Who Holds Power?

How work and power shaped societies across four eras

6-9.WH.1.8 "Analyze different social classes and their impact on societies and civilizations throughout the world, including Ancient, Middle Age, Early-Modern, and Modern."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what each social group did, circle who controlled resources or decisions, and number one effect of those differences in each paragraph.

The Work Behind Wealth

1. Along the Nile in ancient Egypt, farmers planted crops after yearly floods left rich soil. They gave part of their harvest as taxes. Rulers used this grain to feed soldiers and workers who built temples and canals. Scribes recorded the payments, while skilled builders planned and raised stone structures. These groups depended on one another, but they did not hold equal power. Rulers and high officials decided how taxes were used, while farmers did much of the growing and had little control over those decisions.

2. In medieval Mali, farmers grew food for towns, and merchants carried gold and salt along trade routes. Rulers collected taxes on trade and used some of that wealth to support armies and centers of learning. In Timbuktu, scholars studied and taught, and book sellers served readers. Trade helped a city of learning grow, but its rewards were uneven. Merchants could gain wealth through exchange, while many farmers depended mainly on their harvests. Without farm labor, however, traders and scholars in towns could not have been fed.

3. On Caribbean sugar plantations in the early modern era, owners controlled land and enslaved Africans were forced to grow and process cane. Sales brought profits to owners and merchants, while enslaved workers faced violence and had no freedom to leave. Centuries later, in modern factory cities, owners also profited from workers' labor, but many paid workers organized unions to demand higher wages and safer conditions. These situations were not the same: enslaved people lacked the freedom that paid workers had. In both cases, workers' labor produced wealth that others controlled.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did farmers' work and rulers' control of taxes together affect building in ancient Egypt?

2. How did the work of farmers and merchants help support learning in medieval Mali?

3. How did differences in power between plantation owners and enslaved workers shape who benefited from Caribbean sugar sales?

4. How did the different freedoms of enslaved plantation workers and paid factory workers affect their ability to seek change?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise leaders in one society from the passage. In 4 to 5 sentences, name two social groups, propose a change in how they share work or power, predict one benefit and one possible drawback, and support your idea with a detail from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Who Holds Power?

GRADES 6-9 · 6-9.WH.1.8

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what each social group did, circle who controlled resources or decisions, and number one effect of those differences in each paragraph. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did farmers' work and rulers' control of taxes together affect building in ancient Egypt?	**Farmers grew grain paid as taxes. Rulers used it to feed workers who built temples and canals.**
2	How did the work of farmers and merchants help support learning in medieval Mali?	**Farmers fed people in towns, while merchants traded goods that rulers taxed. Some tax wealth supported centers of learning.**
3	How did differences in power between plantation owners and enslaved workers shape who benefited from Caribbean sugar sales?	**Owners controlled the land and received profits from sugar sales, while enslaved workers were forced to produce the sugar and could not leave.**
4	How did the different freedoms of enslaved plantation workers and paid factory workers affect their ability to seek change?	**Enslaved plantation workers had no freedom to leave. Many paid factory workers organized unions to demand better wages and safer conditions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would advise rulers in ancient Egypt to let farmers help decide how harvest taxes are used. Farmers supplied the grain that fed soldiers and canal builders, so their ideas could help leaders plan for food needs. Sharing decisions might make taxes seem fairer to the people who grow the crops. Rulers might resist giving up some control over grain.

Accept other passage-based explanations that connect a group's work or power to an effect on society. For Your Turn, accept any plausible change with a supported benefit and drawback.