Power Beyond the Pews

Church, rulers, and village life in medieval England

SS24.8.7b "Analyze the relationship of the Catholic Church to economic, political, and social systems and rulers in medieval Europe."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways people or rulers supported the Church, circle two ways the Church affected their lives, and number one conflict over authority. Use your marks to trace how Church power worked in different parts of society.

A Village, a King, and the Church

1. In a twelfth-century English village, the parish church was more than a place to pray. Families brought a tithe, often a tenth of their produce, to support the Church. Some farmers also worked land owned by a monastery and paid rent for its use. Monasteries used income to maintain buildings and feed their members; some also helped people in need. These ties gave Church institutions a steady share of local resources. They also meant a poor harvest could strain both village families and the Church.

2. Church power also reached the king's court. Kings valued bishops who could manage records and advise them, while bishops needed royal protection for Church lands. But the two sides did not always agree about authority. In the 1160s, England's King Henry II wanted clergy accused of serious crimes to face royal justice. Archbishop Thomas Becket defended the Church's right to judge clergy in Church courts. Their dispute exposed a larger question: when a priest broke a law, whose rules should govern the trial?

3. The Church shaped daily life as well as politics. Priests led worship and marked births, marriages, and deaths with religious ceremonies. Monasteries sometimes taught children and cared for travelers or sick people. These services made Church institutions important to many families, even as tithes required families to give up food or income. Rulers also supported churches and monasteries with land or gifts, strengthening ties with Church leaders. In return, public support from those leaders could help a ruler appear rightful to Christian subjects.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did a poor harvest affect the economic relationship between village families and Church institutions?

2. Why did Henry II and Thomas Becket disagree, and what does their dispute show about political authority?

3. How could a family both benefit from and bear a cost because of the Church's role in village life?

4. How could a ruler and Church leaders help each other, even if they sometimes disagreed?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a monastery uses rent from its fields to build a bridge, while a ruler promises to protect it. In four sentences, explain an economic effect, a political exchange, a social effect, and one possible tension between the ruler and Church leaders.

ANSWER KEY

Power Beyond the Pews

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.7b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways people or rulers supported the Church, circle two ways the Church affected their lives, and number one conflict over authority. Use your marks to trace how Church power worked in different parts of society. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did a poor harvest affect the economic relationship between village families and Church institutions?	**Families had less produce for tithes and less income for rent, so Church institutions could receive less support.**
2	Why did Henry II and Thomas Becket disagree, and what does their dispute show about political authority?	**Henry wanted clergy accused of serious crimes to face royal justice, while Becket defended Church courts. The dispute showed that rulers and Church leaders competed over who could judge clergy.**
3	How could a family both benefit from and bear a cost because of the Church's role in village life?	**A family might benefit from worship, teaching, or care for sick people, while giving produce or income as a tithe.**
4	How could a ruler and Church leaders help each other, even if they sometimes disagreed?	**A ruler could give land or protection to Church institutions, while Church leaders' public support could help the ruler appear rightful.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Building the bridge would use some of the monastery's rent income, but it could help traders reach markets. The ruler would protect the bridge, while Church leaders might publicly support the ruler. Townspeople could use the bridge to visit neighbors or reach help more easily. If the ruler demanded control of the bridge, Church leaders might resist losing authority over their property.

Accept other passage-supported examples in the short answers. For Your Turn, accept plausible effects and tensions that distinguish economic, political, and social relationships.