When Borders Moved

Citizenship, land, and life after the 1848 treaty

8.C.9.2.B "Describe the impact of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on Mexican Americans (e.g., United States of America citizenship, displacement and land loss)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two rights the treaty offered Mexican residents, underline two barriers to keeping those rights, and put a star beside a sentence showing how land loss could displace a family.

A New Border, an Uncertain Future

1. In 1848, the United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the Mexican-American War. Mexico gave up a vast northern territory, including present-day California and New Mexico. The border moved, but many Mexican families stayed in the same homes. Suddenly, their towns stood inside the United States. For these residents, the treaty was not only a change on paper. It raised urgent questions about who could belong to the new country and whether families could keep the land they had lived on for years.

2. The treaty gave Mexican residents of the transferred territory a choice: move to Mexico or stay in their homes. Those who stayed could keep Mexican citizenship by declaring that choice within one year; otherwise, the treaty treated them as choosing United States citizenship. The treaty also promised protection for their property. Yet citizenship on paper did not ensure equal treatment. Mexican Americans faced prejudice and sometimes had less power than newly arrived settlers in courts and local government. Their legal status changed, but their ability to defend their rights often depended on who held power.

3. Imagine a family whose farm had been passed down for generations. The treaty said their property should be respected, but proving ownership under United States rules could mean paying for surveys, lawyers, and court cases. Some families lost land while claims dragged on; others faced taxes, fraud, or pressure from newcomers. Losing a farm could force a family to leave its home and livelihood, a form of displacement. The treaty promised rights, but the years afterward brought land loss and upheaval for many Mexican Americans.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could staying in the transferred territory change a Mexican resident's citizenship?

2. Why might United States citizenship not have given Mexican Americans equal power to defend their rights?

3. How did the experience of keeping land differ from what the treaty promised?

4. How could land loss displace a Mexican American family?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a museum displays a deed, a paper showing a family's ownership of a farm in the transferred territory. Write a four-sentence label explaining what staying could mean for the family's citizenship, why the deed might not save their farm, and how losing it could change their lives.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.9.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two rights the treaty offered Mexican residents, underline two barriers to keeping those rights, and put a star beside a sentence showing how land loss could displace a family. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could staying in the transferred territory change a Mexican resident's citizenship?	**A resident who stayed and did not declare a choice to keep Mexican citizenship within one year was treated as choosing United States citizenship.**
2	Why might United States citizenship not have given Mexican Americans equal power to defend their rights?	**They faced prejudice and sometimes had less power than newcomers in courts and local government.**
3	How did the experience of keeping land differ from what the treaty promised?	**The treaty promised to protect property, but proving ownership could require costly surveys, lawyers, and court cases, and some families lost land.**
4	How could land loss displace a Mexican American family?	**Losing a farm could force a family to leave its home and find another way to earn a living.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A family kept a deed to their farm when the border moved in 1848. By staying without declaring a choice to keep Mexican citizenship within a year, they were treated as choosing United States citizenship. Although the treaty promised to protect their property, proving ownership in court might cost more than they could pay. If they lost the farm, they might have to find a new home and a new way to earn a living.

Accept responses that distinguish the treaty's citizenship and property promises from the difficulties Mexican Americans faced afterward. Students may describe displacement as losing a home, a livelihood, or both.