Land Shapes History

Trace how terrain and waterways shaped ancient Greece and Rome

9-12.WC.1 "Explain how geography influenced the development of Western Civilization"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four geographic features, circle a human response to each, and write matching numbers beside each feature and response to show how they are connected.

Mountains, Seas, and an Inland City

1 In ancient Greece, a traveler moving overland often met steep mountains and narrow valleys. These barriers made travel between communities slow, so many settlements developed as independent city-states rather than parts of one kingdom. Athens and Sparta, for example, made their own laws and trained their own armies. Mountains did not force them to disagree, but distance helped local leaders keep control. Usable farmland was limited in many areas, while a growing population needed food. Some Greeks responded by founding settlements around the Mediterranean and Black Seas, where they could farm and trade with their home cities.

2 The sea also connected what mountains separated. Greece had a long coastline, many islands, and natural harbors that made short sea voyages possible. Merchants carried olive oil and pottery outward and brought grain and other goods home. As sailors and settlers moved, they encountered different customs and shared Greek language and ideas across distant communities. These exchanges did not make every city-state alike. Instead, geography created a pattern in which cities could govern themselves locally while still taking part in wider networks of trade and culture. The same waters could carry both goods and rival warships.

3 Rome developed in a different setting on the Italian peninsula. The city began beside the Tiber River, which provided water and a route for moving people and goods. Its site lay inland from the coast, offering some protection from attacks by sea while remaining connected to it by the river. Italy's western plains offered room for farming and overland travel, helping Rome support armies as its influence grew. As Rome gained power, its central position in the Mediterranean made territories on several shores easier to reach. Geography did not create the Roman state by itself; Roman choices about roads, alliances, and conquest mattered too.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did mountains help shape the way ancient Greek communities governed themselves?

2. Why did limited farmland lead some Greeks to found settlements around two seas?

3. How could Greek city-states remain separate while sharing goods and ideas?

4. How did Rome's position in the Mediterranean aid its expansion, and what else mattered?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a new city on a fertile river delta beside a narrow sea passage. In five sentences, predict how its location might shape both its economy and its government, then compare one prediction with a Greek or Roman example from the passage. Explain the link between each geographic feature and the choices people might make.

ANSWER KEY

Land Shapes History

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.WC.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four geographic features, circle a human response to each, and write matching numbers beside each feature and response to show how they are connected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did mountains help shape the way ancient Greek communities governed themselves?	**Mountains slowed travel between communities, helping settlements develop as independent city-states whose local leaders kept control.**
2	Why did limited farmland lead some Greeks to found settlements around two seas?	**A growing population needed food, so some Greeks founded settlements around the Mediterranean and Black Seas where they could farm and trade with their home cities.**
3	How could Greek city-states remain separate while sharing goods and ideas?	**Mountains made overland travel difficult, but the coastline, islands, and harbors allowed sailors and merchants to connect cities by sea.**
4	How did Rome's position in the Mediterranean aid its expansion, and what else mattered?	**Rome's central position made territories on several shores easier to reach. Roman decisions about roads, alliances, and conquest also shaped its expansion.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On a fertile river delta, farmers could grow enough food to supply a busy market and support workers who do not farm. The narrow sea passage could draw ships whose crews want to buy supplies. Leaders might collect fees from passing merchants and use the money to build docks. They might also set rules for shipping so traders can pass safely. Like Rome's site beside the Tiber, the river would connect this city to goods and travelers, but the sea passage could make control of ships especially important.

Accept other plausible predictions if the student explains how the delta or sea passage could influence economic and government choices. The comparison should accurately connect one prediction to a geographic influence described in the passage.