Across the Islands

How geography and human choices shape national unity

GHW.10.3 "Analyze the human and physical geographic forces that either bind and unite (centripetal forces) or divide (centrifugal forces) a country or countries. Predict the impact of these forces on the future of these countries..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details about physical geography that can weaken ties, circle two human connections that can strengthen ties, and number two proposed ways to reduce division.

What Connects Indonesia?

1 At a port in eastern Indonesia, a ferry unloads food and passengers after a long crossing. Indonesia is an archipelago of thousands of islands spread across a vast area. The seas between islands can make travel, emergency care, and government services expensive, especially for remote communities. Those distances can weaken ties between places when residents feel overlooked. Yet the same waterways carry ships that move goods and people between islands. Regular routes help businesses trade and families stay connected. Whether the islands feel connected depends partly on the services and decisions that link them.

2 At a school on another island, students who speak different local languages at home can also learn and use Indonesian. A shared national language makes it easier to study, read national news, and work with people from other regions. It does not erase Indonesia's many local languages or cultures. National elections also connect voters across the islands through a single political system. Still, connections are not equally strong everywhere. A town with steady ferry service can reach markets and public offices more easily than an isolated village. Shared institutions matter, but distance and uneven access can limit their reach.

3 In Papua, an eastern region of Indonesia, disputes over political power, land, and the benefits from natural resources have fueled long-running tensions. Some residents say decisions made far away do not reflect local priorities. Distance from the national capital can make these concerns harder to address, while limited access to services may deepen distrust. More shipping routes alone would not settle disagreements about rights or representation. Officials could involve local communities in decisions, protect customary land rights, and make public spending more transparent. If these steps improve trust and access, ties to the wider country may strengthen; if grievances persist, tensions could continue.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How can the seas between Indonesia's islands both weaken and strengthen connections? Explain one way for each.

2. Why might a shared language help unite Indonesians without erasing local differences?

3. How could distance and political grievances reinforce each other in Papua? Predict one result if the grievances persist.

4. Why would more shipping routes alone be insufficient to reduce division in Papua? Explain how one other strategy from the passage could help.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a country split by a mountain range. Its two regions speak different languages, and both depend on a river that crosses the mountains. In four or five sentences, explain one force that could unite the country and one that could divide it, predict a future impact, and propose a realistic way to reduce division.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details about physical geography that can weaken ties, circle two human connections that can strengthen ties, and number two proposed ways to reduce division. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How can the seas between Indonesia's islands both weaken and strengthen connections? Explain one way for each.	**Sea crossings can make services and travel expensive for remote communities. The waterways also allow ships to carry goods and people between islands.**
2	Why might a shared language help unite Indonesians without erasing local differences?	**Indonesian helps people from different regions study, read national news, and work together, while they can continue to speak local languages at home.**
3	How could distance and political grievances reinforce each other in Papua? Predict one result if the grievances persist.	**Distance can make it harder to address concerns about decisions made far away. If concerns about power, land, and resources persist, tensions could continue.**
4	Why would more shipping routes alone be insufficient to reduce division in Papua? Explain how one other strategy from the passage could help.	**Shipping routes would not resolve disputes about rights or representation. Involving local communities in decisions could make those decisions reflect local priorities and build trust.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The shared river could unite the regions because both depend on its water. The mountain range could divide them by making travel and trade costly. If the regions cannot agree on river use, disputes over water might grow. A joint river council with translators and representatives from both regions could set fair rules and help resolve disputes.

Accept other passage-supported explanations of how a force affects connections. For Part 3, look for a plausible prediction and a strategy whose effect on division is explained.