Routes to Growth

Compare how geography shaped medieval European societies.

SS24.8.7a "Compare and contrast the growth of medieval societies in different geographic regions of Europe."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline one cause of growth in each region. Circle two ways the regions grew alike, and number two ways they grew differently.

Three Paths Through Medieval Europe

1 Between 1000 and 1300, many European communities grew, but geography shaped how they grew. In much of France, farmers cleared forests and used improved plows to work heavy soil. Larger harvests supported more people, villages, and market towns. Lords controlled much farmland, while kings gradually gained more power over their realms. Fairs brought merchants to inland routes, where they exchanged cloth, food, and other goods. France's growth began largely in fields, yet trade also helped towns expand. Both farming and commerce changed where people lived and worked.

2 Across Scandinavia, a shorter growing season limited farming compared with much of France. Merchants carried timber, fish, and furs to markets abroad and returned with goods such as cloth. Ports such as Bergen in Norway became busy meeting places. As in France, trade supported growing towns, and kings strengthened their authority. Unlike France, however, northern communities could not rely as heavily on large grain harvests. Fishing and sea routes played a greater role in their growth. Christian churches also linked scattered communities through shared practices and learning.

3 Along the coasts of northern Italy, Venice and Genoa built powerful trading cities. Their ships crossed the Mediterranean, linking European buyers with goods from eastern markets. Merchants invested profits in ships, workshops, and buildings, drawing workers into the cities. Like France and Scandinavia, this region gained towns through trade. Yet Venice and Genoa relied more on long-distance sea commerce than inland French towns did. Their city governments, led by wealthy citizens, also differed from the expanding kingdoms in France and Scandinavia. Growth took different paths because resources and routes differed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did geography shape growth differently in France and Scandinavia? Include one way both regions grew.

2. Compare how trade helped inland French towns and the cities of Venice and Genoa grow.

3. What did Scandinavia and northern Italy have in common as they grew, and what goods or routes made their trade different?

4. How did leadership in Venice and Genoa differ from leadership in France and Scandinavia during this period of growth?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a merchant choosing between an inland French town, a Scandinavian port, and an Italian trading city around 1200. Write one paragraph comparing two choices and recommending one. Use two details from the passage to explain why the differences matter to your trade plans.

ANSWER KEY

Routes to Growth

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.7a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline one cause of growth in each region. Circle two ways the regions grew alike, and number two ways they grew differently. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did geography shape growth differently in France and Scandinavia? Include one way both regions grew.	**France's workable farmland supported larger harvests, while Scandinavia's shorter growing season made fishing and sea routes more important. Trade helped towns grow in both regions.**
2	Compare how trade helped inland French towns and the cities of Venice and Genoa grow.	**Both grew as merchants exchanged goods. French towns benefited from fairs on inland routes, while Venice and Genoa grew through long-distance Mediterranean sea trade.**
3	What did Scandinavia and northern Italy have in common as they grew, and what goods or routes made their trade different?	**Both used sea trade to support growing towns or cities. Scandinavian merchants exported timber, fish, and furs, while Venice and Genoa used Mediterranean routes to connect buyers with goods from eastern markets.**
4	How did leadership in Venice and Genoa differ from leadership in France and Scandinavia during this period of growth?	**Wealthy citizens led the city governments of Venice and Genoa, while kings strengthened their authority in France and Scandinavia.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would choose an Italian trading city over an inland French town. Venice and Genoa sent ships across the Mediterranean, so I could reach buyers and goods from eastern markets. French fairs also offered chances to sell cloth or food, but they served inland routes rather than the same long-distance sea network. If I wanted to trade widely by ship, the Italian city would fit my plans better, even though the French town could offer customers at its fairs.

Accept other well-supported comparisons and merchant choices. Responses should connect geographic or economic differences to how a merchant would trade.