Borders and Belonging

Use language data, identity, and borders to evaluate nation-states.

GHW.10.2 "Use a variety of data, such as atlases, written materials, and statistical source materials to identify countries of the world that are true nation-states..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline evidence about borders, circle language or group data, and number two statements that explain regional patterns. These marks will help you compare sources rather than rely on one statistic.

When Does a Border Fit a Nation?

1 A state governs land; a nation is a group sharing a history and identity. A nation-state is a state whose borders largely match the homeland of one nation. To test that match, compare an atlas of borders with written accounts of identity and statistics on language. A language count alone cannot prove who belongs to a nation.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN FOUR COUNTRIES

Country	Region	Number of official languages
Iceland	Europe	1
Nigeria	Africa	1
Belgium	Europe	3
Switzerland	Europe	4

2 Iceland and Nigeria each list one official language, but that number hides a major difference. Most Icelandic speakers live on Iceland, where a widely shared Icelandic identity developed. Nigeria's colonial-era borders brought together more than 250 ethnic groups, many with distinct languages. Belgium has several language communities. Switzerland's four official languages coexist with a strong shared Swiss civic identity.

3 National movements, wars, and the breakup of empires reshaped many European borders. That history helps explain why some European states come closer to the nation-state pattern. In much of Africa, colonial borders stayed in place at independence, often enclosing several nations. These are trends, not rules: Europe has multinational states, and citizens of African states may share a strong state identity.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which country in the table comes closest to the nation-state pattern? Use evidence about both identity and borders.

2. Iceland and Nigeria each have one official language. Why does that statistic alone give a misleading comparison?

3. What do Belgium and Switzerland show about using official-language counts to identify nation-states?

4. Why might some European states come closer to the nation-state pattern than many African states? Use border history from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Use these fictional reports: In Bayland, 88% of residents speak Bay, but half of all Bay speakers live beyond its border. In Ridge Union, 55% speak Ridge, and three other large language groups live within its borders. In four sentences, judge which state seems closer to a nation-state, explain one border issue, and name two kinds of evidence you would check before making a firm claim.

ANSWER KEY

Borders and Belonging

HIGH SCHOOL · GHW.10.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline evidence about borders, circle language or group data, and number two statements that explain regional patterns. These marks will help you compare sources rather than rely on one statistic. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which country in the table comes closest to the nation-state pattern? Use evidence about both identity and borders.	**Iceland. It has a widely shared Icelandic identity, and most Icelandic speakers live within the country's island borders.**
2	Iceland and Nigeria each have one official language. Why does that statistic alone give a misleading comparison?	**Nigeria's borders enclose more than 250 ethnic groups, many with distinct languages. One official language does not mean its population forms one nation.**
3	What do Belgium and Switzerland show about using official-language counts to identify nation-states?	**Both have multiple official languages, but Switzerland also has a strong shared civic identity. Language counts do not show the full picture of identity.**
4	Why might some European states come closer to the nation-state pattern than many African states? Use border history from the passage.	**National movements, wars, and the breakup of empires reshaped many European borders. Many African states kept colonial borders that enclosed several nations.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Bayland seems closer to a nation-state because a large majority of its residents speak Bay. Still, half of all Bay speakers live outside its borders, so the state does not contain the whole language community. I would check an atlas to see where those speakers live. I would also read accounts of how people in both states describe their national identities.

Accept a qualified choice of either fictional state if the student uses the data accurately and explains why language does not establish national identity on its own. The response should address a border issue and identify two useful kinds of further evidence.