Limits and Borders

Coolidge, limited government, and immigration policy

USH.C.4.1.C "Examine the presidency of President Calvin Coolidge and his philosophy of limited government and debates over immigration policy, including the impact of the Immigration Act of 1924, which established national quotas related to origin."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details about Coolidge's approach to the economy, circle two details about immigration rules, and number one argument for restrictions 1 and one argument against them 2.

A Limited Government?

1 In 1924, a business owner might have welcomed President Calvin Coolidge's call for lower taxes and less federal interference with business. Coolidge also favored restrained federal spending. He believed private enterprise, not Washington, should drive economic growth. Yet his view of limited government did not mean the federal government stayed out of every decision. During his presidency, lawmakers argued over who could enter the United States, and Coolidge signed a law that made the federal government a powerful gatekeeper.

2 Supporters of tighter immigration limits argued that fewer newcomers would protect jobs and preserve what they called American culture. Critics said limits based on birthplace would discriminate and divide families. In 1924, Congress passed the Immigration Act, which Coolidge signed. It set each country's annual quota at 2 percent of the number of people born in that country who lived in the United States in 1890. The law used an older census, taken before large waves of immigration from southern and eastern Europe.

3 The quota formula favored immigrants from northern and western Europe and sharply limited entry from southern and eastern Europe. The law also barred most immigration from Asia, while immigrants from the Western Hemisphere were not subject to its national quotas. Families facing these rules could have very different chances of reuniting, depending on where relatives were born. Coolidge's presidency thus shows a tension: he urged a smaller federal role in the economy but accepted strict federal control over immigration.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Coolidge's decision to sign the immigration law contrast with his approach to the economy?

2. How did using the 1890 census affect who could immigrate under the quotas?

3. What was one argument for immigration limits and one argument against them?

4. How did the law treat immigration from Asia differently from immigration from the Western Hemisphere?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a brief 1924 newspaper editorial arguing whether Coolidge's immigration policy fits his belief in limited government. Use two different details from the passage and address one objection to your position.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details about Coolidge's approach to the economy, circle two details about immigration rules, and number one argument for restrictions 1 and one argument against them 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Coolidge's decision to sign the immigration law contrast with his approach to the economy?	**He favored less federal interference with business but signed a law giving the federal government strict control over immigration.**
2	How did using the 1890 census affect who could immigrate under the quotas?	**Because the census came before large waves of immigration from southern and eastern Europe, the quotas favored northern and western Europeans and sharply limited southern and eastern Europeans.**
3	What was one argument for immigration limits and one argument against them?	**Supporters said limits would protect jobs or preserve American culture. Critics said birthplace-based limits would discriminate or divide families.**
4	How did the law treat immigration from Asia differently from immigration from the Western Hemisphere?	**It barred most immigration from Asia, while immigrants from the Western Hemisphere were not subject to its national quotas.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Coolidge's immigration policy did not fit his call for limited government. He wanted less federal interference with business, yet he signed a law that gave Washington strict power over who could enter the country. The 1890-based quotas favored northern and western Europe and limited immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Supporters argued that restrictions would protect jobs, but that argument does not erase the federal government's large role in deciding which families could reunite.

Accept either position if the editorial uses two accurate, distinct passage details and responds to an objection. Students may distinguish limited government in the economy from federal control over immigration.