Three Federal Tools

Trace how reform laws and agencies addressed different problems.

USH.C.2.4.B "Examine President William Howard Taft's trust-busting agenda, the Pure Food and Drug Act, and formation of the Interstate Commerce Commission."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each problem the federal government tried to address, circle the law or agency used, and number the years in order. Use your marks to compare what began before Taft's presidency with what happened during it.

Who Regulated What?

1. In 1887, Congress created the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) under the Interstate Commerce Act. Railroads carried goods across state lines, but some companies charged different customers unfair rates. The ICC was the first federal agency charged with regulating an industry across states. At first, weak enforcement powers limited its reach. The 1906 Hepburn Act strengthened its ability to control railroad rates. During William Howard Taft's presidency, the 1910 Mann-Elkins Act let the ICC suspend proposed railroad rate increases while it investigated them. It also extended federal regulation to telephone and telegraph companies. Taft strengthened an existing agency; he did not create it.

2. Imagine buying a bottle labeled as a cure without knowing what was inside it. In 1906, Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, before Taft took office. The law prohibited the interstate sale of adulterated or misbranded foods and drugs. It targeted products with harmful or substituted ingredients and labels that misrepresented their contents. Federal inspectors could act against products that broke the law, but the act did not require every medicine to be proved effective before sale. Like railroad regulation, the law used federal authority over interstate commerce to address risks that crossed state lines.

3. Taft took office in 1909 and used the Sherman Antitrust Act to challenge business combinations that restrained competition. His administration filed an antitrust suit against U.S. Steel in 1911, arguing that the company had built its power through illegal practices. A lawsuit was not the same as a breakup: the Supreme Court eventually ruled for U.S. Steel in 1920. In another case, the Court ordered Standard Oil broken up in 1911, although that suit had begun before Taft became president. These examples show different federal tools: lawsuits against trusts, oversight of transportation rates, and rules for food and drug sales.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the 1910 Mann-Elkins Act change the ICC's power, and why would it be inaccurate to say Taft formed the ICC?

2. What problem did the Pure Food and Drug Act address, and how does its date affect claims that it was Taft's law?

3. Compare the federal tools used against unfair railroad rates and business combinations that restrained competition.

4. Why does the passage warn that an antitrust lawsuit was not the same as a breakup? Use both company examples.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A fictional company proposes a railroad rate increase, sells medicine across state lines with a misleading ingredient label, and buys rivals to shut out competition. In five sentences, advise a reformer which federal tool could address each problem, explain one action taken during Taft's presidency, and identify a tool or law that existed before he took office.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.2.4.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each problem the federal government tried to address, circle the law or agency used, and number the years in order. Use your marks to compare what began before Taft's presidency with what happened during it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the 1910 Mann-Elkins Act change the ICC's power, and why would it be inaccurate to say Taft formed the ICC?	**It let the ICC suspend proposed railroad rate increases during investigations and extended regulation to telephone and telegraph companies. Congress had created the ICC in 1887, before Taft took office.**
2	What problem did the Pure Food and Drug Act address, and how does its date affect claims that it was Taft's law?	**It addressed adulterated or misbranded foods and drugs sold across state lines. It passed in 1906 under Theodore Roosevelt, before Taft's presidency.**
3	Compare the federal tools used against unfair railroad rates and business combinations that restrained competition.	**The ICC oversaw railroad rates and could suspend proposed increases during investigations. Taft's administration used antitrust lawsuits to challenge business combinations that restrained competition.**
4	Why does the passage warn that an antitrust lawsuit was not the same as a breakup? Use both company examples.	**Taft's administration sued U.S. Steel, but the Supreme Court later ruled for the company. The Court ordered Standard Oil broken up in 1911, although its suit began before Taft took office.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The ICC could investigate the proposed railroad rate increase and suspend it during the investigation, using authority expanded under Taft in 1910. Congress created the ICC in 1887, so Taft did not form it. The Pure Food and Drug Act could address the misleading medicine label because the drug crosses state lines. That law passed in 1906 under Theodore Roosevelt, not Taft. Taft's administration could bring an antitrust suit if buying rivals restrained competition, but a lawsuit would not guarantee a breakup.

Accept responses that match each problem to the appropriate federal tool and correctly distinguish Taft-era actions from the earlier creation of the ICC or passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. Students need not argue that buying rivals alone proves an antitrust violation.