Coasts and Connections

How geography shaped Greek trade, settlement, and culture

AWH.C.6.2 "Explain how the geographical location of Athens and other city-states contributed to their role in maritime trade, colonies in the Mediterranean, and the expansion of Greek culture."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two geographic features in the passage and circle a trade or settlement action linked to each one. Number each matching feature and action as pair 1 or pair 2 to show how location shaped what people did.

Across the Greek Seas

1. From Athens, a trader could walk to Piraeus, its harbor on the Saronic Gulf, and board a ship bound for Aegean islands. The sea linked Athens to ports that were harder to reach by land across the rugged Greek mainland. Attica, the region around Athens, had limited farmland and could not always supply enough grain for its population. Athenians used sea routes to obtain grain, including shipments from the Black Sea region, while sending out goods such as pottery and olive oil. A harbor did more than hold ships: it connected local needs and products to distant markets.

2. Corinth occupied the narrow isthmus joining the Peloponnese to the rest of mainland Greece. It had access to the Saronic Gulf on the east and the Corinthian Gulf on the west, placing it near routes across two different seas. Merchants could move cargo overland across the isthmus rather than sail around the Peloponnese. Corinthian ships also traveled westward toward Italy and Sicily. In the eighth century BCE, settlers from Corinth founded Syracuse on Sicily's eastern coast. Its harbor and nearby farmland supported a lasting settlement, and sea links kept it connected to Corinth and other Greek communities.

3. Greek colonies were not simply copies of their founding cities. Across the Mediterranean and Black Sea, settlers chose coastal sites where ships could dock, exchange goods, and maintain contact with other ports. People carried Greek speech, religious practices, and pottery styles with them, while meeting communities already living nearby. In Sicily, Syracuse became a center where Greek customs took root and interacted with local traditions. Sea routes also brought travelers and ideas back toward the Greek mainland. Because many city-states faced the sea, their locations helped create networks through which goods and cultural practices moved in more than one direction.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Athens's harbor and the rugged mainland make sea travel useful for traders?

2. How did Attica's farmland affect what Athenians traded by sea?

3. How did Corinth's location support both trade and the founding of Syracuse?

4. How did the coastal location of colonies such as Syracuse help Greek culture spread and change?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your city-state has a sheltered harbor, rocky farmland, and potters who make clay jars; a nearby island has fertile fields and a community already living there. In four sentences, propose a trading post or settlement and explain how geography could shape trade and cultural exchange with the island residents.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.6.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two geographic features in the passage and circle a trade or settlement action linked to each one. Number each matching feature and action as pair 1 or pair 2 to show how location shaped what people did. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Athens's harbor and the rugged mainland make sea travel useful for traders?	**Piraeus gave traders access to sea routes connecting Athens with ports that were harder to reach across the rugged mainland.**
2	How did Attica's farmland affect what Athenians traded by sea?	**Because Attica's farmland could not always provide enough grain, Athenians brought in grain by sea and sent out goods such as pottery and olive oil.**
3	How did Corinth's location support both trade and the founding of Syracuse?	**Corinth's position between two gulfs supported trade across the isthmus and westward sea travel. Corinthian settlers traveled to Sicily and founded Syracuse, where a harbor and nearby farmland supported the settlement.**
4	How did the coastal location of colonies such as Syracuse help Greek culture spread and change?	**Coastal sites kept colonies connected to other ports. Settlers brought Greek customs, which interacted with local traditions, while sea travelers also carried ideas back toward the mainland.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our city has a sheltered harbor and rocky land with little room for farms, so ships can carry our clay jars to the nearby island and bring back grain. I would seek an agreement with the island community to build a trading post near its harbor. The short sea crossing would let merchants visit often and keep the two communities connected. Through trade and shared gatherings, our language and pottery styles might spread, while we could learn island customs too.

Accept other plausible links between geographic features and trade or settlement. For Part 3, look for an explanation of both cultural exchange and interaction with the island's existing community.