Who Runs the Canal?

Trace how treaties changed control of the Panama Canal.

TOT.P.2.1.C "Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements, by comparing how various governmental powers and responsibilities have changed over time."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each treaty or constitutional rule named in the passage. Number the statements that show a change in governmental power or responsibility, from earliest to latest.

The Changing Control of the Panama Canal

(1) Before ships could cross Panama by canal, governments had to decide who would control the route. In 1903, soon after Panama gained independence from Colombia, Panama and the United States signed the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty. It gave the United States rights to use, occupy, and control a strip of land called the Canal Zone to build and operate a canal. The United States paid Panama for these rights. Panama remained an independent country, but its government could not govern the Canal Zone as it governed the rest of its territory. The canal opened in 1914.

(2) Over time, many Panamanians objected to foreign control of land through their country. After years of negotiations, the two nations signed the Panama Canal Treaties in 1977. One treaty ended the old Canal Zone government in 1979 and set a schedule for Panama to take over canal operations. During the transition, the United States continued to operate the canal, but Panama gained an increasing role. On December 31, 1999, Panama assumed full responsibility for running it. The earlier treaty had given the United States broad local control; the later treaties shifted governing authority and operating duties to Panama.

(3) The change also depended on powers inside the United States government. Under the U.S. Constitution, the president makes treaties with the advice and consent of the Senate, provided two-thirds of senators present agree. President Jimmy Carter signed the 1977 treaties, and the Senate approved them in 1978. A separate neutrality treaty committed both countries to keep the canal open to ships of all nations on equal terms. That commitment continued after the transfer. The two governments thus changed who ran the canal without ending their shared duty to keep this international passage open.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the 1977 treaties change who governed the Canal Zone compared with the 1903 treaty?

2. Compare the United States' responsibility for canal operations during the transition with Panama's responsibility after December 31, 1999.

3. Why could President Carter's signature alone not complete the treaty-based change in canal control?

4. What changed under the 1977 treaties, and what responsibility continued under the neutrality treaty?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Panama and the United States propose a new agreement giving both countries equal votes on canal operating rules while Panama keeps day-to-day management. In four or five sentences, compare this proposal with the 1903 and post-1999 arrangements, then explain one possible effect on decisions about canal access.

ANSWER KEY

Who Runs the Canal?

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.P.2.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each treaty or constitutional rule named in the passage. Number the statements that show a change in governmental power or responsibility, from earliest to latest. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the 1977 treaties change who governed the Canal Zone compared with the 1903 treaty?	**The 1903 treaty gave the United States broad control of the Canal Zone. A 1977 treaty ended the Canal Zone government in 1979 and shifted governing authority toward Panama.**
2	Compare the United States' responsibility for canal operations during the transition with Panama's responsibility after December 31, 1999.	**The United States continued to operate the canal during the transition. On December 31, 1999, Panama took full responsibility for operating it.**
3	Why could President Carter's signature alone not complete the treaty-based change in canal control?	**The Constitution requires the Senate's advice and consent, with two-thirds of senators present agreeing, for the president to make a treaty. The Senate approved the treaties in 1978.**
4	What changed under the 1977 treaties, and what responsibility continued under the neutrality treaty?	**Control and operation of the canal shifted to Panama. Both countries remained committed to keeping it open to ships of all nations on equal terms.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Under the 1903 treaty, the United States controlled the Canal Zone and later operated the canal. Since 1999, Panama has run the canal, while both countries remain committed to keeping it open on equal terms. Under the proposed agreement, Panama would still manage daily operations, but the United States would gain a vote on operating rules. Equal votes might slow a decision about canal access if the two governments disagreed.

Accept responses that accurately distinguish control of the Canal Zone from operation of the canal. For the open task, accept plausible effects supported by the proposed division of power.