

Borders With Consequences

Tracing how colonial boundaries shaped later conflicts

SS7H1.a “Explain how the European partitioning across Africa contributed to conflict, civil war, and artificial political boundaries in Africa today.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each detail about a European border or colonial policy, circle each result it caused or helped cause, and number linked cause-and-effect pairs 1, 2, and 3.

Lines Drawn From Afar

- ① In the late 1800s, European powers competed for African land, trade, and resources. At the Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885, European leaders set rules for claiming territory, although Africans did not take part. Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and Spain expanded colonies. Officials often drew borders to suit European claims. They paid little attention to the languages, governments, trade routes, and family ties already connecting African communities. Many local leaders resisted these takeovers, but European armies had powerful weapons.
- ② Some colonial boundaries split one ethnic group between several colonies. The Somali people, for example, were divided among British, Italian, French, and Ethiopian-controlled territories. Other borders placed many groups inside one colony, even when they had different languages or political traditions. Nigeria included hundreds of groups under British rule. Rwanda and Burundi were governed by Germany and later Belgium, whose officials strengthened social divisions between Hutu and Tutsi people. These choices made colonial administration easier, but they did not create fair or stable political communities.
- ③ When colonies became independent, most new countries kept the colonial borders. Changing every border could have caused more disputes, so African leaders supported keeping them. Yet groups separated by a border sometimes sought to unite, while groups forced into one country competed for land, power, or recognition. Colonial policies also favored some groups over others. These tensions helped fuel conflicts and civil wars in places such as Nigeria and Rwanda. European partitioning was not the only cause, but its borders and unequal systems left lasting problems.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Why did European officials often draw colonial borders without following existing African communities?

2 How could splitting one ethnic group between several colonies lead to conflict after independence?

3 How could placing many groups with different political traditions inside one colony contribute to civil war?

4 Why did many African countries keep colonial borders after independence, even though the borders caused problems?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Invent a country with communities affected by a colonial border decision. In three sentences, describe the decision, explain one conflict it could cause after independence, and give one reason leaders might keep the border.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each detail about a European border or colonial policy, circle each result it caused or helped cause, and number linked cause-and-effect pairs 1, 2, and 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did European officials often draw colonial borders without following existing African communities?	They drew borders to suit European claims for land, trade, and resources, and they paid little attention to existing African languages, governments, trade routes, and family ties.
2	How could splitting one ethnic group between several colonies lead to conflict after independence?	People separated by a border might seek to unite, which could create disputes between countries or groups.
3	How could placing many groups with different political traditions inside one colony contribute to civil war?	Groups forced into one country could compete for land, power, or recognition, creating tensions that could help fuel conflict or civil war.
4	Why did many African countries keep colonial borders after independence, even though the borders caused problems?	Changing every border could have caused more disputes, so African leaders supported keeping the existing borders.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

European officials divided the Kalo community between the new countries of Riverland and Hillland, while placing the Mera and Suni communities together in Riverland. After independence, Kalo leaders might demand a union, and Riverland's groups might compete for control of farmland and government offices. Leaders could keep the border because changing it might create new disputes.

Accept responses that accurately connect European border-making or unequal colonial policies to later tensions, conflict, or civil war. For Part 3, accept plausible fictional examples that include all three requested parts.