Crowns and Communities

How royal power grew and subjects made their voices heard

WH.4.3 "Discuss the emergence of nation-states as well as the increased impact of the citizen as a result of the decline of the European medieval period."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two changes that strengthened royal power, circle two ways subjects influenced rulers, and number one limit on political voice in each kingdom. Use your marks to trace how rulers and subjects affected each other.

Who Paid for the King's Army?

1. Imagine a tax collector arriving in a town during the Hundred Years' War (1337 to 1453). England and France needed money to pay soldiers, not just promises of service from nobles. In earlier medieval centuries, rulers had depended heavily on powerful lords to supply fighters and govern local lands. War, trade, and the devastation of the Black Death weakened parts of that older order. Kings built stronger royal courts and tax systems to reach across their realms. These changes helped turn kingdoms into more centralized states, although no king controlled every village equally.

2. In England, a king who wanted new taxes often turned to Parliament, where representatives of counties and towns sat in the House of Commons. These men did not represent everyone, but they could press complaints while considering taxes. In 1381, a poll tax helped spark a major uprising by peasants and townspeople. Rebels marched on London and demanded an end to unfair burdens. The revolt was crushed, and the king did not grant lasting freedom to the peasants. Still, its scale showed rulers that ordinary people could disrupt tax collection and challenge decisions made above them.

3. Across the Channel, French kings gradually gained the means to collect regular taxes and maintain troops under royal authority. After the war, royal officers and armies helped the crown exercise power across much of France, even though local privileges remained. French townspeople could petition officials or bargain over local payments, but they had fewer routine opportunities than members of England's Parliament to debate national taxes. Neither realm was a modern democracy: most peasants and women lacked a direct voice in national decisions. Yet rulers increasingly depended on people's money, work, and cooperation, giving subjects ways to influence, resist, or negotiate royal policies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the need to pay soldiers help kings build more centralized states?

2. How could England's House of Commons affect a king's tax plans, and what limited its claim to speak for the people?

3. What did the 1381 revolt show about subjects' power, and what did it fail to achieve?

4. How did French kings extend their power while townspeople still had a way to influence decisions?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence petition from a town council to a monarch in the 1400s. Invent a specific bargain about funding soldiers, explain how it would strengthen royal rule, and show both how townspeople could influence the decision and a limit on their voice.

Crowns and Communities

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two changes that strengthened royal power, circle two ways subjects influenced rulers, and number one limit on political voice in each kingdom. Use your marks to trace how rulers and subjects affected each other. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the need to pay soldiers help kings build more centralized states?	**Kings developed stronger tax systems to pay soldiers, allowing royal power to reach farther across their realms instead of relying as heavily on lords to supply fighters.**
2	How could England's House of Commons affect a king's tax plans, and what limited its claim to speak for the people?	**Representatives could press complaints while considering taxes, but they did not represent everyone.**
3	What did the 1381 revolt show about subjects' power, and what did it fail to achieve?	**Peasants and townspeople could disrupt tax collection and challenge royal decisions, but the revolt was crushed and did not bring lasting freedom to peasants.**
4	How did French kings extend their power while townspeople still had a way to influence decisions?	**French kings collected regular taxes and maintained troops under royal authority. Townspeople could petition officials or bargain over local payments.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Your Majesty, our council offers to collect a small fee at the town market for one year to help pay your soldiers. In return, we ask you to reduce the extra tax demanded from our town this spring. A dependable payment would help you keep troops ready without asking local lords to supply them. We hope you will consider our offer, though the council cannot make the final decision, and many townspeople have no place on it.

Accept other historically plausible links between taxes, soldiers, and centralized royal power. For the petition, look for an invented bargain, a means of influencing the monarch, and a clear limit on that influence.