Podium in Context

Use time, place, culture, and events to interpret a historical moment.

8.P.ST.1 "Context: Develop and apply knowledge of key components of context such as background information, geographic location, cultural influences, time period, and contemporary events when interpreting and constructing texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that tell about time, place, culture, or events happening beyond the stadium. Circle details that show how those contexts shape the athletes' actions, then number the circled details 1, 2, and 3.

A Statement on the Podium

(1) In October 1968, athletes from around the world arrived in Mexico City for the Summer Olympics. The city sits more than 7,000 feet above sea level, so its thin air affected races and training. That year, many nations had recently gained independence, and competition became a way to display national pride. Television carried Olympic images to huge audiences. At the same time, protests and violence connected to civil rights struggles were making headlines in the United States and other countries.

(2) On October 16, after the 200 meter medal ceremony, American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos stood on the podium with Australian runner Peter Norman. Smith and Carlos each raised a black gloved fist during the U.S. anthem. They wore black socks without shoes to point to poverty. Norman wore an Olympic Project for Human Rights badge after learning about the protest. The athletes used this public, international event, where their actions could be seen worldwide, to draw attention to racial injustice in the United States and beyond.

(3) Understanding the moment changes how a reader interprets a photograph of the podium. Without background information, the gestures might look like a private disagreement or a victory pose. Knowing about segregation, poverty, civil rights activism, and the worldwide audience shows that the athletes were making a planned public statement. Their action drew both support and criticism. Olympic officials removed Smith and Carlos from the Games, while the image later became a lasting symbol of protest in sports and public life for many people around the world afterward.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Mexico City's geographic location affect the Olympic athletes?

2. What contemporary events help explain why the athletes protested racial injustice?

3. What cultural or political background made Olympic competition a way to show national pride in 1968?

4. How does knowing the historical context change the meaning of the raised fists?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 55 to 70 word museum caption for the podium photograph. Use only information from the passage, and include one detail about location, one detail about the historical or cultural moment, and one detail about the athletes' action to explain its meaning.

ANSWER KEY

Podium in Context

GRADE 8 · 8.P.ST.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that tell about time, place, culture, or events happening beyond the stadium. Circle details that show how those contexts shape the athletes' actions, then number the circled details 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 Mexico City's geographic location affect the Olympic athletes?	**The city's high elevation created thin air, which affected races and training.**
2	What contemporary events help explain why the athletes protested racial injustice?	**Civil rights protests and violence were making headlines in the United States and other countries.**
3	What cultural or political background made Olympic competition a way to show national pride in 1968?	**Many nations had recently gained independence.**
4	How does knowing the historical context change the meaning of the raised fists?	**The context shows that the gestures were a planned public protest against racial injustice, not simply victory poses or a private disagreement.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, thin air challenged athletes, while civil rights struggles shaped the world beyond the stadium. During the 200 meter medal ceremony, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised black gloved fists. These details show that their gesture was not simply a victory pose. It was a public protest against racial injustice, witnessed by an international audience.

Accept captions of 55 to 70 words that use accurate passage-based details about place, historical or cultural context, and the podium action. The caption must explain how the context gives the action meaning.