Borders and Bargains

How U.S. policies changed relations with Britain and Mexico

6-12.US1.36 "Analyze how foreign policy during the 1820s to 1860s impacted relations with sovereign powers outside the United States, for example, tariff policies and treaties with European powers and Mexico."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each U.S. policy or agreement named in the passage, then circle words that show its effect on relations with another country. Number the effects that reduced the chance of conflict.

A Tax, Two Borders, and a War

(1) In the 1840s, a merchant unloading British cloth in a United States port might have faced a higher import tax. Congress's Tariff of 1842 raised duties on many imported goods to protect American producers and bring in revenue. British sellers had a harder time competing in the United States, so trade policy could strain relations with Britain. Yet the two governments could cooperate on a different problem. In the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, they settled much of the disputed border between Maine and British-controlled New Brunswick. A clear boundary reduced the chance that a local clash would become a wider conflict.

(2) Farther west, the United States and Britain both claimed the Oregon Country. Settlers arrived, and leaders feared that competing claims might lead to war. Instead, the Oregon Treaty of 1846 divided most of the disputed region along the 49th parallel. Britain kept Vancouver Island, while the United States gained territory south of the line. The agreement did not erase competition, but it turned a possible military crisis into a negotiated border. Britain and the United States could disagree over trade yet still settle land claims by treaty. The choices each government made shaped whether a dispute became a fight or a compromise.

(3) Relations with Mexico followed a harsher path. The United States annexed Texas in 1845, but Mexico did not accept the United States claim that Texas reached the Rio Grande. Fighting broke out in 1846. After the United States won the war, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 set the Rio Grande as the Texas border. Mexico also ceded a vast area to the United States, which paid Mexico $15 million. A treaty settled the boundary, but it followed military defeat and major land loss for Mexico. In 1853, the countries signed an agreement for the Gadsden Purchase, a negotiated sale of more Mexican land to the United States.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the Tariff of 1842 strain relations with Britain, while the Webster-Ashburton Treaty could reduce conflict?

2. How did the Oregon Treaty change the way the United States and Britain handled their competing land claims?

3. Why did the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo settle a border dispute without making the outcome equal for Mexico and the United States?

4. How did the Gadsden Purchase differ from the earlier U.S. approach to gaining land from Mexico?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a new border dispute between the United States and a neighboring sovereign country in 1855. Write four sentences advising U.S. leaders on one action, predicting its effect on relations, and using two different events from the passage as evidence.

ANSWER KEY

Borders and Bargains

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.US1.36

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each U.S. policy or agreement named in the passage, then circle words that show its effect on relations with another country. Number the effects that reduced the chance of conflict. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the Tariff of 1842 strain relations with Britain, while the Webster-Ashburton Treaty could reduce conflict?	**The tariff made it harder for British sellers to compete in U.S. markets. The treaty clarified a disputed border, reducing the chance of a clash.**
2	How did the Oregon Treaty change the way the United States and Britain handled their competing land claims?	**They agreed on a border instead of risking war over the Oregon Country.**
3	Why did the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo settle a border dispute without making the outcome equal for Mexico and the United States?	**It set the Rio Grande border after a U.S. military victory, but Mexico also ceded a vast area of land.**
4	How did the Gadsden Purchase differ from the earlier U.S. approach to gaining land from Mexico?	**The Gadsden Purchase was a negotiated sale, while the earlier land cession followed a war that Mexico lost.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would advise U.S. leaders to negotiate a border treaty with the neighboring country instead of sending troops. The Oregon Treaty shows that negotiation can turn rival land claims into an agreed boundary without war. The war with Mexico shows that fighting can lead to a treaty but leave one country with major land losses. A negotiated border would be more likely to lower the risk of conflict and preserve a working relationship.

Accept other supported recommendations if the response predicts an effect on relations and accurately uses two distinct events from the passage. Students should distinguish a negotiated settlement from a treaty reached after war.