Ports Without Borders

Define a trade region by its connections and trace how they change.

WG.C.1.3 "Define regions and analyze changing interconnections among places, using historical and contemporary examples."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that explains why the places form a region, circle two historical connections among them, and number two changes in those connections over time.

A Region Linked by the Sea

1 A region is not always a shape marked by a government. Consider the western Indian Ocean trade region: the East African coast, the Arabian Peninsula, and western India. These places belong together because ports across the sea have exchanged goods and ideas for centuries. The region has no fixed border. A historian studying sailing routes might include coastal towns reached by seasonal winds, while a shipping planner might include ports connected by container vessels. In both cases, the definition depends on the connection being studied, not on whether the places share a language or a ruler.

2 Before steam engines, sailors used monsoon winds that change direction with the seasons to cross the Indian Ocean. Ships traveled between East African ports, Arabian ports, and western India, then waited for winds favorable to the return trip. East African traders sent goods such as ivory and gold; Indian merchants brought cotton cloth. Arabian ports served as stops and markets along these routes. The trips also carried people, religious ideas, and words between coastal communities. Sailing schedules tied distant places together, but the changing winds limited when many crossings could begin.

3 In 1869, the Suez Canal opened a shorter sea route between the Indian Ocean and Europe through the Red Sea and Mediterranean. Steamships, and later motor ships, no longer had to wait for seasonal winds in the same way sailing ships did. Today container ships connect ports such as Mombasa in Kenya, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, and Mumbai in India to wider supply networks. Cargo includes manufactured goods and food. When the Suez Canal was blocked in 2021, some ships traveling between Asia and Europe went around Africa instead. A disruption beyond the region could therefore change journeys through its ports.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which three areas make up the passage's western Indian Ocean trade region, and what connection puts them in the same region?

2. How did monsoon winds both connect and limit the region's ports before steam engines?

3. How did the Suez Canal and powered ships change connections between this region and other places?

4. Why does the 2021 Suez Canal blockage show that connections beyond the region can affect travel through its ports?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose two of the passage's three areas and name a smaller trade region. In one paragraph, explain why you include those areas but leave out the third for your chosen focus, then compare a historical link with a present-day link supported by the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Ports Without Borders

HIGH SCHOOL · WG.C.1.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that explains why the places form a region, circle two historical connections among them, and number two changes in those connections over time. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which three areas make up the passage's western Indian Ocean trade region, and what connection puts them in the same region?	**The East African coast, the Arabian Peninsula, and western India form a region because their ports have exchanged goods and ideas across the sea.**
2	How did monsoon winds both connect and limit the region's ports before steam engines?	**The winds enabled ships to cross between ports, but sailors had to wait for favorable seasonal winds to begin many crossings or return trips.**
3	How did the Suez Canal and powered ships change connections between this region and other places?	**The canal shortened the sea route to Europe. Steamships and later motor ships relied less on seasonal winds, allowing different sailing schedules.**
4	Why does the 2021 Suez Canal blockage show that connections beyond the region can affect travel through its ports?	**Some ships traveling between Asia and Europe went around Africa instead, showing that a blockage outside the region could change journeys through its ports.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would call the East African coast and western India the Africa-India exchange region. I would leave out the Arabian Peninsula because my focus is trade between those two areas, not every stop along the routes. In the past, ships carried East African ivory and gold and Indian cotton cloth, with crossings shaped by monsoon winds. Today, container ships connect ports including Mombasa and Mumbai to wider supply networks.

Accept other pairs if the student states a clear reason for the narrower boundary and accurately compares a historical and a present-day connection. Leaving an area out for a chosen focus does not mean it had no trade links.