Promises and Costs

Federal policies and the changing West

8.C.13.5 "Evaluate the impact of federal policies related to the on-going migration and settlement of the West. Describe how the Homestead Act of 1862 enabled more individuals to obtain land and partake in economic opportunities following the war..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two federal actions, circle one economic opportunity for settlers, and put a star beside two effects on Native nations. Use your marks to track who benefited and who faced costs.

Land, Rails, and Broken Promises

1. After the Civil War, a family could seek farmland through the Homestead Act of 1862. An eligible applicant could claim 160 acres of federal land, live on it, build a home, and farm it for five years before receiving title. Filing fees still applied, and drought or lack of tools could ruin a claim. The 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad made it easier to ship western grain and cattle toward eastern cities. Farmers gained more buyers, while rail companies earned freight fees and towns grew near tracks.

2. These opportunities came at a steep cost to Native nations. Federal officials treated many Tribal homelands as land open to settlers, even when treaties recognized Native claims. Trains carried soldiers, settlers, and commercial hunters into the West, where bison herds declined as hunting and settlement spread. In 1864, before Ulysses S. Grant became president, U.S. troops attacked a Cheyenne and Arapaho camp at Sand Creek, killing many people, including women and children. Such violence deepened distrust, and disputes over land continued during Grant's presidency.

3. President Grant's Peace Policy, begun in 1869, aimed to reduce warfare by assigning religious groups to run federal Indian agencies and encouraging Native people to live on reservations. Yet its promised peace often meant forcing Tribes from their homelands. Federally supported missions and schools taught English and Christianity while discouraging Native languages and traditions. Some children were separated from their families, and federal boarding schools expanded after Grant left office. Despite the policy, fighting over land continued between Native groups, U.S. troops, and settlers.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Homestead Act make land ownership possible for more people, and what could still prevent a family from keeping a claim?

2. How did the transcontinental railroad connect western farms to markets, and who gained an economic opportunity from that connection?

3. Compare the goal of Grant's Peace Policy with two effects it had on Native people.

4. Why does the attack at Sand Creek help explain distrust and continued conflict during Grant's presidency, even though it happened before he took office?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence note to a newspaper editor in the 1870s. Compare how the Homestead Act and Grant's Peace Policy affected different groups, then propose one change to make western settlement fairer and explain why.

ANSWER KEY

Promises and Costs

GRADE 8 · 8.C.13.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two federal actions, circle one economic opportunity for settlers, and put a star beside two effects on Native nations. Use your marks to track who benefited and who faced costs. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Homestead Act make land ownership possible for more people, and what could still prevent a family from keeping a claim?	**Eligible applicants could claim 160 acres and receive title after living on and farming it for five years. Fees, drought, or a lack of tools could prevent success.**
2	How did the transcontinental railroad connect western farms to markets, and who gained an economic opportunity from that connection?	**It made shipping grain and cattle to eastern cities easier. Farmers gained more buyers, and rail companies earned freight fees.**
3	Compare the goal of Grant's Peace Policy with two effects it had on Native people.	**The policy aimed to reduce warfare, but it pushed Tribes from their homelands onto reservations. Supported schools and missions discouraged Native languages and traditions, and some children were separated from their families.**
4	Why does the attack at Sand Creek help explain distrust and continued conflict during Grant's presidency, even though it happened before he took office?	**U.S. troops killed Cheyenne and Arapaho people at Sand Creek in 1864. That violence deepened distrust, while disputes over land continued into Grant's presidency.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Homestead Act offered settlers a way to own farmland, but Native nations faced the loss of homelands as settlement grew. Grant's Peace Policy promised less fighting, yet it pushed many Native people onto reservations and supported schools that discouraged their languages. The government should honor treaties and seek Tribal consent before allowing new land claims. This would protect Native homelands while making settlement decisions more just.

Accept other passage-supported benefits and costs. For the note, look for a comparison of both policies, a specific proposed change, and a reason for that change.