Changing Edges

Use geographic clues to compare historical U.S. boundaries.

8.G.1 "Read and interpret maps that portray the physical growth and development of the United States from colonization through Reconstruction (1877)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the table's snapshots from earliest to latest. Circle the feature at or near the western edge of each snapshot, then underline the feature that changes from a western edge to a place inside U.S. land.

Where the Edge Moved

1 A map can show more than a place. It can show a changing edge. To compare maps from different years, first find the compass directions, then look for fixed features such as rivers and mountains. The table below gives clues you could use to sketch four simplified maps. It tracks land claims, not where every person lived.

GEOGRAPHIC CLUES FOR FOUR MAP SNAPSHOTS

Year	East-to-west reach	Feature to locate
1763	British colonial communities: Atlantic coast toward Appalachian Mountains	Appalachian Mountains near the western edge of concentrated colonial settlement
1783	United States: Atlantic coast to Mississippi River	Mississippi River at the western edge; Florida outside the United States
1803	U.S. claims: Atlantic coast across Mississippi River toward Rocky Mountains	Mississippi River inside U.S. claims; Rocky Mountains near their western reach
1877	Contiguous United States: Atlantic coast to Pacific Ocean	Mississippi River inside the country; Pacific Ocean at its western edge

2 In 1763, Britain's North American colonies included communities concentrated along the Atlantic coast, while a British order restricted colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. After independence, the 1783 peace treaty recognized a United States reaching the Mississippi River. Florida was not part of the new country. A boundary on a map does not tell you who already lived there.

3 The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 extended U.S. claims west across the Mississippi River, though its exact edges were disputed. Later treaties and war brought U.S. control of land reaching the Pacific. By 1877, Reconstruction had ended, and the mainland country's western edge met that ocean. Maps of expansion also leave out Native nations unless their territories are shown.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In the 1763 snapshot, where are the Appalachian Mountains compared with the Atlantic coast? What does that tell you about where colonial communities were concentrated?

2. Compare the 1783 and 1803 snapshots. How did the Mississippi River's position relative to U.S. land change?

3. Compare the 1803 and 1877 snapshots. Which feature marks the farthest western reach in 1877, and what change does it show?

4. A student shades Florida as U.S. land on a map of 1783. What should the student change? Use a clue from the table.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In two panels, sketch simplified east-to-west land strips through today's central states for 1783 and 1877. Put west on the left, label the Pacific Ocean, Mississippi River, and Atlantic Ocean, shade U.S. land in each panel, and write one sentence explaining the change.

ANSWER KEY

Changing Edges

GRADE 8 · 8.G.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the table's snapshots from earliest to latest. Circle the feature at or near the western edge of each snapshot, then underline the feature that changes from a western edge to a place inside U.S. land. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In the 1763 snapshot, where are the Appalachian Mountains compared with the Atlantic coast? What does that tell you about where colonial communities were concentrated?	**The mountains are inland, west of the Atlantic coast. Colonial communities were concentrated between the coast and the mountains.**
2	Compare the 1783 and 1803 snapshots. How did the Mississippi River's position relative to U.S. land change?	**In 1783, the river marked the western edge. In 1803, U.S. claims extended across it, so it lay inside the claimed area.**
3	Compare the 1803 and 1877 snapshots. Which feature marks the farthest western reach in 1877, and what change does it show?	**The Pacific Ocean marks the western edge in 1877. U.S. land had extended farther west than the claims reaching toward the Rocky Mountains in 1803.**
4	A student shades Florida as U.S. land on a map of 1783. What should the student change? Use a clue from the table.	**The student should remove the shading from Florida. The 1783 row says Florida was outside the United States.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The 1783 panel places the Pacific Ocean on the left and the Atlantic Ocean on the right, with U.S. land shaded only from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic. The 1877 panel shades land from the Pacific to the Atlantic, with the Mississippi River inside the shaded area. Sentence: By 1877, U.S. land reached the Pacific Ocean instead of ending at the Mississippi River.

Accept sketches that show the correct west-to-east order and the change in the river's position relative to U.S. land. The strips are simplified and need not show exact boundaries or scale.