Lines and Promises

Examining Washington's approach to Native nations

8.C.5.1.C "Examine Washington's attempt to develop a cohesive American Indian policy through treaties, assimilation, and the delineation of Tribal lands."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two goals of Washington's policy, circle one example each of a treaty, a land boundary, and assimilation, and number two details that show limits to the policy.

A Policy Put to the Test

1 In 1790, a Muscogee delegation met President George Washington in New York City. Georgia settlers were moving onto Muscogee land, and state leaders wanted more territory. Washington wanted the federal government, rather than individual states, to handle relations with Native nations through treaties. The Treaty of New York set a boundary: Muscogee leaders gave up some land, while the United States promised to protect the land they kept. For Washington, a written line and a federal promise could reduce conflict. But a promise on paper could not stop settlers by itself.

2 Washington's administration also supported what officials called "civilization," now often described as assimilation. Agents urged Native communities to adopt the farming methods, livestock raising, and household work that US officials favored. This did not mean Native people had never farmed: Muscogee communities already grew crops. Officials hoped these changes would tie Native nations more closely to the United States and reduce conflict over land. Native communities could accept, adapt, or reject these pressures; their goals were not necessarily the same as Washington's.

3 The policy faced another test in the Ohio Country. After US forces defeated a Native alliance at Fallen Timbers in 1794, leaders from several Native nations signed the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. The treaty marked lands ceded to the United States and lands that signers retained. It also promised yearly payments to the Native nations. Treaties gave Washington's government a common process for drawing boundaries, but military pressure shaped who had power to negotiate. Settlers still crossed boundaries, so treaty lines did not guarantee Native control of land.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Treaty of New York help Washington pursue a federal policy instead of leaving land disputes to individual states?

2. How was the assimilation plan different from drawing a treaty boundary, and why does the passage mention that Muscogee communities already grew crops?

3. How did the events before the Treaty of Greenville affect the balance of power in treaty negotiations?

4. What two details show that Washington's policy did not guarantee Native control of treaty lands?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise Washington in 1795. In four sentences, recommend one action about treaty boundaries and one about assimilation, explain how both would change his policy, and predict one obstacle using evidence from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Lines and Promises

GRADE 8 · 8.C.5.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two goals of Washington's policy, circle one example each of a treaty, a land boundary, and assimilation, and number two details that show limits to the policy. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Treaty of New York help Washington pursue a federal policy instead of leaving land disputes to individual states?	**The federal government negotiated a treaty that set a boundary and promised to protect Muscogee land, rather than leaving Georgia to handle the dispute.**
2	How was the assimilation plan different from drawing a treaty boundary, and why does the passage mention that Muscogee communities already grew crops?	**A boundary divided land, while assimilation pressured Native communities to adopt practices US officials favored. The crop detail shows that Native people already farmed; officials were promoting particular methods, not introducing farming.**
3	How did the events before the Treaty of Greenville affect the balance of power in treaty negotiations?	**US forces had defeated a Native alliance at Fallen Timbers, so Native leaders negotiated after a military loss.**
4	What two details show that Washington's policy did not guarantee Native control of treaty lands?	**A federal promise alone could not stop settlers, and settlers continued to cross treaty boundaries.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Federal agents should stop settlers at treaty boundaries rather than merely promise protection on paper. They should ask Native leaders what support their communities want instead of pressing them to adopt US farming and household practices. These changes would make treaty promises more credible and let Native nations choose whether to change their ways of living. Georgia settlers had already moved onto Muscogee land, so enforcing a boundary would still face resistance.

Accept recommendations that address both treaty boundaries and assimilation while recognizing Native nations' choices. The predicted obstacle should be supported by a detail from the passage, such as settler encroachment or unequal power after military defeat.