Languages on the Move

Trace how widely spoken languages began, spread, and changed

SS24.HG.6a "Identify the world's most widely spoken languages and trace their origins and development."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline where each language began, circle what helped it spread, and number one detail that shows how it changed or varies today. Use your marks to trace each language's history.

How Languages Travel

1. Which languages cross the most borders? Counts depend on whether researchers include only first-language speakers or everyone who uses a language. English and Mandarin Chinese are among the most widely spoken by total speakers, but their paths differ. English grew from West Germanic speech in early medieval England. After the Norman conquest, French words entered its vocabulary. Later, British colonial rule carried English to many regions, and international business and media extended its use. Mandarin developed from northern Chinese varieties within the Sinitic language family. Governments promoted a standard form across China, while migration brought Mandarin-speaking communities overseas.

2. Hindi and Spanish also reach hundreds of millions of people. Hindi developed in northern India from Indo-Aryan speech forms whose deeper roots include Sanskrit. Its vocabulary absorbed Persian and Arabic words through centuries of contact. Modern Standard Hindi uses the Devanagari script, while everyday speech varies by region. Spanish grew from spoken Latin in the Iberian Peninsula after Roman rule began there. Spanish colonial expansion carried it across much of the Americas. In new settings, contact with Indigenous languages shaped local words and regional varieties. Both languages show that widespread use can grow alongside change.

3. Arabic offers another path from a regional origin to a global presence. It arose on the Arabian Peninsula as a Semitic language. From the seventh century onward, the expansion of Islam and networks of trade helped spread Arabic across North Africa and West Asia. Classical Arabic remains important in Islamic scripture; Modern Standard Arabic is used in formal writing and broadcasts, while spoken varieties differ across regions. These varieties are not always mutually understandable. The histories of English, Mandarin, Hindi, Spanish, and Arabic show why a single speaker ranking cannot explain how a language developed or where it is used today.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did English and Mandarin Chinese differ in both their origins and the forces that extended their use?

2. Trace Hindi from its origins to one change caused by contact with other languages.

3. Where did Spanish develop, what carried it to the Americas, and how did it change there?

4. Trace Arabic from its origin to its wider use, then identify one way its forms differ today.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word label for an exhibit called "A Language Does Not Travel Unchanged." Compare two languages from the passage: give each one's origin, a force behind its spread, and a change or present-day difference in its use. End with a claim about what their histories show.

ANSWER KEY

Languages on the Move

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HG.6a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline where each language began, circle what helped it spread, and number one detail that shows how it changed or varies today. Use your marks to trace each language's history. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did English and Mandarin Chinese differ in both their origins and the forces that extended their use?	**English grew from West Germanic speech in England and spread through British colonial rule, then business and media. Mandarin developed from northern Chinese varieties; government promotion and migration extended its use.**
2	Trace Hindi from its origins to one change caused by contact with other languages.	**Hindi developed in northern India from Indo-Aryan speech forms with deeper roots in Sanskrit. Contact added Persian and Arabic words to its vocabulary.**
3	Where did Spanish develop, what carried it to the Americas, and how did it change there?	**Spanish developed from spoken Latin in the Iberian Peninsula. Colonial expansion carried it to the Americas, where contact with Indigenous languages shaped local words and regional varieties.**
4	Trace Arabic from its origin to its wider use, then identify one way its forms differ today.	**Arabic arose on the Arabian Peninsula and spread through the expansion of Islam and trade. Today, Modern Standard Arabic is used in formal settings, while spoken regional varieties can differ enough that speakers do not always understand one another.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

English began as West Germanic speech in England, while Arabic arose as a Semitic language on the Arabian Peninsula. British colonial rule brought English to many regions; later, business and media widened its reach. English also took French vocabulary after the Norman conquest. Arabic spread through the expansion of Islam and trade, and today its spoken regional varieties are not always mutually understandable. Their reach does not mean their forms stayed fixed: contact and different communities can reshape a language as it spreads.

Accept accurate paraphrases grounded in the passage. For the exhibit label, check that both languages have an origin, a means of spread, and a change or present-day difference, followed by a comparative claim.