Silver and Power

How mining connected systems across the Atlantic

6.H.3 "Identify and explain the development and organization of political, cultural, social, and economic systems in Europe and the Americas."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a detail about political power, circle a detail about work or trade, and write S beside a detail about social groups or cultural practices. Use your marks to trace how these systems developed in Potosí and Spain.

A City Built Around Silver

1. High in the Andes, silver brought thousands of people to Potosí, in present-day Bolivia. Spanish settlers founded the town in 1545, after rich silver deposits were found nearby. The Spanish crown claimed control of the mines and appointed officials to govern the region. These officials collected taxes on silver and enforced the crown's rules. Indigenous communities already lived in the Andes, but they did not choose these rulers. As mining expanded, Potosí became a large city linked to the government of Spain across the Atlantic Ocean.

2. Mining required many workers and supplies. Spanish officials adapted an earlier Andean labor system, called the mita, to require men from many Indigenous communities to work in the mines for set periods. Other workers earned wages, and merchants sold food, tools, and cloth to the growing city. Mine owners gained wealth, while many miners faced dangerous conditions. The rules that supplied labor gave colonial officials and mine owners power over Indigenous workers. Farming communities also had to adjust when workers spent time away from home.

3. Silver from Potosí traveled to Spain, where the crown used taxes from it to pay for wars and government costs. Merchants carried goods between Europe and the Americas, connecting markets on both sides of the ocean. In Potosí, the Catholic Church built churches and taught its faith, while many Indigenous people continued their own traditions. Spanish officials placed people in social groups based partly on ancestry and birthplace. Those rankings affected access to power. The city's government, labor rules, trade, and traditions grew together, but their benefits were not shared equally.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Spain organize political control over Potosí, and what did that allow officials to do?

2. How did the mita change the organization of work and life in Indigenous communities?

3. Explain how Potosí's silver connected the economies of the Americas and Europe.

4. Identify one cultural institution and one social rule in Potosí. What did each do?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence museum label about two systems in Potosí, such as its government, economy, social groups, or cultural practices. Use a fact from the passage about each system, then explain how the systems affected each other.

ANSWER KEY

Silver and Power

GRADE 6 · 6.H.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a detail about political power, circle a detail about work or trade, and write S beside a detail about social groups or cultural practices. Use your marks to trace how these systems developed in Potosí and Spain. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Spain organize political control over Potosí, and what did that allow officials to do?	**The Spanish crown appointed officials to govern the region. They enforced its rules and collected taxes on silver.**
2	How did the mita change the organization of work and life in Indigenous communities?	**Officials required men from many communities to work in the mines for set periods, so farming communities had to adjust when workers were away.**
3	Explain how Potosí's silver connected the economies of the Americas and Europe.	**Silver traveled from Potosí to Spain, where the crown used taxes from it. Merchants also carried goods between Europe and the Americas.**
4	Identify one cultural institution and one social rule in Potosí. What did each do?	**The Catholic Church built churches and taught its faith. Officials grouped people partly by ancestry and birthplace, and those rankings affected access to power.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Spanish crown appointed officials to govern the region around Potosí. Those officials required men from Indigenous communities to work in the mines for set periods. Their political power helped supply workers for the mining economy.

Accept accurate explanations in students' own words. For the museum label, look for two distinct systems, a passage fact about each, and a clear connection between them.