Who Runs the Mill?

Compare four ways of thinking about work, ownership, and change

SS24.WH.4b "Compare the theories of capitalism, utilitarianism, socialism, and Marxism, including the philosophies of John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, and Robert Owen."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a guiding idea for each of the four theories. Circle statements about who controls production, then number Owen's and Marx's different paths to change 1 and 2.

A Mill and Four Ideas

1. In 1840, imagine a textile mill where owners decide wages and workers spend long days at machines. Under capitalism, individuals can own factories and seek profit by selling cloth in a competitive market. Owners decide what to make and how to invest, while workers sell their labor for pay. Supporters argue that competition can spur invention and increase production. Critics point out that an owner may gain wealth while workers face low wages and unsafe conditions.

2. John Stuart Mill asked a different question: which choices would increase well-being for the greatest number of people? This utilitarian test could support safer machines or shorter hours if the benefits outweighed the costs. Mill also defended individual liberty, arguing that society should not restrict people simply for holding unpopular views. Utilitarianism is a way to judge actions, not a plan for factory ownership. Mill also supported worker cooperatives, where employees could share control and profits.

3. Robert Owen, a socialist reformer, improved conditions at his Scottish mills and proposed cooperative communities where people would share work, control, and resources rather than compete for private profit. Marxism, based on Karl Marx's ideas, held that capitalism divided society into owners and wage workers, whose interests clashed. Marx expected workers to overthrow capitalism and take collective control of production. Both thinkers challenged inequality, but Owen tested peaceful cooperation, while Marx saw class struggle and revolution as necessary.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How would control and profit differ between a capitalist mill and one based on Owen's ideas?

2. How does Mill's utilitarian test differ from a capitalist owner's goal of earning profit?

3. How did Owen's and Marx's proposed paths to change differ?

4. How did Mill's and Marx's ideas about workers sharing control differ?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A new mill opens in your town. In four or five sentences, propose a plan for its ownership and workday, explain how Mill, Owen, and Marx might assess it in relation to capitalism, and identify one tradeoff.

ANSWER KEY

Who Runs the Mill?

GRADE 9 · SS24.WH.4b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a guiding idea for each of the four theories. Circle statements about who controls production, then number Owen's and Marx's different paths to change 1 and 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How would control and profit differ between a capitalist mill and one based on Owen's ideas?	**In a capitalist mill, private owners control production and seek profit. In Owen's cooperative model, people share control, work, and resources.**
2	How does Mill's utilitarian test differ from a capitalist owner's goal of earning profit?	**Mill's test weighs effects on the well-being of the greatest number, while the capitalist owner seeks profit.**
3	How did Owen's and Marx's proposed paths to change differ?	**Owen tested peaceful cooperation in mills and communities. Marx expected class struggle and revolution to bring collective control.**
4	How did Mill's and Marx's ideas about workers sharing control differ?	**Mill supported worker cooperatives as an option. Marx expected workers to overthrow capitalism and take collective control of production.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would turn the town's new mill into a worker cooperative and limit shifts to eight hours. Owen would favor shared control because his communities relied on cooperation rather than private profit. Mill might approve the shorter day if its benefits to workers and families outweighed any loss in production. Marx might argue that one cooperative cannot end the larger conflict between workers and capitalist owners. A tradeoff is that shorter shifts could reduce cloth output.

Accept other supported comparisons. For the open task, look for a specific plan, distinct and accurate uses of all three thinkers, a connection to capitalism, and a plausible tradeoff.