

Routes That Changed History

Read how geography shaped key places and turning points in United States history.

8.10 "Geography. The student understands the location and characteristics of places and regions of the United States, past and present. The student is expected to: locate places and regions directly related to major eras and turning points in..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each place name and circle each physical or human geographic factor that affected people or events. Number 1, 2, and 3 beside the details from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Geography at Turning Points

- ① In 1607, English settlers founded Jamestown beside the James River in Virginia's Tidewater region. The river gave ships a route from the Atlantic Ocean to the settlement, so people and supplies could arrive by water. Yet the low, marshy land brought problems. Mosquitoes spread disease, and nearby brackish water was often unsafe to drink. A severe drought from 1609 to 1610 worsened food shortages. Jamestown's location offered transportation advantages, but weather and local land conditions made survival difficult.
- ② During the American Revolution, the Hudson River valley connected New York City with inland routes toward Canada. In 1777, British General John Burgoyne moved south from Canada, hoping to control this corridor and separate New England from the other colonies. American forces met his army near Saratoga, north of Albany. Forests, hills, and limited roads slowed British movement and supply wagons. The American victory at Saratoga helped persuade France to join the war. Here, a river valley and transportation routes shaped a major turning point.
- ③ In the early nineteenth century, the Erie Canal linked the Hudson River at Albany to Lake Erie at Buffalo. This human-built waterway crossed New York's varied terrain and opened a cheaper route between Atlantic ports and Great Lakes farms. Towns grew along the canal as workers, goods, and news traveled more quickly. Later, railroads reached places waterways did not, crossing mountains and prairies in many regions. Canals and railroads changed where people settled, how businesses traded, and how rapidly information moved.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the James River help Jamestown, and what two local conditions made life there difficult?

2 Why did Burgoyne want to control the Hudson River valley, and what geographic conditions slowed his army near Saratoga?

3 Compare the James River at Jamestown with the Erie Canal in New York. How did each water route affect movement or settlement?

4 What two kinds of transportation described in the last paragraph changed where people settled and how information moved?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a United States place or event from the 17th, 18th, or 19th century that is not named in the passage. Write four sentences that identify its location and era, describe one physical or human geographic factor, and explain how that factor affected people or a historical event.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each place name and circle each physical or human geographic factor that affected people or events. Number 1, 2, and 3 beside the details from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the James River help Jamestown, and what two local conditions made life there difficult?	The James River gave ships a route from the Atlantic Ocean so people and supplies could arrive by water. Marshy land, disease-carrying mosquitoes, unsafe brackish water, and drought made survival difficult. Accept any two listed problems.
2	Why did Burgoyne want to control the Hudson River valley, and what geographic conditions slowed his army near Saratoga?	He hoped to control the corridor and separate New England from the other colonies. Forests, hills, and limited roads slowed British movement and supply wagons.
3	Compare the James River at Jamestown with the Erie Canal in New York. How did each water route affect movement or settlement?	The James River brought ships, people, and supplies to Jamestown from the Atlantic. The Erie Canal created a cheaper route between Atlantic ports and Great Lakes farms, helping towns grow as people, goods, and news moved faster.
4	What two kinds of transportation described in the last paragraph changed where people settled and how information moved?	Canals and railroads.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1848, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California. The remote mountain location and difficult overland travel made reaching the area slow and dangerous for many migrants. Rivers and ports at San Francisco also helped carry people and supplies. These physical features and transportation routes helped turn the Gold Rush into a major migration and growth event.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect a named geographic feature or human-built system to an effect on movement, settlement, trade, communication, or a historical event. For the open response, accept accurate examples from the required centuries that include a location, era, geographic factor, and clear effect.