Rails and Rule

Weighing the effects of British rule in India

MWH.C.5.3.D "Assess the political, economic, and cultural impact of the British Raj, Britain's subordination of India, as characterized by economic, educational, and infrastructure investments, at the costs of exploitation and self-rule."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two investments made under the British Raj and circle two costs or limits. Write P, E, or C in the margin beside one political, one economic, and one cultural effect.

Who Gained from the Raj?

1. In 1910, a bale of cotton grown in western India might ride a train to Bombay, a port now called Mumbai. Under the British Raj, which lasted from 1858 to 1947, British authorities held final power over India rather than allowing national self-rule. Railways and ports made moving goods faster, and some Indian merchants and farmers gained access to distant markets. Yet the same routes helped send Indian raw cotton to British mills, while British-made cloth returned to Indian markets. Competition from imported cloth hurt many Indian handloom weavers, so faster trade did not bring equal gains to everyone.

2. The colonial government also invested in roads, telegraph lines, and schools that taught in English. Telegraphs let officials send messages quickly, but they also helped people in different cities share news and organize campaigns. English education opened careers in government and law for some Indians; access remained unequal, especially for poor and rural communities. Students could read British arguments about liberty and then ask why Indians had so little control over their own government. Indian reformers and nationalists used newspapers and meetings to build support across regions. Thus, an educational system meant partly to serve colonial administration also supplied tools for challenging it.

3. These projects were not simply gifts. The colonial state collected taxes in India, and railway financing often guaranteed returns to private investors, including British investors. Indian taxpayers could bear costs even when rail lines mainly served trade or military movement. British authorities kept decisive power over budgets and laws, although some Indians served on councils with limited powers. In the twentieth century, Indian activists demanded greater control and eventually independence. A railway could therefore help a farmer reach a buyer while also strengthening a government that farmer had not chosen. To judge the Raj, consider who paid, who benefited, and who decided.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the same railway benefit some Indians while harming others?

2. How did English-language schooling affect careers and political ideas? Who had less access to it?

3. Why might an Indian taxpayer question whether railway construction was a fair investment?

4. Why did activists demand self-rule despite the roads, railways, and schools built under British rule?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are writing to an Indian town council in 1910 about a proposed railway station. In three sentences, recommend whether to support it, using one economic benefit, one economic cost, and one political or cultural consequence from the passage.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two investments made under the British Raj and circle two costs or limits. Write P, E, or C in the margin beside one political, one economic, and one cultural effect. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the same railway benefit some Indians while harming others?	**Railways gave some farmers and merchants access to distant markets, but routes also carried cotton to British mills. Returning British-made cloth competed with Indian handloom weavers.**
2	How did English-language schooling affect careers and political ideas? Who had less access to it?	**It opened government and law careers for some Indians and exposed students to ideas about liberty that they could use to question British rule. Poor and rural communities had less access.**
3	Why might an Indian taxpayer question whether railway construction was a fair investment?	**Indian taxes helped pay for projects, and railway financing could guarantee investors returns even when lines mainly served trade or military movement.**
4	Why did activists demand self-rule despite the roads, railways, and schools built under British rule?	**British authorities still held decisive power over laws and budgets, while Indians on councils had limited power. Infrastructure did not give Indians national self-rule.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would support the station if the council could make sure local residents benefit, since trains could help farmers reach distant buyers. I would also ask who will pay, because Indian taxpayers could bear railway costs while investors receive guaranteed returns. A station might help people share news across regions, but it would not give Indians control over the laws governing them.

Accept other evidence-based judgments about the station if the response includes an economic benefit, an economic cost, and a political or cultural consequence. The passage does not claim that every railway line benefited the same groups.