Places Shape Poleis

Read how land and sea shaped Greek city-states.

SS24.7.14a "Explain the development of the polis and analyze how geography affected the process, including Athens and Sparta."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two geographic features in the passage and circle a result each helped bring about. Label each matching feature and result 1 or 2 to show the connection.

A City-States's Place

1 In ancient Greece, a traveler might cross a mountain pass and find a new city with its own laws. Mountains and stretches of sea made travel between settlements difficult. As villages grew, many joined with nearby farmland to form a polis, or city-state. Each polis controlled its own territory and made decisions about defense and government. People could gather in the city, while farmers worked land outside its walls. Geography did not create the same society everywhere, but it shaped which neighbors a polis could reach and what resources it could use.

2 Athens grew in Attica, a region of hills and farmland near the Aegean Sea. Its port of Piraeus linked the city to sea routes, making it easier to bring in grain and sell goods such as pottery. As the population grew, local fields could not supply all the grain people needed. Access to ships became especially important. Athens built a strong navy to protect its interests at sea. Sea travel also connected Athenians with ideas from other places, although contact alone did not create Athens's system of government.

3 Sparta developed inland in the Eurotas River valley, where people could farm more land than in many rocky parts of Greece. Mountains bordered the region and helped separate it from other communities. Spartans also conquered nearby Messenia and forced many of its people, called helots, to work the land. To control this large labor force and defend their territory, Sparta trained male citizens for military service. Unlike Athens, Sparta depended less on sea trade. Its farmland, location, and conquest shaped a polis focused on land and soldiers.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could mountains and sea help separate Greek poleis even as nearby villages and farms joined together?

2. Why did Athens's location and farmland make ships important for feeding its people?

3. How did Sparta's control of nearby land and its workers affect the kind of polis it became?

4. How did geography help lead Athens and Sparta toward different ways of defending their interests?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a new Greek polis on a steep, rocky island with a sheltered harbor but little farmland. In four sentences, explain how its land and water might shape its food supply and defense, then compare one choice with Athens or Sparta.

ANSWER KEY

Places Shape Poleis

GRADE 7 · SS24.7.14a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two geographic features in the passage and circle a result each helped bring about. Label each matching feature and result 1 or 2 to show the connection. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could mountains and sea help separate Greek poleis even as nearby villages and farms joined together?	**Mountains and sea made travel between settlements difficult. Nearby villages and farmland could join to form a polis that controlled its own territory.**
2	Why did Athens's location and farmland make ships important for feeding its people?	**Local fields could not supply all the grain Athenians needed as the population grew, and the port of Piraeus gave ships access to sea routes for bringing in grain.**
3	How did Sparta's control of nearby land and its workers affect the kind of polis it became?	**After conquering Messenia, Sparta forced many people to work the land. It trained male citizens for military service to control that labor force and defend its territory.**
4	How did geography help lead Athens and Sparta toward different ways of defending their interests?	**Athens's access to sea routes helped make a navy important. Inland Sparta focused on soldiers to defend its territory and control the people forced to work its land.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Because the island has little farmland, its people would need to bring in grain by ship. The sheltered harbor would let merchants unload food. To protect arriving food, the polis might build ships to guard the harbor. Like Athens, it would depend on sea routes, but its steep cliffs could also help defend against an attack from land.

Accept other well-supported links between geography and a polis's development. For Your Turn, look for four sentences that address food, defense, and a comparison with Athens or Sparta.