Land, Labor, Power

How a medieval manor connected work, authority, and social rank

SS24.8.7c "Explain the significant economic, political, and social aspects of European feudalism."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details about work or resources, circle two details about who held authority, and write S beside two details about status or community life. Use your marks to explain how these parts of feudalism worked together.

Life on a Medieval Manor

1 Around 1200, a family in a western European village worked strips of farmland scattered across a manor. The manor included fields, homes, and land controlled by a lord. Some villagers were free tenants, while others were serfs, people bound to the manor who faced limits on leaving it. Families raised crops for food and owed the lord rent, farm labor, or part of their harvest. A mill owned by the lord might grind their grain for a fee. These obligations shaped how families earned and used what they produced.

2 The lord did not rule alone. In many regions, a king granted powerful nobles control of land in return for loyalty and military service. A noble could grant land to a lesser lord on similar terms. These agreements linked rulers to armed supporters, but actual power differed from place to place. On the manor, the lord or an appointed official settled some disputes and enforced local rules. A king might claim authority over the realm, yet a distant village often felt the decisions of its nearby lord more directly.

3 Social rank shaped daily life as much as land and law did. Noble families often held more power and privileges than peasant families, and birth strongly influenced a person's place. A peasant usually could not expect to become a lord. Women in both groups worked, but custom and law often limited their choices differently from men's. The local church brought people together for worship and festivals, while teaching duties toward others. These ties could create a sense of belonging, even as unequal rights kept villagers and nobles in different positions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could owing the lord farm labor or part of a harvest affect a family's ability to provide for itself?

2. How did land grants help rulers gain military support, and why might a village feel its lord's power more directly than the king's?

3. How did birth and the limits faced by serfs affect people's place in society?

4. How could a lord's control of land and local rules help maintain unequal social ranks?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine that a lord replaces a manor's required farm labor with a payment in coins. In one paragraph, predict an economic, a political, and a social effect, then explain how at least two of those effects connect. Use details from the passage to support your predictions.

ANSWER KEY

Land, Labor, Power

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.7c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details about work or resources, circle two details about who held authority, and write S beside two details about status or community life. Use your marks to explain how these parts of feudalism worked together. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could owing the lord farm labor or part of a harvest affect a family's ability to provide for itself?	**Farm labor took time the family could have spent on its own fields, and giving up part of a harvest left less food or produce for the family.**
2	How did land grants help rulers gain military support, and why might a village feel its lord's power more directly than the king's?	**Kings granted nobles control of land in return for loyalty and military service. A nearby lord or official enforced local rules and settled disputes, so villagers encountered that authority directly.**
3	How did birth and the limits faced by serfs affect people's place in society?	**Birth strongly influenced social rank, making it unlikely that a peasant would become a lord. Serfs also faced limits on leaving the manor.**
4	How could a lord's control of land and local rules help maintain unequal social ranks?	**The lord controlled land that families worked and could collect their labor, rent, or harvest. The lord or an official also enforced local rules, reinforcing the lord's greater power and privileges.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Families might gain more time to work their own fields, but they would need coins to pay the lord. Because the lord still controls land and enforces local rules, he could demand payment even when a harvest is poor. Some households might find ways to earn coins more easily than others, increasing differences among neighbors. Thus, a change in the family's work obligation could affect village relationships without ending the lord's authority or freeing serfs to leave.

Accept other supported predictions about coin payments if the response addresses economic, political, and social effects and explains a connection between at least two. Do not require students to assume that replacing labor with rent would end serfdom.