Power Along the Nile

Read how royal decisions reached people across Egyptian society.

AWH.C.3.3 "Explain the role of pharaoh, the concept of dynasties, Egyptian conquests, the relationship of pharaohs to other social classes, and the role of enslaved persons in Egyptian society."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail each about dynasties, conquest, and enslaved people. Circle the groups who held power or carried out orders to trace how the pharaoh's authority worked.

A Petition at the Palace

1. Imagine arriving at a New Kingdom palace with a petition about a damaged canal. Egypt's pharaoh was the kingdom's highest ruler, responsible for major decisions about law, warfare, and religious ceremonies. Egyptians regarded the pharaoh as a sacred ruler whose duty was to maintain order. Yet an order from the palace needed people to carry it out. Officials collected taxes and supervised building projects; scribes recorded supplies and decisions; farmers raised the crops that supported the state. A dynasty was a line of rulers from the same family. Royal succession often kept power within a family, though rival claimants could disrupt it.

2. A petition might reach the palace while an army returned from Nubia, south of Egypt. During the New Kingdom, Egyptian pharaohs expanded control into Nubia and parts of the eastern Mediterranean region called the Levant. Control was not the same everywhere: some areas had Egyptian governors, while some local rulers paid tribute. These conquests could bring gold, goods, and captives to Egypt and protect trade routes. Soldiers fought, but officials had to manage conquered territories and record tribute. Conquest therefore enlarged a pharaoh's reach while adding work for people far below the royal family.

3. Some captives taken in war became enslaved in Egypt. Enslaved people could be assigned to households, temples, or royal estates, where they worked without the freedom to leave their service. Their experiences varied, and the surviving records do not reveal every person's life. Enslaved people were not the only workers who served the state: farmers and other Egyptians could also be required to work on public projects as a form of tax. For the canal in the petition, an official might organize local labor rather than an enslaved workforce. The palace depended on many social classes, even though their power and freedom differed sharply.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could a dynasty help keep royal power in one family, and why did a pharaoh still need other social groups?

2. Explain two ways conquest could expand a pharaoh's power and one task it created for officials.

3. How did the work of scribes, farmers, and officials help turn a pharaoh's decisions into action? Give two examples.

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say enslaved people performed all labor for the Egyptian state?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence report by a palace scribe about a newly controlled territory sending tribute and captives. Explain how the pharaoh's authority affects at least three groups, including enslaved people; distinguish required public labor from enslavement, and explain how a dynasty relates to the ruler.

ANSWER KEY

Power Along the Nile

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.3.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail each about dynasties, conquest, and enslaved people. Circle the groups who held power or carried out orders to trace how the pharaoh's authority worked. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could a dynasty help keep royal power in one family, and why did a pharaoh still need other social groups?	**Succession often passed rule to a family member. The pharaoh needed officials, scribes, and farmers to carry out decisions and support the state.**
2	Explain two ways conquest could expand a pharaoh's power and one task it created for officials.	**Conquest extended control over territory and could bring tribute, goods, or captives to Egypt. Officials managed conquered areas and recorded tribute.**
3	How did the work of scribes, farmers, and officials help turn a pharaoh's decisions into action? Give two examples.	**For example, scribes recorded decisions and supplies, while officials collected taxes or supervised projects. Farmers grew crops that supported the state.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say enslaved people performed all labor for the Egyptian state?	**Farmers and other Egyptians could also be required to work on public projects as a form of tax. That required labor was not the same as enslavement.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our pharaoh has claimed control of a territory in Nubia, and its leaders have sent gold as tribute. The pharaoh's officials will record the payment and send instructions to local governors. Soldiers will guard the route used to carry the goods. Some captives may be enslaved and assigned to work on royal estates. Farmers in Egypt may also be required to repair a canal as a tax, but that does not make them enslaved. Because our ruler belongs to a dynasty, a family member may succeed the pharaoh, although succession is not always peaceful.

Accept other passage-supported examples of how groups carried out royal decisions. In the report, look for a clear distinction between required public labor and enslavement.