Machines Move West

How inventions changed farming, travel, and land

5.SS.1.11 "Describe the impact of scientific and technological advances on westward expansion including but not limited to the cotton gin, the reaper, the steam engine, and steam locomotive."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the names of four advances in the passage. Underline one effect of each advance on westward expansion, then write matching numbers beside each advance and its effect.

Changes on the Western Land

1. In the early 1800s, many settlers moved west, but the land was already home to Native nations. New machines changed what people could grow, move, and sell. The cotton gin quickly removed seeds from cotton. This made cotton farming more profitable, so plantation owners spread cotton fields into western lands. They forced enslaved people to work those fields, and Native peoples lost land as plantations expanded.

2. On farms farther north, the mechanical reaper cut grain much faster than a worker using a hand tool. A farmer could harvest more wheat with fewer workers. This helped some families farm larger fields as settlers moved west. But growing farms also pushed onto land used by Native peoples. A machine that saved farm labor could still bring serious harm to communities whose land was taken.

3. A steam engine used heat from burning fuel to power machines. On steamboats, steam engines turned paddles that moved boats along rivers, helping people and goods travel even against the current. A steam locomotive used a steam engine to pull railroad cars over tracks. As rail lines reached farther west, settlers could travel and ship crops to distant markets more quickly. Building those tracks also cut across Native lands.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the cotton gin affect western lands and the people living or working there?

2. How did the reaper help some settlers farm larger fields in the West?

3. How did a steam engine make river travel more useful for people moving west?

4. How did steam locomotives change life in the West for settlers and Native peoples?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a family planning a farm near a western river and a Native community already living there. In four or five sentences, explain how two different advances from the passage might affect the family's plans and the Native community. Include one benefit and one harm.

ANSWER KEY

Machines Move West

GRADE 5 · 5.SS.1.11

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the names of four advances in the passage. Underline one effect of each advance on westward expansion, then write matching numbers beside each advance and its effect. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the cotton gin affect western lands and the people living or working there?	**It made cotton farming more profitable, so plantations spread west. Enslaved people were forced to work there, and Native peoples lost land.**
2	How did the reaper help some settlers farm larger fields in the West?	**It cut grain faster than a hand tool, letting farmers harvest more wheat with fewer workers.**
3	How did a steam engine make river travel more useful for people moving west?	**It powered steamboat paddles, helping boats carry people and goods along rivers even against the current.**
4	How did steam locomotives change life in the West for settlers and Native peoples?	**They pulled trains that helped settlers travel and ship crops to distant markets more quickly. Railroad tracks also cut across Native lands.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A family planning a farm near a western river might bring a mechanical reaper to harvest a larger wheat field. A steamboat powered by a steam engine could bring supplies upriver and carry their wheat to buyers. These advances might help the family earn money from its farm. But if the family took land used by a Native community, that community would lose access to land it relied on.

Accept any passage-supported explanation that connects an advance to a change in farming, travel, trade, or land use. For Part 3, look for two distinct advances and a plausible benefit and harm in the imagined situation.