Rails to Market

Trace how a railroad connection changed trade.

8.C.13.5.B "Analyze the impact of the development of the Transcontinental Railroad on connecting agricultural goods and products to population centers and markets."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two agricultural products, underline each route that links a producer to a city market, and number two effects of those links on producers or city buyers.

From Farms to City Markets

1. In 1869, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads met in Utah, completing the first transcontinental railroad. Before that connection, a farmer on the Great Plains had limited ways to sell a large wheat crop far away. Wagons moved slowly, and long trips raised the cost of hauling heavy loads. Rail lines did not reach every farm, but nearby stations gave many growers a new link to distant buyers. A farmer could take sacks of wheat to a station, where trains carried them toward mills and cities in the East.

2. Ranchers also used rail connections to reach markets. They drove cattle to railheads, where the animals were loaded onto cars and shipped to stockyards in Chicago. There, businesses could buy the cattle, process the meat, and send products to large groups of customers. Compared with a long cattle drive all the way to a distant market, the train could move many animals over a long stretch more quickly. Rail service linked western ranches with a city that had workers, equipment, and buyers ready for the animals.

3. These connections changed what farmers and ranchers could earn and what city residents could buy. Access to more buyers could increase a producer's sales, while steady shipments helped supply growing cities with grain and meat. Yet a rail link did not guarantee profit: shipping fees cut into earnings, and growers far from stations still faced a costly trip to reach a train. Railroad building also crossed Indigenous lands and helped drive the loss of those lands. The same network that opened markets for some communities brought serious harm to others.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could a Great Plains farmer get wheat to an eastern city after the railroad connection, and why did this route matter?

2. How did the rail route help western ranchers sell cattle in Chicago?

3. How could regular rail shipments affect both producers and people in growing cities?

4. Why might a grower far from a station benefit less from distant markets than a grower near one?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence newspaper notice from an 1870s town near a new rail station. Explain how a farm product could reach a distant market, one likely benefit for sellers and city buyers, and one cost or limit.

ANSWER KEY

Rails to Market

GRADE 8 · 8.C.13.5.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two agricultural products, underline each route that links a producer to a city market, and number two effects of those links on producers or city buyers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could a Great Plains farmer get wheat to an eastern city after the railroad connection, and why did this route matter?	**The farmer could haul wheat to a station, then ship it by train toward eastern mills and cities. This gave the farmer access to distant buyers that were costly to reach by wagon.**
2	How did the rail route help western ranchers sell cattle in Chicago?	**Ranchers drove cattle to railheads, and trains took the animals to Chicago stockyards. Businesses there could buy the cattle and process the meat.**
3	How could regular rail shipments affect both producers and people in growing cities?	**Producers could reach more buyers and increase sales, while city residents could receive steadier supplies of grain and meat.**
4	Why might a grower far from a station benefit less from distant markets than a grower near one?	**The distant grower still had a costly trip to reach the train, and shipping fees further reduced earnings.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Farmers near our new station can bring sacks of wheat here for trains heading toward eastern mills and cities. Those cities have buyers who were difficult for local growers to reach by wagon. More sales could help growers, while regular shipments could help supply city residents with grain. Farmers must still pay shipping fees, so selling farther away will not always mean a larger profit.

Accept answers that accurately trace goods from producers through rail connections to markets and explain an effect on sellers or city buyers. For the notice, accept cattle instead of wheat if the route, benefit, and limit match the passage.