Power and Performance

Weigh the achievements and limits of Tudor England.

9-12.WC.37 "Analyze the Golden Age of the Tudor dynasty including, but not limited to Queen Elizabeth I, the works of William Shakespeare, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and the rise of English power in Europe."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details showing cultural achievement, circle two details showing growing power at sea, and number two details that limit the claim that this era was a Golden Age.

England in Elizabeth's Reign

1. When Elizabeth I took the English throne in 1558, religious conflict threatened her kingdom. Her 1559 religious settlement restored a Protestant church but kept some traditional forms of worship, seeking broad support rather than ending disagreement. Elizabeth also avoided marriage, which left no direct heir but let her negotiate with foreign rulers without placing England under a husband's influence. During her long reign, her court sponsored music and poetry, while London grew as a center of trade and theater. These achievements help explain the label "Golden Age," although Catholics faced restrictions and many ordinary people struggled with poverty.

2. Londoners could pay to see plays by William Shakespeare, whose company performed at the Globe Theatre after it opened in 1599. His histories, such as *Henry V*, explored kingship and war; his comedies and tragedies drew large audiences across social ranks. Theater offered a shared public culture, but it depended on a growing capital whose wealth was unevenly distributed. Across the Atlantic, English sailors attacked Spanish shipping, and English merchants sought new markets. Such ventures brought profits and experience at sea, but privateering also sharpened conflict with Spain, Europe's strongest overseas empire.

3. In 1588, Spain's Philip II sent an armada toward England, hoping to support an invasion by troops based in the Spanish Netherlands. English ships harassed the fleet, and storms helped prevent the Spanish plan from succeeding. The victory strengthened Elizabeth's image and gave England confidence, but Spain remained powerful; one battle did not make England master of Europe. By the end of Elizabeth's reign in 1603, trade, seafaring, and cultural influence had expanded England's reach. The Tudor "Golden Age" was therefore a period of rising English power, not a time of equal prosperity or uncontested dominance.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Elizabeth's religious policy seek stability while leaving the Golden Age incomplete?

2. Why does the passage present Shakespeare's plays as evidence of a shared culture rather than only court entertainment?

3. What helped stop Spain's invasion plan, and why did the victory not make England master of Europe?

4. How did England's overseas ventures both strengthen the country and increase its risks?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Which mattered most to England's rising power during Elizabeth's reign: her leadership, cultural life, or activity at sea? In four or five sentences, support your judgment with details from two different paragraphs and address one limit to the Golden Age label.

ANSWER KEY

Power and Performance

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.WC.37

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details showing cultural achievement, circle two details showing growing power at sea, and number two details that limit the claim that this era was a Golden Age. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Elizabeth's religious policy seek stability while leaving the Golden Age incomplete?	**The settlement sought broad support by keeping some traditional forms of worship in a Protestant church, but Catholics still faced restrictions.**
2	Why does the passage present Shakespeare's plays as evidence of a shared culture rather than only court entertainment?	**Londoners could pay to attend, and Shakespeare's plays drew audiences across social ranks.**
3	What helped stop Spain's invasion plan, and why did the victory not make England master of Europe?	**English ships harassed the armada and storms disrupted the plan, but Spain remained powerful.**
4	How did England's overseas ventures both strengthen the country and increase its risks?	**They brought profits and experience at sea, but attacks on Spanish shipping sharpened conflict with Spain.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Activity at sea mattered most to England's rising power. English merchants sought new markets, while sailors gained experience by attacking Spanish shipping. The defeat of the Armada in 1588 increased England's confidence, and seafaring expanded its reach by 1603. Still, Spain remained powerful, so England's rise did not mean it dominated Europe.

Accept supported judgments that identify evidence from two different paragraphs and explain a limit to the Golden Age label. For the marking job, accept any passage details that clearly fit the three requested categories.