Holding Out

How defending territory shaped the Confederate war strategy

8.C.12.3.B "Describe how the Southern military strategy focused on holding Confederate territory in hopes the North would eventually abandon the war effort."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways Confederate forces tried to hold Southern territory. Circle two details that show why Confederate leaders thought a longer war might weaken Northern support.

The Strategy of Holding Ground

1 In 1861, Confederate leaders faced a difficult problem: the Union had more people, factories, and ships. The Confederacy did not need to conquer the North to achieve independence. Instead, its leaders hoped to keep control of Southern land long enough for the Union to stop fighting. Confederate troops often defended positions near key roads, rail lines, and cities. This approach forced Union armies to travel into hostile territory and capture places one by one. Every long march and hard battle cost the Union time, supplies, and lives.

2 The Confederate capital, Richmond, Virginia, shows why holding territory mattered. Its factories and rail connections helped the Southern war effort, and losing the capital could damage Confederate confidence. Confederate forces defended routes leading to Richmond and tried to make Union advances costly. Holding the city also kept a working center of government in Confederate hands. Defending did not mean Confederate armies never attacked; they sometimes invaded Northern territory. Still, the larger hope was that keeping enough Southern ground would prevent the Union from winning quickly.

3 Time was a weapon in this strategy. As Union casualties rose and the war dragged on, Confederate leaders hoped Northern voters would demand an end to the fighting. The 1864 presidential election made that hope especially important: a change in public opinion might change the Union's willingness to continue the war. But holding territory was not enough if major positions fell. When Union forces captured Atlanta in September 1864, the victory strengthened Northern confidence that the war could be won. The Confederacy's plan depended on holding out longer than the North wanted to fight.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could holding Southern land make the war harder for Union armies?

2. Why did Confederate forces defend routes to Richmond as part of this strategy?

3. How did Confederate leaders hope a longer war would affect the North's willingness to fight?

4. Why did the Union capture of Atlanta threaten the Confederate strategy?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise Confederate leaders in 1864 about a Southern river crossing that carries supplies by rail. Write four sentences explaining why you would defend it, how holding it might affect Union troops and Northern support for the war, and one risk to your plan.

ANSWER KEY

Holding Out

GRADE 8 · 8.C.12.3.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways Confederate forces tried to hold Southern territory. Circle two details that show why Confederate leaders thought a longer war might weaken Northern support. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could holding Southern land make the war harder for Union armies?	**Union armies had to enter hostile territory and capture places one by one, spending time and supplies and losing lives.**
2	Why did Confederate forces defend routes to Richmond as part of this strategy?	**Defending the routes made Union advances costly and helped the Confederacy keep its capital, factories, rail connections, and government.**
3	How did Confederate leaders hope a longer war would affect the North's willingness to fight?	**They hoped rising casualties and a drawn-out war would lead Northern voters to demand an end to the fighting.**
4	Why did the Union capture of Atlanta threaten the Confederate strategy?	**The loss showed that the Confederacy could not hold all its territory, while the Union victory strengthened Northern confidence that the war could be won.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would defend the river crossing because its rail line carries supplies to Confederate troops. If Union soldiers must fight for the crossing, their advance could take more time and cost more lives. Confederate leaders might hope those losses make Northern voters less willing to keep fighting. However, a long defense could also use up Confederate soldiers and supplies.

Accept responses that connect holding territory to a longer, costlier Union campaign and a possible decline in Northern support. The stated risk should be plausible.