slavery and opposed its expansion. Not every rebel fought for slavery, but some feared losing the labor system that supported their farms. After rebels won independence in 1836, the Republic of Texas allowed slavery. Its leaders sought admission to the United States, turning a fight over government in Texas into a national question: Would another slave state shift political power?

2. Congress delayed annexation partly because adding Texas as a slave state could strengthen the slaveholding South in Congress. Northern opponents of slavery's expansion resisted that shift; supporters argued that admitting Texas would protect settlers and extend American influence. The United States annexed Texas in 1845, and Mexico, which still claimed Texas, protested. The two governments also disputed its southern border. Texas claimed the Rio Grande; Mexico treated the Nueces River, farther north, as the border. After U.S. and Mexican forces clashed in the disputed area in 1846, the United States declared war. Annexation had linked slavery politics to a border conflict.

3. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War and gave the United States vast western lands, including present-day California and New Mexico. Now Congress faced a question beyond Texas: Would slavery be allowed in territory acquired from Mexico? During the war, Representative David Wilmot proposed barring slavery from any land gained from Mexico. His proposal passed the House but failed in the Senate, exposing a sectional split rather than resolving it. Southern politicians demanded equal access to the new territory for slaveholders; many northern politicians opposed slavery's spread. Each expansion decision now threatened the balance of power between free and slave states.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did concerns about slavery help turn the Texas Revolution into a debate across the United States?

2. Why did annexing Texas create both sectional tension and a dispute with Mexico?

3. Trace one chain of events from the disputed Texas border to a new debate over slavery.

4. Why did the Wilmot proposal intensify sectional tension instead of settling the question of slavery in new territory?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Which escalated sectional tension more, the annexation of Texas or the land gained after the Mexican-American War? Write one paragraph that makes a claim, uses at least two details from the passage, and explains why the other event also mattered.

ANSWER KEY

Borders and Balance

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.11b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline causes of the Texas Revolution and Mexican-American War, circle consequences, and number two places where an event increased sectional tension over slavery. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did concerns about slavery help turn the Texas Revolution into a debate across the United States?	**Some settlers feared losing slavery under Mexican rule. After independence, Texas allowed slavery and sought U.S. admission, raising fears that another slave state would shift political power.**
2	Why did annexing Texas create both sectional tension and a dispute with Mexico?	**Admission as a slave state could strengthen the South in Congress. Mexico still claimed Texas, and the two countries disagreed about its southern border.**
3	Trace one chain of events from the disputed Texas border to a new debate over slavery.	**U.S. and Mexican forces clashed in the disputed border area, and the United States declared war. The war ended with U.S. control of western lands, prompting debate over whether slavery would be allowed there.**
4	Why did the Wilmot proposal intensify sectional tension instead of settling the question of slavery in new territory?	**The proposed ban passed the House but failed in the Senate. Southern politicians demanded access for slaveholders, while many northern politicians opposed slavery's spread.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The land gained after the Mexican-American War intensified sectional tension more than the annexation of Texas did. Texas entered as a slave state, so its admission had already raised fears about political power in Congress. Still, the 1848 treaty opened a much larger question about slavery across vast western lands, not just one state. Wilmot's proposed ban passed the House but failed in the Senate, showing that lawmakers could not agree on a rule for those lands. Although annexing Texas helped bring on the war, its aftermath made the dispute harder to contain.

Accept either choice in Part 3 if the student supports it with two accurate passage details and explains how the other event contributed to sectional tension. Look for a causal argument, not just a list of events.