Field to Flour

Identify improvements that changed farming and food production in medieval Europe.

AWH.C.10.5.E "Identify technological and agricultural improvements (e.g., plough, windmills, watermills)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each named improvement in the passage. Circle the words that show what work each improvement made possible or easier.

Work in a Medieval Village

1 Imagine a farming village in northern Europe around 1200. Its fields hold thick, damp soil that a light scratch plough struggles to turn. A heavy plough, fitted with an iron cutting blade and a curved board, cuts deep and rolls the soil aside. Farmers can plant in ground that was harder to use before. This does not mean every village immediately gains more food. A heavy plough costs materials, requires animals to pull it, and works best in certain soils. Still, its design changes which land farmers can cultivate and how they prepare it.

2 After harvest, grain must be ground into flour. In villages near flowing streams, a watermill uses moving water to turn a wheel connected to grinding stones. This can grind more grain with less hand labor than people working with hand-operated stones. In places with useful winds, a windmill turns sails that drive machinery, often grinding grain as well. Windmills give some communities a power source where running water is scarce, although calm days can stop their work. Both mills turn energy from nature into mechanical motion, but they depend on different local conditions.

3 Changes in farming were not limited to tools and mills. A horse collar spreads the pull across a horse's shoulders instead of pressing on its throat, allowing a horse to pull a plough more effectively. Some farmers also used a three-field system: they planted winter crops in one field, spring crops in another, and left a third unplanted for a season. Rotating which field rested helped limit soil exhaustion while keeping two fields planted each year. These improvements served different purposes: some opened difficult soil, some supplied power, and others organized work on farmland. Their value depended on local conditions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which improvement helped farmers work thick, damp soil? Identify the part of its design that moved soil aside.

2. Identify the two improvements that could grind grain using power from nature. What powered each one?

3. Which improvement helped a horse pull a plough more effectively? Explain how it worked.

4. Which improvement organized how farmers planted their fields? Describe what happened to the third field each season.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A village has thick soil, steady wind, and no stream. In four sentences, describe how villagers could use two improvements from the passage to move from preparing a field to making flour. Explain why a third improvement would be difficult to use there.

Field to Flour

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each named improvement in the passage. Circle the words that show what work each improvement made possible or easier. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which improvement helped farmers work thick, damp soil? Identify the part of its design that moved soil aside.	**The heavy plough worked thick, damp soil. Its curved board rolled the soil aside.**
2	Identify the two improvements that could grind grain using power from nature. What powered each one?	**A watermill used moving water, and a windmill used wind.**
3	Which improvement helped a horse pull a plough more effectively? Explain how it worked.	**The horse collar spread the pull across the horse's shoulders instead of pressing on its throat.**
4	Which improvement organized how farmers planted their fields? Describe what happened to the third field each season.	**The three-field system organized planting. Farmers left one field unplanted for a season and rotated which field rested.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Villagers could use a heavy plough to turn their thick soil before planting grain. After harvest, they could take the grain to a windmill. Its sails would use the steady wind to power stones that grind the grain into flour. A watermill would be difficult to use because the village has no stream.

Accept descriptions that correctly distinguish what each improvement did and, for the mills, what powered it. Part 3 should connect field preparation to flour production and use the village's conditions to explain why another improvement is less suitable.