Pittsburgh Changes Course

Trace how one city's roles changed over time

WG.4.17 "Analyze the changing functions of cities over time."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number Pittsburgh's three main functions from earliest to latest, underline the words that name each function, and circle a factor that helped the city change from one function to the next.

From River Junction to Steel City and Beyond

1 In the 1700s, a settlement grew where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers join to form the Ohio River. Boats could carry goods west, and the river junction made the settlement a useful trading and transport center. By the 1800s, nearby coal deposits and access to iron ore from the Great Lakes helped change its role. Rail lines and riverboats brought in raw materials and carried out finished metal. Furnaces and mills crowded the riverbanks, where water and transport were close. Pittsburgh was no longer mainly a place to exchange goods; it was becoming a place to make them.

2 In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Pittsburgh became a major steelmaking center. Its mills made steel for bridges, buildings, railroads, and machines across the country. Steel jobs attracted workers, and neighborhoods, shops, and streetcar lines grew around the mills. This industrial role came with costs: smoke darkened the air, and factories used long stretches of riverfront land. The city still served as a transport center, but moving materials now supported mass production. Its location mattered in a new way: the rivers and railroads connected factories to distant suppliers and buyers.

3 After World War II, changes in production and competition put pressure on Pittsburgh's steel industry. From the 1970s through the 1980s, many mills closed as older plants struggled with rising costs and competition from newer producers in the United States and abroad. Thousands of industrial jobs disappeared. Over time, hospitals and universities became major employers, and research, technology, and other services expanded. Former industrial land was reused for offices, housing, and public spaces. Steelmaking did not vanish completely, but it no longer defined most work in the city. Pittsburgh's changing jobs and land use show how a city's functions can shift without erasing its past.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Pittsburgh's rivers support its early role and its later industrial role in different ways?

2. How did the growth of steelmaking change Pittsburgh's neighborhoods and riverfront?

3. What pressures helped shift Pittsburgh away from steelmaking, and how did its jobs and land use change?

4. Why is it more accurate to say Pittsburgh's functions changed than to say its industrial function disappeared?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a city other than Pittsburgh. In four sentences, describe its main function in an earlier period, explain why its main function changed, describe one effect on jobs or land use, and identify something from its earlier period that remained useful.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number Pittsburgh's three main functions from earliest to latest, underline the words that name each function, and circle a factor that helped the city change from one function to the next. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Pittsburgh's rivers support its early role and its later industrial role in different ways?	**At first, boats used the river junction to carry trade goods west. Later, river transport brought raw materials to factories and carried out finished metal.**
2	How did the growth of steelmaking change Pittsburgh's neighborhoods and riverfront?	**Steel jobs drew workers, so neighborhoods, shops, and streetcar lines grew near mills. Factories occupied long stretches of riverfront.**
3	What pressures helped shift Pittsburgh away from steelmaking, and how did its jobs and land use change?	**Older mills faced rising costs and competition from newer producers. Many closed, while hospitals, universities, research, technology, and other services expanded; some former industrial land became offices, housing, and public spaces.**
4	Why is it more accurate to say Pittsburgh's functions changed than to say its industrial function disappeared?	**Steelmaking continued, but it no longer defined most work as hospitals, universities, and other services became more important.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the 1800s, my invented coastal city, Gullport, depended on fishing boats and a busy fish market. A new rail connection and investment in beach hotels later made tourism its main source of jobs. Many workers moved from processing fish to running hotels, restaurants, and boat tours. The old docks still served a few fishing crews and also became stops for visitor boats.

Accept other passage-supported explanations of how transport, employment, and land use changed. For the open task, look for a plausible cause of change, an effect, and a useful feature that persisted.