Power and Limits

Assessing Benjamin Harrison's national policies

IS.1.12 "Describe and assess the impact of Indiana's only president, Benjamin Harrison, on national policies including: environmental protection, business regulation, immigration, civil rights, and foreign affairs."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline a federal action in each policy area. Circle a result or limit of each action so you can assess its impact.

What Changed Under Harrison?

1 In 1889, Benjamin Harrison took office as the only U.S. president from Indiana. The country was changing fast: railroads linked markets, factories grew, and more land was cleared. Harrison signed the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, which let presidents set aside public land as forest reserves. He then created reserves totaling about 13 million acres, a lasting step toward federal land protection, though it did not stop all logging. He also signed the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1890. It gave the federal government a tool against business combinations that restrained trade, but enforcement during his presidency was limited.

2 Immigration and voting raised different questions about federal power. The Immigration Act of 1891 expanded national control over arrivals by creating a federal immigration office and barring some people, including those with certain contagious diseases. Supporters called this orderly screening; for excluded migrants, it closed a door. Harrison also urged Congress to protect Black citizens' voting rights in the South, where violence and unfair rules kept many from the polls. The House passed a federal elections bill, often called the Force Bill, but the Senate did not pass it. Harrison's position was clear; lasting federal voting protections did not follow.

3 Abroad, Harrison backed closer trade with countries in the Americas through agreements enabled by the McKinley Tariff of 1890. Near the end of his term, he also sent the Senate a treaty to annex Hawaii after the Hawaiian monarchy was overthrown while U.S. troops were present. The treaty was not approved, and the next president withdrew it. Harrison's proposal showed a push for American power in the Pacific, but it threatened Hawaiian self-rule. Across these issues, his record shows both an expanding federal role and limits: signing a law, proposing a policy, and achieving fair results were not the same thing.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Harrison's actions affect environmental protection and business regulation differently?

2. Assess one benefit and one cost of the 1891 immigration law described in the passage.

3. What did Harrison seek for Black voters, and what limited his impact on civil rights?

4. How might Harrison's foreign policies have affected trade and Hawaiian self-rule differently?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a museum label of 70 to 100 words answering this question: Did Harrison's presidency expand federal power equally for everyone? Make a claim using evidence from three different policy areas, and explain at least one benefit and one limit or cost.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline a federal action in each policy area. Circle a result or limit of each action so you can assess its impact. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Harrison's actions affect environmental protection and business regulation differently?	**He created forest reserves totaling about 13 million acres, a lasting protection. He signed the Sherman Antitrust Act, but enforcement against business combinations was limited during his presidency.**
2	Assess one benefit and one cost of the 1891 immigration law described in the passage.	**The law created a national system for screening arrivals, which supporters saw as orderly. It also barred some migrants from entering.**
3	What did Harrison seek for Black voters, and what limited his impact on civil rights?	**He sought federal protection for Black citizens' voting rights. The Senate did not pass the federal elections bill, so the proposed protections did not become law.**
4	How might Harrison's foreign policies have affected trade and Hawaiian self-rule differently?	**His trade agreements aimed to strengthen commerce with countries in the Americas. His proposed annexation of Hawaii threatened Hawaiian self-rule, although the treaty was not approved.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Harrison's presidency expanded federal power, but the results were uneven. Forest reserves put millions of acres under national protection, a lasting benefit even though logging did not end. The 1891 immigration law strengthened federal screening, but it also kept some migrants out. In civil rights, Harrison supported federal protection for Black voters, yet the Senate failed to pass the elections bill. These examples show that new authority could protect land, restrict entry, or fail to protect people when Congress refused to act.

Accept other supported assessments of benefits and limits, including answers using business regulation or foreign affairs. Distinguish policies Harrison proposed from measures that became law.