The Boomer Challenge

Trace how a land campaign became a conflict

OKH.C.3.3.B "Analyze the goals, strategies, and escalated tension created by the Boomer Movement under the leadership of David Payne."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the Boomers' goal, circle two strategies they used, and number two places where their actions increased tension with federal authorities.

David Payne and the Boomer Movement

1. In the late 1870s, would-be settlers looked toward the Unassigned Lands in Indian Territory, in what is now central Oklahoma. The federal government had gained control of this area through treaties with the Creek and Seminole nations after the Civil War. David L. Payne argued that land not assigned to a particular tribe should be opened to homesteaders. His followers, called Boomers, wanted farms and a chance to build towns. But "unassigned" did not mean the region was empty or that everyone agreed it could be settled. Federal officials barred unauthorized settlement, and Native nations had a stake in decisions about the territory.

2. Payne did not wait for Congress to settle the issue. He recruited settlers through public meetings and newspaper notices, presenting entry as a legal claim rather than a land grab. Then he led groups across the border into the Unassigned Lands to establish camps and claim farms. These trips turned a political demand into a visible challenge to federal policy. When soldiers ordered the groups out, Payne and other Boomers often returned after being removed. Each return drew attention to their cause, but it also forced federal officers to enforce the ban again.

3. The repeated entries raised the stakes for everyone involved. Soldiers removed settlers, and Payne was arrested more than once, yet those setbacks helped keep the dispute in the news. Boomers pointed to removals as evidence that the government was blocking their chance to farm. Federal authorities saw unauthorized camps as a challenge to their power to manage Indian Territory. Native nations faced pressure as outsiders demanded more land. Payne died in 1884, before the federal government opened the Unassigned Lands to non-Native settlement in 1889. His campaign did not win immediate access, but it made the conflict harder to ignore.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Payne's argument about “unassigned” land support the Boomers' goal, and what detail in the passage complicates his argument?

2. How did Payne use both publicity and trips into the territory to pursue the Boomers' goal?

3. Why did returning after removal increase tension instead of ending the dispute?

4. How did the soldiers' removals serve the Boomers' campaign while also showing why federal authorities opposed it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short statement to a newspaper editor in 1884. State the Boomers' goal, then explain how two different strategies increased tension with federal officials or Native nations. Give a separate consequence for each strategy.

ANSWER KEY

The Boomer Challenge

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.3.3.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the Boomers' goal, circle two strategies they used, and number two places where their actions increased tension with federal authorities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Payne's argument about "unassigned" land support the Boomers' goal, and what detail in the passage complicates his argument?	**Payne argued that land not assigned to a tribe should be opened for homesteads. The passage notes that Native nations had a stake in decisions about the territory and that federal officials barred unauthorized settlement.**
2	How did Payne use both publicity and trips into the territory to pursue the Boomers' goal?	**Meetings and newspaper notices recruited supporters and presented entry as a legal claim. Trips into the territory put that claim into action by establishing camps and claiming farms.**
3	Why did returning after removal increase tension instead of ending the dispute?	**Each return challenged the settlement ban again and forced federal officers to remove the Boomers again.**
4	How did the soldiers' removals serve the Boomers' campaign while also showing why federal authorities opposed it?	**Removals kept the dispute in the news and let Boomers argue that the government blocked their chance to farm. Federal authorities viewed the unauthorized camps as a challenge to their control of Indian Territory.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Boomers wanted to open the Unassigned Lands for farms and towns. Payne's public meetings and newspaper notices recruited supporters, putting more public pressure on federal officials to defend the settlement ban. His groups also entered the territory and established camps, turning their demand into a direct challenge to that ban. Soldiers removed the settlers, but the Boomers returned, forcing officers to enforce the rule again. The campaign drew attention to the Boomers' goal while increasing conflict over who could decide the land's future.

Accept supported explanations that connect a Boomer goal or strategy to a consequence, not just lists of events. For Part 3, look for two distinct strategies and an explanation of how each increased tension.