Family Lines, Shared Lives

Compare descent, resources, and family roles

SS24.HG.8 "Compare and contrast the roles of men and women in societies around the world, including matrilineal and patrilineal societies."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline how family membership and resources pass between generations in each community. Circle one role women hold and one role men hold in each community so you can compare who does what.

Land, Cattle, and Family

1. Picture two family meetings about a valuable resource. In a Minangkabau community in West Sumatra, Indonesia, relatives may discuss the future of inherited rice land. A woman's children belong to her maternal clan, and ancestral land usually passes through women of that clan. Senior women help guard the family house and land, while maternal uncles may represent the clan in public decisions. This pattern is called matrilineal descent: family membership follows the mother's line. It does not mean women alone make every decision or that fathers have no role in raising children.

2. Now imagine a Maasai household in Kenya or Tanzania planning how to care for cattle. Traditionally, children belong to their father's lineage, and sons commonly inherit cattle from fathers. Men have often held formal authority over herds and community decisions. Women have managed households, cared for children, and handled milk from the family's cattle; some also earn money through trade. A wife often joins her husband's household. This pattern is patrilineal descent: family membership follows the father's line. These descriptions show common traditions, not rules followed by every Maasai family today.

3. The two communities show why descent and power should not be confused. In both, women and men contribute to family resources, but the paths by which land or cattle pass between generations differ. Minangkabau women hold important rights to ancestral land, yet men also exercise authority as maternal uncles. Maasai men traditionally control much cattle, yet women's work with milk and trade supports family income. Neither pattern tells us what every person can do. Schooling, laws, migration, and individual choices can change daily roles, even where relatives continue to identify with a mother's or father's lineage.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do family membership and inheritance differ between the Minangkabau and Maasai communities described?

2. Compare the roles men hold in decisions about family resources in the two communities.

3. How does women's work with family resources differ between the two communities?

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say that matrilineal families give women all authority while patrilineal families give women no economic role? Use both communities in your answer.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a Minangkabau family deciding how to use income from ancestral rice land. In five or six sentences, propose a fair decision-making process and compare it with the Maasai household in the passage. Include one accurate detail about each community and explain how descent differs from who makes decisions.

Family Lines, Shared Lives

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline how family membership and resources pass between generations in each community. Circle one role women hold and one role men hold in each community so you can compare who does what. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do family membership and inheritance differ between the Minangkabau and Maasai communities described?	**Minangkabau children belong to their mother's clan, and ancestral land usually passes through women. Maasai children traditionally belong to their father's lineage, and sons commonly inherit cattle from fathers.**
2	Compare the roles men hold in decisions about family resources in the two communities.	**Minangkabau maternal uncles may represent their clan in public decisions. Maasai men have traditionally held formal authority over herds and community decisions.**
3	How does women's work with family resources differ between the two communities?	**Minangkabau women hold rights to ancestral land and help guard the family house and land. Maasai women handle milk from cattle, and some earn money through trade.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say that matrilineal families give women all authority while patrilineal families give women no economic role? Use both communities in your answer.	**Minangkabau maternal uncles may take part in public decisions despite descent through mothers. Maasai women work with milk and may earn money through trade despite descent through fathers.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A Minangkabau family could hold a meeting where senior women and maternal uncles decide together how to use income from ancestral rice land. Women hold important rights to that land, so their views should shape the plan. Maternal uncles may also take part in public decisions, showing that matrilineal descent does not give women every leadership role. In the Maasai household described, children follow their father's lineage, and men have traditionally held authority over cattle. Women there handle milk and may trade, so including their ideas about cattle income would recognize their work even though descent follows fathers.

Accept other comparisons grounded in the passage. Look for a clear distinction between the lineage a person belongs to and the roles people hold in family decisions or economic work.