From Court to Shogun

Trace how warriors gained power in medieval Japan

SS24.8.4d "Trace the development of the feudal structure of medieval Japan, including the establishment of the Shogunate by Minamoto no Yoritomo."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four developments that show how warrior power grew into a shogunate, and number them in time order.

How the Shogunate Took Shape

1. In the Heian period (794 to 1185), Japan's emperor and nobles ruled from Kyoto, but their control was uneven. Powerful families and temples held large private estates called shoen. Some estates paid little or no tax to the central government, so court officials had less money and reach in the countryside. Estate owners relied on local warriors to guard fields, collect payments, and settle disputes. These armed families built ties with landholders and with one another. Over time, warriors gained influence because people needed them to protect land.

2. In the late 1100s, rival warrior families fought to control the court. The Taira first held great influence, but the Minamoto defeated them in the Genpei War, which ended in 1185. Minamoto no Yoritomo then built a military government based in Kamakura, far from Kyoto. He rewarded loyal warriors with rights and offices connected to land, and they owed him military service. In 1192, the emperor named Yoritomo shogun, or supreme military commander. The title made his leadership official, though his military government had already begun to take shape.

3. Under Yoritomo, the Kamakura government sent stewards to oversee estates and constables to help keep order in provinces. These officials were often Yoritomo's warrior followers, whose service connected local land to his government. This network of personal loyalty, land rights, and military duties helped form Japan's feudal structure. The emperor still lived in Kyoto, and the court continued to exist, but the shogun held much of the practical power over warriors and land. Authority was divided rather than simply moved from one capital to another.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did private estates help local warriors gain influence before the shogunate formed?

2. How did the outcome of the Genpei War help Yoritomo build a new government?

3. Which came first, Yoritomo's military government or his appointment as shogun? Explain why the appointment still mattered.

4. How did Yoritomo's appointments connect local estates to his government, and why did this not end the emperor's rule?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a six-sentence letter from a Kyoto court official in 1192 to a relative on an estate. Describe at least three changes in chronological order, then explain one concern the official might have about the new division of power using evidence from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

From Court to Shogun

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.4d

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four developments that show how warrior power grew into a shogunate, and number them in time order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did private estates help local warriors gain influence before the shogunate formed?	**Some estates paid little or no tax to the central government, weakening its reach. Estate owners depended on local warriors to protect land and handle disputes.**
2	How did the outcome of the Genpei War help Yoritomo build a new government?	**The Minamoto defeated the Taira, and Yoritomo then built a military government in Kamakura.**
3	Which came first, Yoritomo's military government or his appointment as shogun? Explain why the appointment still mattered.	**His military government began first. The emperor's appointment in 1192 made Yoritomo's leadership official.**
4	How did Yoritomo's appointments connect local estates to his government, and why did this not end the emperor's rule?	**Yoritomo sent warrior followers to oversee estates and help keep order in provinces. The emperor and court remained in Kyoto, although the shogun held much of the practical power over warriors and land.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When I was younger, our court in Kyoto claimed authority over the countryside. Yet private estates paid little tax, and their owners turned to warriors for protection. Those warriors grew powerful, and the Minamoto defeated the Taira in 1185. Yoritomo then built a military government in Kamakura and gave his followers land-related offices in return for service. Now, in 1192, the emperor has named him shogun. I fear that although the emperor remains in Kyoto, our court may struggle to direct the warriors who oversee distant estates.

For the marking task, accept any four passage-supported developments numbered in chronological order. For the letter, accept a historically reasonable concern grounded in the court's reduced practical power.