Power Takes Shape

Trace changing authority across medieval Europe

AWH.C.10.3 "Describe political developments in medieval Europe from the Norman Conquest to the Mongol Invasions including the development of English Common Law, including Henry II's consolidation of royal power, reorganization of the judicial system..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline actions that changed who held power, and circle the people or groups that gained or lost power. Number three changes that show different directions of political development.

Who Held Power in Medieval Europe?

1. In 1066, William of Normandy conquered England and claimed its throne. His successors inherited a kingdom with a strong monarchy, but local lords still held considerable power. In the 1100s, Henry II strengthened royal authority by sending judges to hear cases around the kingdom. His courts used royal writs, written orders that opened a path to royal justice. Local men serving on juries reported suspected crimes to visiting judges, an early procedure for criminal prosecution. Over time, royal judges applied similar rules in different places. This developing common law made the king's courts more important than many local courts.

2. Unlike England's growing royal courts, the Holy Roman Empire struggled to keep its territories under one ruler. In the 1100s and 1200s, emperors disputed power with popes, German princes, and northern Italian towns. Princes gained control over local affairs, while some Italian and German cities governed themselves. The empire did not disappear, but imperial power weakened in many areas. Crusading also changed who ruled: in 1204, the Fourth Crusade attacked and seized Constantinople, the capital of Orthodox Christian Byzantium. Crusaders set up a Latin Empire there and ruled Greek territories, including the Principality of Achaea and the Duchy of Athens. Byzantine forces retook Constantinople in 1261.

3. Farther east, the lands of Rus', a forerunner of Russia, followed a different political path. Their rulers had adopted Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium, linking them to the eastern church rather than the Roman Catholic church in the West. In the 1200s, Catholic crusaders campaigning around the Baltic Sea clashed with forces from Novgorod, a Rus' city. Mongol armies conquered many Rus' principalities between 1237 and 1240. Mongol rulers demanded tribute and recognized local princes, who continued to govern under Mongol oversight. This arrangement, often called the Mongol Yoke, shaped Rus' politics differently from England's expanding royal courts and western cities' growing independence.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Henry II build on the strong monarchy inherited by William of Normandy's successors?

2. How did political power in the Holy Roman Empire develop differently from political power in England?

3. How did the Fourth Crusade change who ruled Constantinople and parts of Greece?

4. How did religion, Baltic crusading, and Mongol rule help set Rus' apart from Western Europe?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine advising a traveler in 1250 who claims that rulers across Europe gained power in the same way. Write one paragraph that challenges the claim using changes in England, one part of the Holy Roman Empire or Greece, and Rus'. Explain what these differences show about political power.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.10.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline actions that changed who held power, and circle the people or groups that gained or lost power. Number three changes that show different directions of political development. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Henry II build on the strong monarchy inherited by William of Normandy's successors?	**Henry II sent royal judges around England, used writs to bring cases to royal courts, and developed procedures for reporting suspected crimes.**
2	How did political power in the Holy Roman Empire develop differently from political power in England?	**Royal courts extended the English king's authority, while German princes and some Italian and German cities gained greater control over local affairs as imperial power weakened.**
3	How did the Fourth Crusade change who ruled Constantinople and parts of Greece?	**Crusaders seized Constantinople in 1204, established a Latin Empire there, and ruled Greek territories including Achaea and Athens.**
4	How did religion, Baltic crusading, and Mongol rule help set Rus' apart from Western Europe?	**Rus' rulers followed Orthodox Christianity rather than Roman Catholicism. Forces from Novgorod clashed with Catholic Baltic crusaders, and Mongol rulers demanded tribute while allowing local princes to govern under their oversight.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Political power did not change in one way across Europe. In England, Henry II made the king's courts more important by sending royal judges around the kingdom. In the Holy Roman Empire, some princes and cities gained local control instead of giving more power to the emperor. Rus' followed another path: Mongol rulers demanded tribute but let local princes govern under their oversight. A traveler in 1250 would find stronger royal authority in England, more local independence in parts of the empire, and foreign overlords above the princes of Rus'.

Accept equivalent explanations grounded in the passage. For the open task, look for accurate evidence from all three required regions and an explanation of why their paths differed.