Causes in Conflict

Trace why the 1857 rebellion began and what changed afterward

6-9.WH.5.1 "Explain the political, economic, religious, or cultural causes of conflicts in various civilizations and their consequences."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one political or economic cause and one religious cause in the passage. Circle a consequence, then draw an arrow from each underlined cause to a consequence it helps explain.

The Rebellion of 1857

1 In 1857, soldiers in the East India Company's army began a rebellion in northern India. The company was a British trading business that ruled large areas of India. Many Indian soldiers, called sepoys, felt anger toward their commanders. A new rifle used paper cartridges that soldiers had to bite open. Rumors said the cartridges were greased with cow and pig fat. Cows are sacred to many Hindus, and Muslims are forbidden to eat pork. British officials tried to calm fears, but the rumor deepened distrust.

2 Other grievances had been growing for years. Company leaders took over Indian kingdoms when rulers died without an heir the company would recognize. This policy angered rulers and people who wanted local control. In Awadh, company rule stripped many landowners of their estates, while demands for taxes burdened farmers. These changes threatened both power and livelihoods. When sepoys rebelled at Meerut in May 1857, they moved to Delhi. Some rulers, farmers, and townspeople joined them, though many Indians did not. The rebellion spread across parts of northern and central India.

3 The fighting was fierce, and both rebels and British forces killed civilians. British troops and their allies defeated the main rebel forces by 1858. The rebellion did not end British rule. Instead, the British government took control from the East India Company in 1858 and ruled India directly. It promised to respect Indian religions and stopped taking kingdoms under the company's heir policy. Still, Indians had little say in the highest decisions of the new government. The conflict changed who ruled India, but not who held most power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why might the company's policy about heirs have led some Indian rulers to resist its rule?

2. How could company policies in Awadh have led landowners and farmers to support the rebellion?

3. Why did the cartridge rumor deepen distrust among some Hindu and Muslim sepoys?

4. After the rebellion, what changed about who governed India, and what did not change about Indians' political power?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are advising a company official in early 1857. Propose two changes, each addressing a different kind of cause in the passage, and explain how they might affect the rebellion.

ANSWER KEY

Causes in Conflict

GRADES 6-9 · 6-9.WH.5.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one political or economic cause and one religious cause in the passage. Circle a consequence, then draw an arrow from each underlined cause to a consequence it helps explain. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why might the company's policy about heirs have led some Indian rulers to resist its rule?	**The company took over kingdoms when it would not recognize a ruler's heir, threatening rulers' power and local control.**
2	How could company policies in Awadh have led landowners and farmers to support the rebellion?	**Many landowners lost their estates, while farmers faced demands for taxes. Both groups had reasons to resist company rule.**
3	Why did the cartridge rumor deepen distrust among some Hindu and Muslim sepoys?	**Sepoys had to bite the cartridges open, and the rumored cow and pig fat conflicted with Hindu and Muslim religious practices.**
4	After the rebellion, what changed about who governed India, and what did not change about Indians' political power?	**The British government took control from the East India Company, but Indians still had little say in the highest government decisions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would stop taking over kingdoms under the heir policy so more Indian rulers could keep local power. That change might reduce political anger toward the company. I would also let sepoys open cartridges without biting them and investigate the grease, since the rumors offended Hindu and Muslim beliefs. That step might ease religious fears. If fewer rulers and soldiers opposed the company, the rebellion might spread less widely, although other grievances would remain.

Accept other passage-supported explanations of causes and consequences. For Your Turn, look for two plausible changes addressing different kinds of causes and a prediction presented as a possibility, not a historical fact.