Borrowed, Then Changed

How Chinese ideas took different forms across Asia

SS24.8.4a "Explain China's influence on other civilizations in Asia."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle Korea, Japan, and Vietnam in the passage. Underline a Chinese practice each society adopted, then number the local changes that show how people adapted what they borrowed.

Writing Across Borders

1. In medieval Asia, a book could travel farther than its writer. Chinese characters crossed borders with Buddhist monks, merchants, and scholars. People in neighboring societies did not simply copy everything they saw. In Korea, rulers used Chinese characters to keep official records, and they adopted examinations based on Confucian learning to select some government officials. This gave educated families a path into government, though access to schooling was unequal. Most people spoke Korean, so reading a Chinese text still required years of study.

2. Across the sea in Japan, court leaders also learned from China. They used Chinese characters in government and studied Buddhist texts brought from the mainland. Yet Japanese speech did not match the structure of written Chinese. Over time, Japanese writers developed kana, signs derived from Chinese characters that represented sounds in Japanese. Kana made it easier to write Japanese words and helped court authors create works in their own language. For example, Murasaki Shikibu wrote *The Tale of Genji* in the early 1000s, using Japanese writing shaped by this exchange.

3. Farther south, Vietnamese rulers faced a different choice after periods of Chinese rule. In independent Vietnam, courts used Chinese characters for laws and records, while officials took examinations based on Confucian texts. These practices helped rulers organize the government and connected educated people to a wider world of Chinese books. But the Vietnamese language was not Chinese. Writers developed chữ Nôm, a writing system that used Chinese characters and new character forms to represent Vietnamese words. A borrowed tool could strengthen a court while local writers made space for their own voice.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Chinese learning shape the way Korean rulers chose some officials, and who had a better chance to benefit?

2. Why did Japanese writers develop kana after adopting Chinese characters, and how did it change their writing?

3. How did practices borrowed from China help rulers govern independent Vietnam?

4. How did chữ Nôm show that Vietnamese writers adapted Chinese influence rather than simply copying it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise the ruler of an island kingdom that speaks its own language. In four sentences, propose one use for Chinese writing and one way to adapt it for local speech, explain an effect of each choice, and support your plan with examples from two societies in the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Borrowed, Then Changed

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.4a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle Korea, Japan, and Vietnam in the passage. Underline a Chinese practice each society adopted, then number the local changes that show how people adapted what they borrowed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Chinese learning shape the way Korean rulers chose some officials, and who had a better chance to benefit?	**Korean rulers used examinations based on Confucian learning to select some officials. Educated families had a better chance because schooling was unequal.**
2	Why did Japanese writers develop kana after adopting Chinese characters, and how did it change their writing?	**Written Chinese did not match Japanese speech. Kana represented Japanese sounds, making it easier to write Japanese words and works in that language.**
3	How did practices borrowed from China help rulers govern independent Vietnam?	**Courts used Chinese characters for laws and records and Confucian-based examinations for officials. These practices helped rulers organize the government.**
4	How did chữ Nôm show that Vietnamese writers adapted Chinese influence rather than simply copying it?	**Writers used Chinese characters and new character forms to represent Vietnamese words.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would use Chinese characters to keep government records, as rulers in Korea did. Those records could help officials keep track of decisions. I would also develop signs for sounds in our language, as Japanese writers did with kana. These signs could help local authors write stories in their own words.

Accept other plausible plans that name a use for Chinese writing, adapt it for local speech, explain an effect of each choice, and accurately cite two societies from the passage.