Power Beyond Palaces

Trace how government decisions shaped life in three dynasties.

AWH.C.11.3 "Examine the significant political, economic, and cultural aspects of the history of the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties (e.g., the civil service, Mongol conquest, Construction of the Forbidden City, voyages of Zheng He…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In each paragraph, underline one government action or policy. Circle a linked effect on trade, learning, or culture.

Decisions That Shaped Dynasties

1. In the Song dynasty (960 to 1279), government jobs increasingly went to men who passed civil service exams on Confucian texts. This gave educated families a route to power, although most people could not afford years of study. Busy cities linked farmers, artisans, and merchants. The government issued paper money, making large transactions easier. Movable-type printing let printers rearrange characters to produce new pages, though printing Chinese texts still required managing thousands of different characters.

2. In 1279, Mongol armies completed the conquest of the Song. Under Kublai Khan's Yuan dynasty, the emperor ruled China as part of a wider Mongol world. The government placed Mongols above many other groups in its official social order and gave Chinese scholars fewer chances to gain high office through exams. Yet Mongol-controlled routes helped merchants and travelers move goods and ideas across Eurasia. Yuan rulers also issued paper money, but heavy printing of notes eventually reduced their value.

3. The Ming dynasty (1368 to 1644) restored Chinese rule and revived civil service exams. In Beijing, the Forbidden City made imperial authority visible through its vast palace complex. Early Ming emperors also sent Zheng He's fleets across the Indian Ocean to display power and expand diplomatic and commercial contacts. Later, the state struggled with tax problems, costly wars, and uprisings. In 1644, rebels captured Beijing; Manchu forces then took the city and established Qing rule. These events showed that displays of power could not guarantee stability.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Song civil service exams affect access to government power?

2. How did two Song innovations affect economic or cultural life?

3. How did Yuan rule limit one group while helping exchange across Eurasia?

4. What contrast does the passage show between early Ming displays of power and the dynasty's end?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 50 to 70 word museum label comparing two dynasties. For each, connect one government action to an effect on trade, learning, or culture, then explain one difference.

ANSWER KEY

Power Beyond Palaces

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.11.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each paragraph, underline one government action or policy. Circle a linked effect on trade, learning, or culture. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Song civil service exams affect access to government power?	**Exams gave educated families a route to office, but most people could not afford the study required.**
2	How did two Song innovations affect economic or cultural life?	**Paper money eased large transactions. Movable-type printing allowed printers to rearrange characters for new pages.**
3	How did Yuan rule limit one group while helping exchange across Eurasia?	**Chinese scholars had fewer chances at high office through exams, while Mongol-controlled routes helped merchants and travelers carry goods and ideas.**
4	What contrast does the passage show between early Ming displays of power and the dynasty's end?	**The Forbidden City and Zheng He's voyages displayed imperial power, but tax problems, wars, and uprisings weakened the state before rebels captured Beijing.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Song and Ming dynasties both used government power to shape life beyond the palace. Song officials selected many administrators through civil service exams, encouraging some families to invest in Confucian study. Ming rulers sent Zheng He's fleets across the Indian Ocean, expanding commercial contacts. The Song policy shaped who could enter government through learning, while the Ming voyages carried imperial influence abroad.

Accept other accurate political, economic, and cultural links supported by the passage. For the museum label, look for two distinct dynasties, a supported action-and-effect link for each, and a clear contrast.