Promise and Practice

Trace how an author develops a nuanced historical claim.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.10 "By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence or clause in each paragraph that you think advances the author's central interpretation. Circle transition or limiting words that signal a shift or qualification, then use your marks to trace the argument.

The GI Bill's Uneven Legacy

(1) In 1944, as U.S. leaders planned for the return of millions of service members, Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, commonly called the GI Bill. Its education provision paid tuition and supplied living expenses for eligible veterans, while its loan guarantees encouraged banks to lend for homes, farms, and businesses. Policymakers hoped these benefits would prevent the unemployment that had followed World War I and would ease veterans' transition into civilian life. The law therefore functioned not simply as a reward for military service, but as a plan to shape the postwar economy.

(2) Yet the bill's broad language did not ensure equal results. Federal administrators left much of the program's operation to state agencies, local officials, colleges, and private lenders. In the segregated South, many Black veterans encountered colleges that refused admission or lacked space because states had underfunded Black institutions. Elsewhere, discriminatory lending practices and neighborhood rules limited access to federally backed mortgages. Historians consequently caution against describing the GI Bill as a benefit distributed evenly to every veteran. The program opened major opportunities, but those opportunities were filtered through existing local systems of power.

(3) The scale of participation nevertheless transformed American higher education and housing. By 1956, nearly 7.8 million veterans had used GI Bill education or training benefits, helping colleges expand enrollments and build new programs. Veterans' home purchases also contributed to suburban growth, although that growth often reinforced racial separation where exclusionary policies operated. These outcomes show why historians read the law alongside the institutions that carried it out. A national promise can produce sweeping change, yet its effects may differ sharply when local rules determine who can enter a classroom, receive a loan, or buy a house.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1 State the passage's central claim about the GI Bill in one sentence.

2 How does paragraph 2 complicate the idea that the GI Bill helped veterans? Use one detail from the paragraph.

3 What does the statistic about nearly 7.8 million veterans help the author establish?

4 In the final paragraph, how does the contrast between a national promise and local rules explain why outcomes varied?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly three sentences as a historical reading note. State the passage's central claim, identify one qualification to that claim, and explain how one piece of evidence supports the claim, referring to at least two distinct details from the passage.

Promise and Practice

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence or clause in each paragraph that you think advances the author's central interpretation. Circle transition or limiting words that signal a shift or qualification, then use your marks to trace the argument. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	State the passage's central claim about the GI Bill in one sentence.	**The GI Bill created major postwar educational and economic opportunities, but local discriminatory systems made its benefits unequal.**
2	How does paragraph 2 complicate the idea that the GI Bill helped veterans? Use one detail from the paragraph.	**It explains that unequal local practices limited access, such as colleges refusing Black veterans admission or discriminatory lending restricting mortgages.**
3	What does the statistic about nearly 7.8 million veterans help the author establish?	**It shows that the GI Bill operated on a large scale and significantly changed higher education.**
4	In the final paragraph, how does the contrast between a national promise and local rules explain why outcomes varied?	**A national law offered broad benefits, but local rules and institutions determined who could actually receive those benefits.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The passage argues that the GI Bill reshaped postwar education and housing, but its benefits were not distributed equally. Its qualification is supported by the description of Black veterans facing limited college access and discriminatory mortgage practices. The figure of nearly 7.8 million education or training users shows that the program's effects were broad even as local systems restricted access for many people.

Accept equivalent statements that recognize both the GI Bill's large-scale impact and its unequal distribution. For the open response, require exactly three sentences, a central claim, a qualification, and support from at least two passage details.