Shared Dreams, Real Costs

Examining how early communal communities managed work, money, and conflict.

SS.8.HC.1.1 “Examine early attempts at communal living in American society and their effect on economic stability and societal prosperity.”

NAME ______________________ DATE ____________

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline evidence that shows whether a community gained or lost economic stability. Circle the communal practice or event that helped cause each result, then number the three communities 1, 2, and 3.

Testing Communal Living

(1) In the early 1800s, some Americans tried communal living, in which members shared property, work, and decisions. Robert Owen bought the town of New Harmony, Indiana, in 1825 and invited people to build a cooperative society. He hoped shared labor and education would reduce poverty and create prosperity. New Harmony attracted teachers, craftspeople, and reformers. Yet many members had different skills, work habits, and ideas about rules. The community struggled to produce enough income and broke apart within about two years.

(2) The Oneida Community in New York, founded in 1848, lasted longer. Its members pooled earnings and organized work in farming and businesses. They made animal traps, processed silk, and later produced silverware. Careful management and successful products gave the community more economic stability than New Harmony. However, members faced strict social rules, including rules about marriage and family life. Conflict over these rules grew. In 1881, communal living ended, and the silverware business continued as a company.

(3) Brook Farm, started in Massachusetts in 1841, combined farming, a school, and shared living. Residents expected each person to contribute labor and receive support from the group. The farm's soil produced limited income, so the school became important. Leaders also spent money building a large meeting hall. When the unfinished hall burned in 1846, the debt was too heavy. Brook Farm closed soon afterward. These experiments show that shared ideals alone did not ensure prosperity. Productive work, clear organization, and enough money mattered.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the economic result at New Harmony differ from the economic result at Oneida? Use one detail from the passage for each community.

2. Explain how Oneida's work and businesses helped support its communal system.

3. What chain of events caused Brook Farm to close? Include both a financial problem and an event that made it worse.

4. What two conditions, besides shared ideals, does the passage identify as necessary for a communal community to become economically stable?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine that a group plans a new communal community. Write exactly four sentences that recommend two plans for economic stability. Use lessons from at least two different communities in the passage to explain your recommendations.

ANSWER KEY

Shared Dreams, Real Costs

GRADE 8 · SS.8.HC.1.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline evidence that shows whether a community gained or lost economic stability. Circle the communal practice or event that helped cause each result, then number the three communities 1, 2, and 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the economic result at New Harmony differ from the economic result at Oneida? Use one detail from the passage for each community.	**New Harmony could not produce enough income and broke apart within about two years. Oneida gained greater stability through carefully managed farming and businesses that sold successful products.**
2	Explain how Oneida's work and businesses helped support its communal system.	**Members pooled earnings and organized labor in farming and businesses. Products such as animal traps, silk, and silverware brought in income.**
3	What chain of events caused Brook Farm to close? Include both a financial problem and an event that made it worse.	**Brook Farm's poor soil brought in limited farm income, and leaders spent money on a meeting hall. When the unfinished hall burned, the community's debt became too heavy, so it closed.**
4	What two conditions, besides shared ideals, does the passage identify as necessary for a communal community to become economically stable?	**Answers include productive work, clear organization, and enough money.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

First, the group should choose work that can reliably earn income, because Oneida's products supported its community. Second, it should set clear work duties, decision rules, and a careful budget, since disagreements weakened New Harmony and debt closed Brook Farm. Both plans use lessons from early communities rather than relying only on shared ideals. They would make the new community more economically stable.

Accept equivalent evidence-based comparisons and cause-and-effect explanations from the passage. For the open response, accept any exactly four-sentence recommendation that gives two economic plans and accurately connects them to at least two communities.