Power Across Kingdoms

Compare how ancient rulers gained and held power.

WH.1.4 "Examine the development and characteristics of early empires, such as Assyria, Persia, Israel, Minoan, and Zhou."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one way each state gained or held control. Circle one way Assyrian rulers displayed authority and one way Zhou rulers claimed it.

Three Paths to Power

1. Around 900 BCE, Assyrian rulers began turning a kingdom in northern Mesopotamia into a vast empire. Their armies used iron weapons, siege engines, and organized supply routes to capture cities across the Near East. Conquered communities paid tribute, while appointed officials reported to the king. The government also moved some defeated peoples to new areas, making rebellion harder and supplying workers where needed. At Nineveh, royal palaces displayed carved scenes of victories. These images advertised power, but the empire depended just as much on roads, records, and officials who could collect taxes and enforce orders.

2. In the southern Levant, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah followed a different path. According to biblical accounts, David brought several tribes under one monarchy around 1000 BCE, and Solomon later built a temple in Jerusalem. Archaeologists debate the size and power of this early united kingdom. After Solomon's reign, a northern kingdom called Israel and a southern kingdom called Judah ruled separately. Israel's kings collected taxes and faced pressure from stronger neighbors. Assyria conquered the northern kingdom in 722 BCE and deported many inhabitants. Judah survived as a separate kingdom, though its rulers paid tribute to Assyria.

3. Far to the east, Zhou leaders defeated the Shang dynasty around 1046 BCE and claimed the right to rule. They said Heaven had withdrawn its approval from the Shang because of poor rule, an idea later called the Mandate of Heaven. Zhou kings granted lands to relatives and allies, who promised troops and loyalty in return. This arrangement helped the kings govern distant areas without placing royal officers everywhere. Over generations, local lords gained power of their own. In 771 BCE, attackers struck the western capital; the royal court moved east soon afterward, and the king's control over regional rulers weakened.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Assyria use both military force and administration to build and hold its empire? Give one example of each.

2. Why would it be misleading to describe Israel and Judah as a single empire after Solomon's reign? Use two details from the passage.

3. How did the Zhou system of land grants help the kings at first and weaken their power later?

4. Compare one way Assyrian rulers displayed authority with one way Zhou rulers claimed it. How were their approaches different?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise the ruler of a new kingdom. In four sentences, compare how Assyria and Zhou governed distant lands, propose two policies not described in the passage for your kingdom, and explain one likely benefit and one risk.

ANSWER KEY

Power Across Kingdoms

HIGH SCHOOL · WH.1.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one way each state gained or held control. Circle one way Assyrian rulers displayed authority and one way Zhou rulers claimed it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Assyria use both military force and administration to build and hold its empire? Give one example of each.	**Assyrian armies used siege engines to capture cities, while appointed officials collected taxes and enforced orders.**
2	Why would it be misleading to describe Israel and Judah as a single empire after Solomon's reign? Use two details from the passage.	**They ruled as separate kingdoms after Solomon's reign. Assyria later conquered Israel, while Judah survived as a separate kingdom.**
3	How did the Zhou system of land grants help the kings at first and weaken their power later?	**Relatives and allies governed distant areas in return for troops and loyalty, but local lords gained power over generations and the king's control weakened.**
4	Compare one way Assyrian rulers displayed authority with one way Zhou rulers claimed it. How were their approaches different?	**Assyrian rulers displayed carved scenes of military victories, while Zhou rulers claimed Heaven had given them the right to rule.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Assyria sent officials to manage conquered communities, while Zhou kings gave land to allies who promised loyalty. I would let towns elect councils and hold public hearings where residents could challenge tax demands. Councils and hearings might help people trust the government and warn me about unfair officials. However, local councils could resist royal orders, and hearings would take time to organize.

Accept other passage-supported examples and comparisons. For Your Turn, look for two distinct proposed policies, a plausible benefit and risk, and an accurate comparison of Assyrian and Zhou rule.