Follow the Money

Economic choices across three turning points in U.S. history

8.E.1 "Identify economic factors contributing to European exploration and colonization in North America, the American Revolution, and the drafting of the United States Constitution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In each paragraph, underline one economic goal or problem and circle one action taken in response. Use your marks to trace how money and trade shaped decisions.

From Colonial Docks to Congress

1. Picture a colonial dock stacked with barrels of fish and planks of timber. In the 1500s and 1600s, European rulers and investors sought wealth through overseas trade. North America offered fish, timber, furs, and land for crops. European nations set up colonies to obtain these resources and sell goods made at home to colonial buyers. Under Britain's trade rules, many colonial products had to travel in British ships or pass through British ports. Such rules aimed to keep trade profits and shipping jobs within the empire.

2. Now picture that dock after the French and Indian War ended in 1763. Britain faced large war debts and costs for troops in North America. Parliament taxed colonists through measures such as the Stamp Act, which placed a tax on printed materials. Many colonists objected because they had no elected representatives in Parliament to approve those taxes. British limits on colonial trade also angered merchants who wanted more freedom to buy and sell. Disputes over taxes and trade helped push the colonies toward revolution, alongside political arguments about rights and self-government.

3. After independence, money problems did not disappear. Under the Articles of Confederation, the national government could not levy taxes directly, so it struggled to pay debts. States could place tariffs, or taxes, on goods from other states, making trade between them harder. States also issued different paper currencies, which complicated business. At the 1787 Constitutional Convention, delegates debated ways to strengthen the national economy. The Constitution gave Congress power to tax, regulate trade among the states, and coin money. These powers addressed problems that the earlier government could not solve.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What economic goal led European nations to establish colonies in North America?

2. How did Britain's war debt contribute to a dispute that pushed the colonies toward revolution?

3. Why did British trade limits anger some colonial merchants?

4. Name two economic problems under the Articles of Confederation and a power the Constitution gave Congress to address each one.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence pitch for a museum exhibit about a merchant family that trades one product across three generations. Invent the product, then show how one economic factor shapes the family's business during colonization, the Revolution, and the years when the Constitution was drafted.

ANSWER KEY

Follow the Money

GRADE 8 · 8.E.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each paragraph, underline one economic goal or problem and circle one action taken in response. Use your marks to trace how money and trade shaped decisions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What economic goal led European nations to establish colonies in North America?	**They wanted resources from North America and buyers for goods made at home.**
2	How did Britain's war debt contribute to a dispute that pushed the colonies toward revolution?	**Britain taxed colonists to help cover war debts and troop costs. Many colonists objected because they had no elected representatives in Parliament to approve the taxes.**
3	Why did British trade limits anger some colonial merchants?	**The limits reduced merchants' freedom to buy and sell.**
4	Name two economic problems under the Articles of Confederation and a power the Constitution gave Congress to address each one.	**The national government struggled to pay debts because it could not levy taxes directly, and the Constitution gave Congress power to tax. State tariffs made trade harder, and the Constitution gave Congress power to regulate trade among the states.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our exhibit follows three generations of a family that sells timber. During colonization, the first generation ships timber to British buyers because European demand makes it valuable. During the Revolution, the next generation worries that British trade limits will restrict where it can sell. In the years when the Constitution is drafted, the third generation wants easier trade between states because state tariffs raise its costs.

Accept historically sound economic cause-and-effect connections supported by the passage. For the exhibit pitch, look for one product and a distinct business choice or concern in each of the three eras.