Who Gained Ground?

Economic growth and its costs in the postwar West

SS24.US1.14 "Explain how westward expansion after the Civil War created economic growth in the West and affected the people living there as well as those migrating to the region..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two reasons people migrated west, circle two economic gains, and number three federal actions affecting Native land to track how westward growth changed people's lives.

Growth on Contested Ground

1 In 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was completed, joining eastern rail lines to the Pacific coast. Federal land grants and loans helped railroad companies build it. Faster, cheaper travel brought settlers west and carried grain and cattle toward eastern buyers. The Homestead Act of 1862 offered eligible applicants 160 acres of public land if they lived on and improved it for five years. That promise attracted migrants seeking farms, including formerly enslaved people known as Exodusters. Yet families needed tools, water, and money to survive. Railroad routes and homestead claims also crossed lands Native nations already used and claimed.

2 Near a mining camp, a new strike could bring workers, stores, and freight business almost overnight. Gold and silver mining supplied jobs and investment, but abandoned mine waste polluted streams, and digging damaged hillsides. On the grasslands, ranchers raised cattle for eastern markets. Rail shipments helped turn cattle into a major business; cowhands, including Black and Mexican American workers, drove herds to railheads. Large herds ate grasses and trampled stream banks, especially where grazing was concentrated. Ranchers could earn money, while drought, falling prices, and severe winters could ruin others. Western growth created opportunities, but its costs were not shared equally.

3 Federal officials often treated Native homelands as available for settlers, miners, and railroads, despite treaties recognizing Native rights. The U.S. Army forced many communities onto reservations and fought those who resisted. In 1876, Lakota and Cheyenne fighters defeated U.S. troops at the Battle of the Little Bighorn; later military campaigns increased federal control. The Dawes Act of 1887 divided many reservations into individual allotments and opened remaining land to non-Native settlers. This policy broke up communal landholdings and cost Native nations millions of acres. Native people resisted through armed defense, legal action, and the continued practice of their languages and traditions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Homestead Act and the railroad work together to encourage migration and settlement? What difficulty could settlers still face?

2. Compare one economic benefit and one environmental cost of mining with one economic benefit and one environmental cost of cattle ranching.

3. Explain how one federal policy and one military action changed Native people's control of land.

4. How did Native fighters challenge federal control at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, and what happened afterward?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 110 word letter dated 1889 arguing whether westward growth should be called "progress." Use two economic gains, one environmental cost, one effect on Native land, and one example of Native resistance from the passage, and address a counterargument.

ANSWER KEY

Who Gained Ground?

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.14

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons people migrated west, circle two economic gains, and number three federal actions affecting Native land to track how westward growth changed people's lives. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Homestead Act and the railroad work together to encourage migration and settlement? What difficulty could settlers still face?	**The Homestead Act offered eligible migrants land to farm, while the railroad made travel west faster and cheaper and provided access to markets. Settlers still needed tools, water, and money.**
2	Compare one economic benefit and one environmental cost of mining with one economic benefit and one environmental cost of cattle ranching.	**Mining created jobs but polluted streams with mine waste. Cattle ranching brought income from eastern markets but could damage grasses and stream banks.**
3	Explain how one federal policy and one military action changed Native people's control of land.	**The Dawes Act divided reservations and opened remaining land to non-Native settlers. The U.S. Army forced many Native communities onto reservations.**
4	How did Native fighters challenge federal control at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, and what happened afterward?	**Lakota and Cheyenne fighters defeated U.S. troops in 1876. Later military campaigns increased federal control.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

To the editor, in 1889 I cannot call western growth progress for everyone. The railroad carries cattle to eastern buyers, and mining camps create jobs for workers and shopkeepers. Some neighbors say these gains justify the changes. Yet mine waste pollutes streams, and the Dawes Act opens Native land to non-Native settlers. Lakota and Cheyenne fighters resisted federal control at Little Bighorn, showing that people did not simply consent to losing their homelands. A stronger economy matters, but it cannot erase damaged water or the loss of land protected by treaties. We should judge growth by who benefits and who pays.

Accept other passage-supported examples of economic gains, environmental costs, federal actions, and Native resistance. The letter may argue either position if it meets the evidence, counterargument, date, and word-count requirements.