River Divided

Trace how two surrenders changed control of the Mississippi.

8.C.12.4.D "Explain how the Confederate loss of Vicksburg opened the way for the North to seize control of the Mississippi River, dividing the Confederate forces."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the two Confederate surrenders, circle two details that explain why Vicksburg could block river travel, and number three sentences that trace the path from surrender to Union river travel to weaker Confederate support.

Opening the Mississippi

1. In 1863, the Mississippi River was a major travel route for people, food, and military supplies. Union boats could use much of it, but Confederate guns at Vicksburg, Mississippi, threatened boats passing a sharp bend. The town stood on high ground above the water, making it a strong place to defend the river. Farther south, Confederate troops held Port Hudson, Louisiana. These two strongholds interrupted Union travel between northern river ports and New Orleans near its mouth. Controlling only parts of the river was not the same as controlling its full length.

2. Union general Ulysses S. Grant moved his army around Vicksburg and surrounded the city in May 1863. Union gunboats also operated on the river. During the siege, Confederate soldiers and civilians inside Vicksburg ran short of food. On July 4, the Confederate garrison surrendered. Union boats no longer faced Vicksburg's guns, opening a key stretch of the river. Yet Union forces still needed to take Port Hudson to control the whole route. After learning that Vicksburg had fallen, Port Hudson's defenders surrendered on July 9.

3. With both strongholds gone, Union ships could travel the Mississippi from its northern reaches to the Gulf of Mexico. The North could move troops and supplies along this long waterway instead of stopping at Confederate river forts. The river also marked a divide within the Confederacy. Texas, Arkansas, and much of Louisiana lay west of it, while major Confederate armies fought to the east. Union control made it much harder for Confederate leaders to send cattle, supplies, or soldiers across the river to those armies. The division weakened their ability to support one another.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Vicksburg's location help Confederate forces interrupt Union travel on the river?

2. Why did Vicksburg's surrender open a key stretch of the river but not give the Union control of the full route?

3. How did Port Hudson's surrender change what Union ships could do?

4. Why did Union control of the river weaken Confederate forces on opposite sides of it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a Union supply officer after July 9. Write a four-sentence memo recommending a river trip from St. Louis to New Orleans. Explain why the route is now open, how it affects Confederate forces on opposite sides of the river, and why the division does not mean every crossing is impossible.

ANSWER KEY

River Divided

GRADE 8 · 8.C.12.4.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the two Confederate surrenders, circle two details that explain why Vicksburg could block river travel, and number three sentences that trace the path from surrender to Union river travel to weaker Confederate support. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Vicksburg's location help Confederate forces interrupt Union travel on the river?	**Its guns could threaten boats passing the sharp bend, and its high ground made the position strong to defend.**
2	Why did Vicksburg's surrender open a key stretch of the river but not give the Union control of the full route?	**Union boats no longer faced Vicksburg's guns, but Confederate troops still held Port Hudson farther south.**
3	How did Port Hudson's surrender change what Union ships could do?	**With both Confederate strongholds gone, Union ships could travel the Mississippi from its northern reaches to the Gulf of Mexico.**
4	Why did Union control of the river weaken Confederate forces on opposite sides of it?	**It made it much harder to send cattle, supplies, or soldiers from west of the river to Confederate armies in the east.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Send our supply boats down the Mississippi from St. Louis to New Orleans. Vicksburg and Port Hudson have surrendered, so their defenders can no longer block this river route. Confederate forces west of the river will find it harder to send cattle or soldiers to armies in the east. Some crossings may still occur, but Union control makes that support more difficult.

Accept responses that connect both surrenders to Union travel along the river and explain that control hindered, rather than made impossible, Confederate support across it.