A Treaty's Reach

How the 1783 peace agreement changed a nation's status and boundaries

8.C.2.3.D "Describe the significance of the Treaty of Paris (1783) as it relates to the recognition of the United States of America as an independent nation and the extension of American authority over western territory ceded by Britain."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that states what Britain recognized, circle the river that became the United States' western boundary, and write 1 beside a sentence that limits what the treaty accomplished. These marks will help you distinguish a treaty claim from control on the ground.

What Changed in 1783?

1. In 1783, a British official could no longer treat the former colonies as rebellious parts of his country. The Treaty of Paris ended the war between Britain and the United States. In its first article, Britain recognized the United States as a "free, sovereign and independent" nation. That recognition mattered beyond a battlefield victory: Britain formally agreed to deal with the United States as a separate country. The new nation could make its own decisions and conduct relations with other countries instead of answering to the British crown.

2. Independence also came with a larger area under American authority. The treaty set the United States' western boundary at the Mississippi River, far beyond the Appalachian Mountains. It described a northern border through the Great Lakes and a southern border near Spanish Florida. Britain gave up its claims to the territory within those boundaries, including land west of the mountains. The United States could now claim authority there under the treaty, rather than leaving that territory under British rule. A change in boundaries changed who could claim to govern.

3. Yet a line in a treaty did not make western land empty or peaceful. Native nations lived on and governed lands within the new American boundaries, and they were not parties to the treaty. Britain and the United States could settle their own competing claims, but they could not erase Native peoples' presence or consent by signing a document. American leaders sought to extend their control westward, while Native nations defended their lands and political independence. The treaty established international recognition and a territorial claim, not uncontested control of every western community.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Britain's recognition change its official relationship with the United States?

2. What does the Mississippi River boundary show about the reach of the new nation's territorial claim?

3. Besides recognizing independence, what change in authority did Britain agree to in the treaty?

4. Why did the treaty not give the United States uncontested control of every western community?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A newspaper claims, "The treaty made every western acre empty and free for Americans to take." Write four sentences correcting the claim. Explain what the treaty changed for the United States and why the newspaper's claim about western land is wrong.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.2.3.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that states what Britain recognized, circle the river that became the United States' western boundary, and write 1 beside a sentence that limits what the treaty accomplished. These marks will help you distinguish a treaty claim from control on the ground. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Britain's recognition change its official relationship with the United States?	**Britain formally accepted the United States as an independent country, not rebellious colonies under British rule.**
2	What does the Mississippi River boundary show about the reach of the new nation's territorial claim?	**The United States could claim territory far west of the Appalachian Mountains, as far as the Mississippi River.**
3	Besides recognizing independence, what change in authority did Britain agree to in the treaty?	**Britain gave up its claims within the new boundaries, allowing the United States to claim authority over territory west of the mountains.**
4	Why did the treaty not give the United States uncontested control of every western community?	**Native nations lived on and governed lands within the boundaries, and they were not parties to the treaty.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Treaty of Paris made Britain recognize the United States as an independent nation. Britain also gave up its claims to territory extending west to the Mississippi River. Those changes let the United States claim authority over a much larger area. But Native nations already lived on and governed lands there, and they had not agreed to the treaty.

Accept wording that distinguishes Britain's recognition and surrendered claims from actual control of western lands. Students should not describe Native lands as empty or treat Native nations as parties to the treaty.