Ideas Across Languages

Trace the path of Classical thought into medieval Europe

9-12.WC.25 "Explain the reintroduction of Classical thought from the Islamic World into Christendom."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each place or language that helped Greek ideas travel into Christian Europe. Number the steps in order, then circle one way a scholar added to the ideas rather than simply copying them.

The Long Route to a Latin Classroom

1. Imagine an ancient Greek astronomy book arriving at a school in western Europe centuries after it was written. Its route was rarely a straight line. In the eighth and ninth centuries, rulers and scholars in the Abbasid Caliphate supported the translation of Greek works into Arabic, sometimes through earlier Syriac versions. Baghdad became an important center for this work. Translators drew on books about medicine, mathematics, and philosophy as well as astronomy. These translations made ancient arguments available to readers across the Islamic world, including people who could not read Greek.

2. Translation was not the same as placing old books on a shelf. Scholars writing in Arabic tested, criticized, and expanded what they read. The physician Ibn Sina, known in Latin as Avicenna, drew on Greek medicine and his own reasoning in *The Canon of Medicine*. Astronomers compared inherited models of the heavens with observations and debated their limits. These scholars worked in a world that included Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Their writing carried ancient ideas forward, but it also added new questions, explanations, and evidence. A later European reader could encounter both a Greek claim and centuries of discussion about it.

3. From the eleventh century onward, Latin-speaking scholars in parts of Christian Europe sought texts available in Arabic. In Toledo, a city in Iberia ruled by Christians after 1085, translators worked across languages to render Arabic texts into Latin. In the twelfth century, Gerard of Cremona translated Ptolemy's Greek astronomy work, the *Almagest*, from Arabic into Latin. Latin versions of works by Aristotle and Ibn Sina also entered European study. Teachers and students in medieval universities used these texts to debate nature, logic, and medicine. Some Greek works reached western Europe by other routes, but Arabic-to-Latin translation was a major path of reintroduction.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Explain how translation in Baghdad helped Greek thought reach readers who did not know Greek.

2. How does Ibn Sina's work show that Greek medical thought was changed as well as preserved?

3. Trace how Ptolemy's *Almagest* became available to Latin readers in Christian Europe.

4. Why did Arabic-to-Latin translation count as a reintroduction of Classical thought into Christian Europe?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word letter from a Latin student in the 1200s to a classmate who thinks Greek ideas reached your classroom directly and unchanged. Explain their route through the Islamic world, describe one contribution scholars made there, and end with how the ideas affect your studies.

ANSWER KEY

Ideas Across Languages

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.WC.25

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each place or language that helped Greek ideas travel into Christian Europe. Number the steps in order, then circle one way a scholar added to the ideas rather than simply copying them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Explain how translation in Baghdad helped Greek thought reach readers who did not know Greek.	**Scholars translated Greek works into Arabic, sometimes through Syriac, so readers across the Islamic world could study their arguments without knowing Greek.**
2	How does Ibn Sina's work show that Greek medical thought was changed as well as preserved?	**Ibn Sina drew on Greek medicine but also used his own reasoning in *The Canon of Medicine*.**
3	Trace how Ptolemy's *Almagest* became available to Latin readers in Christian Europe.	**Ptolemy wrote the work in Greek. It became available in Arabic, and Gerard of Cremona translated it from Arabic into Latin in the twelfth century.**
4	Why did Arabic-to-Latin translation count as a reintroduction of Classical thought into Christian Europe?	**It made ancient Greek ideas preserved and discussed in Arabic texts available to Latin-speaking teachers and students for study and debate.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Matteo, You asked why our lessons about nature sound both ancient and new. Greek authors wrote some of the arguments, but scholars in the Islamic world translated their works into Arabic. They did not merely copy them: physicians such as Ibn Sina used Greek medicine while developing their own explanations. Translators in Christian-ruled Toledo later made Arabic texts available in Latin. Now our teachers can debate those ideas with us. The path to our classroom passed through many languages and many minds. Your friend, Lucia

Accept historically supported routes that include translation into Arabic and later into Latin, even if students omit Syriac. For the letter, look for an accurate route, a scholarly contribution beyond copying, and a specific effect on Latin study.