Land and Livelihoods

How Indiana's landscape shapes work, travel, and growth

IS.3.4 "Identify the challenges early settlers faced regarding the physical landscape of Indiana and understand landscape challenges citizens face today, and will face tomorrow, in terms of economic development."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two landscape obstacles early settlers faced, circle two challenges that affect development today, and put a star beside one future challenge. Use your marks to compare how the landscape affects decisions across time.

Where Can Indiana Grow?

1. In the early 1800s, a settler hauling grain across northern Indiana could meet a wide marsh instead of a firm road. The Kankakee River spread through wetlands, and soft ground made wagon travel slow or impossible after rain. Farther south, steep hills and narrow valleys complicated road building and separated farms from markets. Settlers could choose higher ground, cut routes around obstacles, or use rivers when water levels allowed. Each choice cost time or labor. The landscape did not simply offer resources; it shaped where families could travel, farm, and sell what they grew.

2. Today, drainage projects have converted much of the Kankakee marsh to farmland. That change opened land for crops and roads, but it also reduced wetland space that once held water. Heavy rain can threaten fields, streets, and buildings, making flood protection a cost of development. In southern Indiana, hills still affect where trucks can travel efficiently and where new roads or warehouses can be built. A level site near a highway may save a company money, while cutting into a hillside can raise construction costs and disturb soil. Economic gains depend on how land is used.

3. As heavier downpours become more common in the Midwest, low-lying land near rivers may face greater flood risk. A town that fills a wet area for a business park might gain jobs but leave less space for water, raising the cost of storm drains or repairs. Building on higher ground may lower flood exposure, yet a site far from roads can increase shipping costs. Restoring wetlands, keeping new buildings out of flood-prone places, and planning safer routes all require money now. The challenge is to weigh those costs against future damage and the value of land for work.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Kankakee wetlands make it harder for early settlers to sell what they grew?

2. Compare one problem southern Indiana's hills caused for early settlers with one problem they cause for development today.

3. What economic benefit came from draining much of the Kankakee marsh, and what landscape challenge remains?

4. Why might a town hesitate to fill a wet area for a future business park, even if the park could bring jobs?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine an Indiana town choosing between a low, wet site near a highway and a dry hillside site farther from the highway for a new workshop. In four or five sentences, choose a site, explain one landscape benefit and one economic cost of your choice, and propose a step to reduce a future landscape risk.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two landscape obstacles early settlers faced, circle two challenges that affect development today, and put a star beside one future challenge. Use your marks to compare how the landscape affects decisions across time. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Kankakee wetlands make it harder for early settlers to sell what they grew?	**Soft, wet ground slowed or stopped wagons after rain, making it harder to take crops to market.**
2	Compare one problem southern Indiana's hills caused for early settlers with one problem they cause for development today.	**Hills made early road building difficult and separated farms from markets. Today, they can complicate truck routes and raise the cost of building roads or warehouses.**
3	What economic benefit came from draining much of the Kankakee marsh, and what landscape challenge remains?	**Drainage opened land for crops and roads, but reduced wetland space for water, leaving fields and developed areas vulnerable to flooding.**
4	Why might a town hesitate to fill a wet area for a future business park, even if the park could bring jobs?	**Filling the area would leave less space for water during heavier downpours and could increase spending on storm drains or flood repairs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would place the workshop on the dry hillside site because it is less likely to flood during heavier downpours. Its distance from the highway could raise shipping costs. I would avoid cutting deeply into the slope to limit soil disturbance. I would also keep trees on the hillside to slow runoff during storms.

Accept either site if the response explains a plausible landscape benefit, an economic cost, and a specific step that reduces future risk. Students may identify different valid challenges when marking the passage.