Whose Land, Whose Future

Compare views of allotment and its effects on tribal land

OKH.C.3.4.A "Compare multiple points of view to evaluate the impact of the Dawes Act of 1877 (General Allotment Act) which resulted in the loss of Tribal communal lands through a transfer to individual property."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one federal argument for allotment, circle two tribal concerns, and number two ways land moved out of tribal control. Use your marks to compare what each group hoped to gain or feared losing.

What Did Allotment Change?

1. In 1887, Congress passed the General Allotment Act, often called the Dawes Act. It aimed to replace land held by a tribe with separate parcels assigned to individual Native people. Federal officials argued that private farms would make Native families more independent and encourage them to adopt non-Native farming and property customs. After parcels were assigned, the government could label remaining tribal land "surplus" and open it to non-Native settlement. To an official seeking more farms for settlers, that transfer looked like progress. To a tribal nation, it meant losing control over shared land and decisions about its future.

2. Many tribal leaders argued that shared land supported grazing, hunting, and future generations, not just the people alive when parcels were assigned. Dividing it could weaken a nation's ability to govern its territory. Yet Native people did not all experience allotment alike. A family might value having a legally recognized parcel while still opposing the sale of land beyond it. Parcels could also be too small or poorly suited to farming, and some owners later lost land through taxes, debt, or sales. The promise of individual ownership therefore did not guarantee lasting security for Native families.

3. The original Dawes Act did not apply to the Five Tribes in Indian Territory, now part of Oklahoma. Later agreements and federal laws, including the Curtis Act of 1898, brought allotment to their lands. Some federal officials praised individual deeds as a path to wealth, while many tribal citizens warned that dividing communal holdings would undermine their governments. As land moved into individual ownership, restrictions on sales were changed or removed in many cases, and non-Native buyers acquired land. Officials measured success by the spread of private property. Critics also considered the loss of tribal land and authority.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How might a federal official and a tribal leader view the opening of “surplus” land differently?

2. How could a Native family value its parcel but still share tribal leaders' concerns about allotment?

3. The Five Tribes were exempt from the original Dawes Act. Why might their citizens still have shared the concerns of tribal leaders elsewhere?

4. Which view of allotment is better supported by the passage's account of land transfers: the officials' view or the critics' view? Give two details.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are advising a tribal council in Indian Territory after allotment has begun. In 4 to 5 sentences, compare a federal official's view with a tribal citizen's view, use two different facts from the passage, and propose one specific action the council could take to address a risk.

ANSWER KEY

Whose Land, Whose Future

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.3.4.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one federal argument for allotment, circle two tribal concerns, and number two ways land moved out of tribal control. Use your marks to compare what each group hoped to gain or feared losing. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How might a federal official and a tribal leader view the opening of "surplus" land differently?	**An official might see new farms for settlers as progress. A tribal leader might see the transfer as a loss of shared land and control over its future.**
2	How could a Native family value its parcel but still share tribal leaders' concerns about allotment?	**The family could value a legally recognized parcel while opposing the sale of other shared land or worrying that dividing land would weaken tribal government.**
3	The Five Tribes were exempt from the original Dawes Act. Why might their citizens still have shared the concerns of tribal leaders elsewhere?	**Later agreements and federal laws brought allotment to the Five Tribes. Their citizens could therefore fear the loss of communal land and tribal authority.**
4	Which view of allotment is better supported by the passage's account of land transfers: the officials' view or the critics' view? Give two details.	**The critics' view is better supported: remaining tribal land was opened to non-Native settlement, and non-Native buyers later acquired individually owned land. Accept a reasoned defense of the officials' view that addresses these losses.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A federal official might say that individual deeds offer families a path to wealth. A tribal citizen might answer that dividing shared land weakens the nation's control over its territory. The council should take that concern seriously because non-Native buyers acquired land after restrictions on some sales changed or ended. I recommend that the council organize legal help for families reviewing offers to buy their parcels.

Accept different judgments when students accurately compare viewpoints and support their reasoning with the passage. For the open task, the proposed action should address a risk identified in the text.