Three Claims, One Church

Trace how disputes over papal authority divided the Church.

AWH.C.12.1 "Describe internal divisions and impact on the Roman Catholic Church during the Avignon Papacy, the Great Schism, and the subsequent councils."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline causes or signs of division, circle effects on the Church or its members, and number the two council efforts in the order they happened.

When Popes Disagreed

1. In 1309, Pope Clement V settled in Avignon, a city near the French kingdom, rather than in Rome. For nearly seventy years, popes governed from there. Many church leaders were French, and critics feared that French rulers had too much influence over the pope. That concern did not mean there were two popes: the Avignon Papacy had one recognized pope at a time. Still, distance from Rome and costly church taxes fueled complaints about papal leadership. When Gregory XI returned the papacy to Rome in 1377, those doubts had not disappeared.

2. After Gregory XI died in 1378, a Roman crowd demanded an Italian pope. Cardinals chose Urban VI, but some later said the pressure made that election invalid. They elected Clement VII, who established his court in Avignon. Now rival popes claimed authority in Rome and Avignon. Rulers backed different claimants, dividing Western Christendom along political lines. Bishops and ordinary believers faced conflicting orders about which pope to obey and whose appointments were valid. The dispute, known as the Great Schism, damaged the Church's claim to speak with one voice, even though both sides considered themselves Catholic.

3. Church leaders tried to end the split through councils, meetings of bishops and other clergy. At Pisa in 1409, a council rejected the two rival popes and elected another. Neither rival stepped aside, leaving three claimants instead of two. The Council of Constance, which met from 1414 to 1418, handled the claims differently: one pope resigned, the council removed another, and it declared a third deposed despite his refusal to resign. In 1417, it elected Martin V, restoring one broadly recognized pope. Yet arguments continued over whether councils or popes held final authority, and calls for deeper reform remained.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Avignon Papacy create doubts about Church leadership even before there were rival popes?

2. How did the disputed election of 1378 divide the Church and affect its members?

3. Why did the Council of Pisa increase the division it meant to end?

4. How did the Council of Constance restore unity, and what dispute remained afterward?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 100 word memo advising the Council of Constance in 1416. Propose two specific steps beyond choosing a pope, and explain how each could address a different division or harm described in the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Three Claims, One Church

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.12.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline causes or signs of division, circle effects on the Church or its members, and number the two council efforts in the order they happened. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Avignon Papacy create doubts about Church leadership even before there were rival popes?	**Critics feared French influence over the pope, while the move away from Rome and costly church taxes fueled complaints.**
2	How did the disputed election of 1378 divide the Church and affect its members?	**Some cardinals rejected Urban VI's election and chose Clement VII. Rulers backed different popes, while bishops and believers faced conflicting orders and disputed appointments.**
3	Why did the Council of Pisa increase the division it meant to end?	**It elected another pope, but neither existing claimant stepped aside, leaving three claimants instead of two.**
4	How did the Council of Constance restore unity, and what dispute remained afterward?	**It resolved the three rival claims and elected Martin V as one broadly recognized pope. Debate continued over whether councils or popes held final authority.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Require each claimant to publish accounts of church taxes for review by delegates from several kingdoms. Shared scrutiny could reduce suspicion that one ruler controls the Church and answer complaints about costly leadership. Next, create a temporary board of bishops from both sides to review disputed appointments until the conflict ends. That board could keep local churches from receiving opposite orders about their leaders. Public reports on both efforts would help believers see that ending the rivalry includes repairing trust, not just naming a leader.

Accept historically plausible proposals that address two distinct harms from the passage. The memo should explain how each proposed step might help, without treating the 1417 election as an event that has already happened in 1416.