Village Rules

How faith, work, and authority shaped life on an English manor

6-9.WH.1.11 "Discuss how religion, belief systems, economics, and politics influenced social behavior and were used to maintain social order."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In each paragraph, underline one belief or rule that shaped what villagers did. Circle words that show how it helped keep order or gave someone authority.

Life on an English Manor

1. In a farming village in thirteenth-century England, the church bell called people to worship on Sundays. A priest taught that Christians should care for neighbors and give to the poor. Villagers might bring food to someone whose crops had failed. The church also taught duties toward authority, and many people saw obedience as part of a well-ordered Christian life. Villagers paid a tithe, usually a tenth of their produce, to support the church. Shared worship and expectations helped neighbors cooperate, while church leaders gained a way to guide behavior.

2. Most village families farmed land held from a lord. In return for using fields, some tenants worked days on the lord's land, while others paid rent in money or goods. The exact duties depended on local custom and a family's status. A tenant who skipped required work could owe a fine, but the right to use fields also helped the family survive. These economic ties shaped when people worked and whom they had to answer to. They gave lords a steady supply of labor or income.

3. On many manors, a lord's official held a court that heard disputes and enforced local rules. Villagers could report a neighbor for letting animals stray into crops or failing to do required work. Fines made these rules matter in daily life. Villagers also valued custom, the idea that long-used rights and duties should be respected. They might bring a complaint if an official demanded more labor than custom allowed. The court strengthened the lord's authority, yet custom could give tenants a way to challenge unfair demands.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could church teachings affect the way villagers treated neighbors and people in authority?

2. How did the need for farmland shape tenants' work and help lords maintain their position?

3. How could the manor court change what a villager did from day to day?

4. How could belief in custom limit a lord's power while still supporting order?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a family on this manor after a poor harvest. In four or five sentences, explain how church teachings, land duties, the manor court, and belief in custom might shape the family's choices and help keep order. Include one possible tension between the family's needs and a rule.

ANSWER KEY # Village Rules

GRADES 6-9 · 6-9.WH.1.11

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each paragraph, underline one belief or rule that shaped what villagers did. Circle words that show how it helped keep order or gave someone authority. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could church teachings affect the way villagers treated neighbors and people in authority?	**Teachings encouraged villagers to care for neighbors in need and to see obedience to authority as a duty.**
2	How did the need for farmland shape tenants' work and help lords maintain their position?	**Tenants worked for a lord or paid rent in return for land, giving lords labor or income.**
3	How could the manor court change what a villager did from day to day?	**Because the court enforced rules and imposed fines, villagers had a reason to keep animals out of crops and complete required work.**
4	How could belief in custom limit a lord's power while still supporting order?	**Custom set expected rights and duties. Tenants could use it to challenge demands for more labor than they owed.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After a poor harvest, a family asks neighbors for food because the priest teaches care for those in need. The family still tries to complete the work it owes the lord, although food is scarce. If family members skip that work, the manor court could fine them. They might also use custom to challenge an official who demands extra days of labor. Charity helps the family survive, while work duties and court rules help keep village life orderly.

Accept other plausible choices that connect all four influences to behavior and order. The response should identify a tension, not assume that a poor harvest cancels a tenant's duties.