Why They Follow

Compare the reasons people accept a leader's direction.

SS24.S.8a "Compare how authority is perceived in legitimate power and coercive power leadership styles.*"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that support Maya's right to direct the volunteers, and circle Jalen's threatened penalty. Write 1 beside a sentence showing why volunteers obey Maya and 2 beside a sentence showing why they obey Jalen.

Two Ways to Lead a Water Station

1. At a neighborhood street fair, student volunteers run a water station. The planning committee has chosen Maya as station coordinator and explained her duties at the first meeting. When Maya asks volunteers to move the water jugs away from the exit, she points to the fair's safety plan. Some volunteers would rather keep the jugs nearby, but they follow her direction. They see her as someone with a recognized right to organize the station, even when a decision is inconvenient. This is legitimate power: people accept the leader's authority because her role and the group's rules support it.

2. Jalen also works at the station and controls the list of preferred shifts. He tells volunteers to move the same jugs and warns that anyone who refuses will lose a preferred shift next week. They move the jugs, but several say they are obeying because they fear losing a shift, not because they think Jalen has a right to direct the station. This is coercive power: a leader gains compliance through the possibility of a penalty. The jugs end up in the same place, yet the volunteers understand the two people's authority differently.

3. Later, a storm warning leads the committee to close the station early. Maya announces the decision as part of the committee's safety plan, and volunteers recognize her duty to carry it out. Jalen repeats the order but adds that anyone who stays will lose future shifts. Both messages call for the same action, yet one appeals to an accepted role while the other uses a threat. A person can have a recognized role and still use threats, so the leader's title alone does not settle how authority is perceived. Ask what makes people follow a particular direction.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why do volunteers accept Maya's direction even though it is inconvenient, and how does that differ from why they follow Jalen?

2. Both leaders get the jugs moved. Why does that result alone not tell you how volunteers perceive each leader's authority?

3. When the station closes early, compare the reasons volunteers might obey Maya's message and Jalen's message.

4. Suppose Jalen can no longer change the shift list. Which leader would volunteers still have a recognized reason to follow, and why?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a setting different from the street fair. In four sentences, show two leaders giving the same direction, one relying on a recognized role and the other on a threatened penalty, and explain how the group perceives each leader's authority.

ANSWER KEY

Why They Follow

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.S.8a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that support Maya's right to direct the volunteers, and circle Jalen's threatened penalty. Write 1 beside a sentence showing why volunteers obey Maya and 2 beside a sentence showing why they obey Jalen. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why do volunteers accept Maya's direction even though it is inconvenient, and how does that differ from why they follow Jalen?	**They accept Maya's right to direct the station because the committee chose her and her request follows the safety plan. They follow Jalen to avoid losing a preferred shift.**
2	Both leaders get the jugs moved. Why does that result alone not tell you how volunteers perceive each leader's authority?	**The same action can come from accepting a leader's right to direct the group or from fearing a penalty.**
3	When the station closes early, compare the reasons volunteers might obey Maya's message and Jalen's message.	**They might obey Maya because they recognize her duty to carry out the committee's safety plan. They might obey Jalen because he threatens to take away future shifts.**
4	Suppose Jalen can no longer change the shift list. Which leader would volunteers still have a recognized reason to follow, and why?	**Maya, because her committee-assigned role and the safety plan still support her authority. Jalen's threatened penalty would no longer be available.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a robotics club, two leaders tell members to put tools away before leaving. Elected captain Nia cites the club's cleanup rule, so members follow because they accept her responsibility to direct the group. Equipment manager Leo warns that anyone who ignores him will be barred from using the printers next week. Members comply with Leo to avoid the penalty, even if they do not see him as entitled to set cleanup rules.

Accept responses that distinguish an accepted right to direct the group from compliance based on fear of a penalty. A leader may have a recognized role and also use coercive power.