Who Makes Rules?

Trace how public laws and political power changed across societies.

MWH.C.1 "Analyze the impact of the patterns of ancient political, economic, and cultural development. Analyze the influence of religious, political, and philosophical ideas on society..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways laws became public, circle one decision-maker in each paragraph, and put a star beside two limits on political rights. Use your marks to compare who made rules and who lived under them.

Rules, Rights, and Power

1. Imagine a farmer claiming that a neighbor damaged an irrigation ditch. In Babylon around 1750 BCE, a judge could consult the Code of Hammurabi, one of the earliest surviving collections of written laws. Issued by a king, its rules covered property and work, but penalties could differ by social rank. The code made royal judgments public; it did not give everyone equal protection. Centuries later, Athens used a different way to make decisions. In its direct democracy, male citizens voted in an assembly on laws and public policy. Women, enslaved people, and foreigners were excluded. Both societies made public rules, but political power rested in different hands.

2. In the Roman Republic, citizens elected officials, assemblies voted on laws, and the Senate advised and guided policy. Two consuls shared the highest executive office, and tribunes could veto some official actions. This division of responsibilities helped prevent one official from holding all power, though wealthy families often dominated politics. Rome's Twelve Tables made key laws public, so officials could not as easily claim that rules were secret. The Roman thinker Cicero argued that officials should serve the common good and that law should guide government. Roman civic duty encouraged citizens to take part in public affairs, but citizenship and political rights remained unequal.

3. Long after the republic ended, the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, emperor Justinian ordered a compilation of Roman law in the 500s CE. This work, often called the Justinian Code, preserved and organized centuries of legal writing. Later European scholars studied it, and it influenced legal systems in many European regions. Christian teachings about moral duties also shaped some European laws, but law still varied by place. Under medieval feudal arrangements, local lords exercised authority over land and people. Across these cases, written rules could make decisions more predictable, yet who wrote the rules, and who had rights under them, changed sharply.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How were Hammurabi's code and the Twelve Tables alike, and what does the passage say made them different?

2. How did citizens take part in making decisions in Athens and the Roman Republic? Identify one limit on participation in either society.

3. How did the Roman Republic divide political power, and why did that division not give everyone equal influence?

4. What helped Roman law influence later European legal systems? Explain why this did not mean law was the same everywhere in medieval Europe.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A school council is deciding how to settle disputes over shared supplies. Write four or five sentences proposing two practices adapted from different societies in the passage, explaining what each would improve, and naming one historical limit your plan would avoid.

ANSWER KEY

Who Makes Rules?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways laws became public, circle one decision-maker in each paragraph, and put a star beside two limits on political rights. Use your marks to compare who made rules and who lived under them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How were Hammurabi's code and the Twelve Tables alike, and what does the passage say made them different?	**Both made laws public. Hammurabi's code published rules issued by a king, while the Twelve Tables made key Roman laws public in a republic where assemblies voted on laws.**
2	How did citizens take part in making decisions in Athens and the Roman Republic? Identify one limit on participation in either society.	**Male citizens voted directly in Athens's assembly. In Rome, citizens elected officials and assemblies voted on laws. Athens excluded women, enslaved people, and foreigners.**
3	How did the Roman Republic divide political power, and why did that division not give everyone equal influence?	**Assemblies, consuls, and the Senate had different roles, and tribunes could veto some actions. Wealthy families often dominated politics, and political rights were unequal.**
4	What helped Roman law influence later European legal systems? Explain why this did not mean law was the same everywhere in medieval Europe.	**Justinian's compilation preserved Roman law for later European scholars to study. European laws also reflected Christian teachings, while feudal lords exercised local authority, so laws varied by place.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our council would let every student vote directly on rules for shared supplies, adapting Athens's assembly. This would give students a voice in decisions that affect them. We would also post written rules, as Rome did with the Twelve Tables, so decisions are easier to check. Unlike ancient Athens, our council would not exclude students because of identity or status. A teacher would review disputed decisions under the same posted rules.

Accept other accurate comparisons supported by the passage. For the open task, look for two practices from different societies, a benefit of each, and a clear response to a historical limit.