

Powering New Possibilities

Trace how business choices and electricity changed American life.

USII.5.a “explaining how capitalism and free markets helped foster developments in factory and labor productivity, transportation, and communication and how rural electrification changed American life and the standard of living;”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases that show a business choice or new technology. Circle the results for workers, transportation, communication, or rural families so you can trace cause and effect.

Business, Technology, and Daily Life

- ① In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the United States had a capitalist economy. Individuals and companies could own businesses, seek profits, and decide what goods or services to sell. In free markets, many businesses competed for customers. Competition gave owners reasons to invest in new machines, hire workers, and improve products. Successful companies could earn money and expand. This system did not guarantee success, but it encouraged people to take risks and try new ideas.
- ② Factory owners used machines and division of labor, in which each worker did one part of a job. These methods increased labor productivity, meaning workers made more goods in the same amount of time. Businesses also invested in railroads, steamships, and later trucks to move raw materials and finished goods. Telegraph and telephone lines sent messages quickly over long distances. Faster transportation and communication helped companies buy, sell, and coordinate work across wider markets than before.
- ③ Before electric lines reached many farms, rural families relied on kerosene lamps and hand labor. The Rural Electrification Administration, created in 1935, helped bring electricity to rural areas through loans and local cooperatives. Electric lights made evenings brighter, while pumps could move water and refrigerators could keep food fresh. Electricity also powered radios and other appliances. By reducing some difficult chores and improving access to news and services, rural electrification raised many families' standard of living.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did competition in free markets help increase factory productivity?

2 Name two kinds of transportation or communication that businesses used. How did faster systems help companies?

3 What organization helped bring electricity to rural areas, and how did it help?

4 How did rural electrification raise the standard of living for many farm families? Use two details from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write three sentences about two companies competing to sell a useful electric product to rural families. Explain how factory production, transportation, or communication helps the product reach customers, then explain one way electricity changes daily life.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline phrases that show a business choice or new technology. Circle the results for workers, transportation, communication, or rural families so you can trace cause and effect. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did competition in free markets help increase factory productivity?	Competition encouraged owners to invest in machines and improve products. Machines and division of labor helped workers make more goods in the same amount of time.
2	Name two kinds of transportation or communication that businesses used. How did faster systems help companies?	Answers may name railroads, steamships, trucks, telegraph lines, or telephone lines. Faster systems helped companies move goods, send messages, and coordinate work across wider markets.
3	What organization helped bring electricity to rural areas, and how did it help?	The Rural Electrification Administration helped bring electricity to rural areas through loans and local cooperatives.
4	How did rural electrification raise the standard of living for many farm families? Use two details from the passage.	It reduced difficult chores and improved daily life with electric lights, water pumps, refrigerators, radios, and better access to news and services.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Two companies compete to sell electric water pumps to farms, so each tries to make a reliable pump at a lower price. A factory uses machines to produce pumps quickly, and trucks carry them to rural stores. Electricity lets farm families pump water more easily, improving daily life.

Accept accurate cause-and-effect explanations that connect competition or business investment to technological development and changes in daily life. For the open response, accept different realistic electric products and transportation or communication examples if all required links are clear.