A Changing Home Front

Demobilization, the GI Bill, and uneven postwar prosperity

9-12.US2.22 "Evaluate the impact of postwar demobilization and the GI Bill on economic growth, culture, and lifestyle."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two cause-and-effect links that show economic growth, circle two barriers to sharing in that growth, and number two changes in daily life.

Coming Home to a Changing Economy

1 By late 1945, train stations filled with Americans leaving military service and looking for civilian work. Demobilization moved millions from military service into a peacetime economy. Factories that had made weapons began selling cars, refrigerators, and other household goods. Yet the shift was not smooth: workers faced layoffs as war contracts ended, and many women who had held industrial jobs were pushed out when veterans returned. Families had saved money during the war, when many goods were scarce. Their spending after the war helped businesses hire workers, but shortages also drove prices up.

2 Congress had passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, known as the GI Bill, in 1944. It offered eligible veterans tuition and living support for education or training, along with government-backed loans for homes and businesses. Instead of competing for the same jobs at once, some veterans entered classrooms and learned skills for new careers. Colleges expanded as enrollment grew. Graduates could earn more, spend more, and add to the skilled workforce. Loans made homeownership possible for many families; construction of homes supported jobs in building and related industries. These changes fueled growth, though the bill did not cause the postwar boom by itself.

3 Consider two veterans seeking a home in the late 1940s. A white veteran might use a GI-backed loan to buy a house in a growing suburb, then commute by car and shop at new stores. A Black veteran qualified for the same federal benefit but might be denied a mortgage or barred from that neighborhood because lenders and developers discriminated. Segregated colleges also limited some Black veterans' educational choices. Suburban growth reshaped daily life around houses, cars, and shopping, but its rewards were unequal. The GI Bill widened opportunities for millions while existing barriers kept others from sharing fully in that prosperity.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did demobilization both disrupt employment and help expand civilian businesses?

2. Evaluate two different ways the GI Bill contributed to economic growth.

3. How did the postwar boom change daily life, and why would it be inaccurate to credit the GI Bill alone?

4. Evaluate the claim that the GI Bill gave every eligible veteran an equal chance to enjoy suburban life.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your town in 1948 can fund either new trade-school classrooms or roads to a new suburb. In four sentences, recommend one choice, explain two ways it could affect the economy or daily life, and identify one limit to who might benefit.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.US2.22

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two cause-and-effect links that show economic growth, circle two barriers to sharing in that growth, and number two changes in daily life. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did demobilization both disrupt employment and help expand civilian businesses?	**Ending war contracts caused layoffs, and returning veterans added to the number of people seeking work. At the same time, factories shifted to civilian goods, and families spent wartime savings, helping businesses hire workers.**
2	Evaluate two different ways the GI Bill contributed to economic growth.	**Education support helped veterans gain skills for work and potentially higher earnings. Home loans helped families buy houses, supporting construction jobs and related industries.**
3	How did the postwar boom change daily life, and why would it be inaccurate to credit the GI Bill alone?	**Suburban homes, car commutes, and shopping at new stores changed daily life. Families' wartime savings and factories' shift to civilian goods also helped drive the boom.**
4	Evaluate the claim that the GI Bill gave every eligible veteran an equal chance to enjoy suburban life.	**The claim is inaccurate. Although Black veterans qualified for federal benefits, discrimination by lenders and developers could prevent them from buying homes in growing suburbs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would fund new trade-school classrooms rather than roads to a new suburb. GI Bill support could bring more veterans into training, where they could gain skills for better-paying work. Higher earnings could increase spending at local businesses, while classrooms would offer an opportunity that does not require buying a house. This choice would not erase unequal access, since segregation could still limit Black veterans' educational options.

Accept either funding choice if the response gives two plausible effects grounded in the passage and identifies a relevant limit. Do not treat GI Bill eligibility as proof of equal access to loans, housing, or education.