Lines That Matter

How seats and district boundaries shape representation

9-12.GOV.53 "Explain the impact of reapportionment and redistricting on elections and governance."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the change in Harbor's number of House seats, then circle two ways district boundaries could affect voters or representatives. Number the steps from the census to an election or governance effect.

A New Seat for Harbor

1. After the 2030 census, imagine that the fictional state of Harbor gains one seat in the U.S. House, moving from eight representatives to nine. This change is reapportionment: the 435 House seats are divided among states according to population after each census. Because the total stays at 435 unless federal law changes it, a gain for one state means a loss elsewhere. Harbor's voters will elect nine House members instead of eight, giving the state another voice in House votes and committee work. Its electoral votes also rise from ten to eleven because each state's total includes its House seats and two senators.

2. Next, Harbor must redraw its congressional districts so nine districts, rather than eight, each contain roughly the same number of residents. That process is redistricting. Suppose the growing port neighborhoods had been split between two old districts. One possible new plan places them together in a district; another divides them among several districts. The first plan might help port residents choose a representative focused on their shared concerns. The second might make those voters less able to influence any single House race. District boundaries can also change which candidates run, which incumbents face each other, and whether elections are competitive.

3. Harbor's lawmakers must follow federal rules, including equal population requirements and protections against racial discrimination, as well as applicable state rules. Some states give a commission rather than lawmakers the main role in drawing lines. Even a legal map can shape governance after Election Day: a representative whose district includes most of the port may spend more time on shipping and flood protection. A district that stretches across port neighborhoods and distant farms may bring competing priorities to the same office. Redistricting does not change how many seats Harbor receives; it changes which residents vote together for each seat.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Harbor's new House seat affect both its elections and its work in Congress?

2. Why does Harbor's gain mean a loss elsewhere, and how does the gain affect Harbor's presidential elections?

3. How might placing the port neighborhoods together, rather than dividing them, change their influence in a House election?

4. How could a district that includes both the port and distant farms affect its representative's work after Election Day?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine that Mesa keeps the same population while other states grow faster. Mesa has a small city beside farming towns, and its House seats fall from seven to six. In four or five sentences, explain two election effects, propose one boundary choice, and explain a possible benefit and tradeoff for representation.

Lines That Matter

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the change in Harbor's number of House seats, then circle two ways district boundaries could affect voters or representatives. Number the steps from the census to an election or governance effect. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Harbor's new House seat affect both its elections and its work in Congress?	**Voters elect nine House members instead of eight, and Harbor gains another voice in House votes and committee work.**
2	Why does Harbor's gain mean a loss elsewhere, and how does the gain affect Harbor's presidential elections?	**The House has 435 seats, so another state must lose a seat. Harbor's electoral votes rise from ten to eleven.**
3	How might placing the port neighborhoods together, rather than dividing them, change their influence in a House election?	**Together, port voters may have more influence in choosing a representative focused on their concerns. Divided among districts, they may have less influence in any one race.**
4	How could a district that includes both the port and distant farms affect its representative's work after Election Day?	**The representative would have to address competing port and farm priorities within the same district.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mesa will elect six House members instead of seven, so each district will contain more residents. Its electoral votes will fall from nine to eight, reducing its weight in presidential elections. Mesa could group its small city and nearby farming towns in one district. Their shared water needs might gain a single advocate in Congress. Yet one representative would have to balance urban housing needs against farm irrigation needs.

Accept other plausible boundary choices and tradeoffs if the response distinguishes the loss of a seat from the effects of drawing district lines. With a constant population and one fewer House seat, Mesa's districts will contain more residents.