Who Owns the Mill?

Read Marx and Engels's account of class conflict and historical change.

TOT.C.1.2 "Explain the socio-economic ideas of Marx and Engels as outlined in their treatise The Communist Manifesto, including the claim known as "dialectical materialism," which proposed that history must be viewed through the lens of "class..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the authors' claim about history, circle the two classes in the mill, and number the two steps that could lead from workers' shared interests to a change in power.

A Mill and a Theory of History

1. In 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published The Communist Manifesto as factories transformed European work. Imagine a textile mill: owners buy machines and pay wages, while workers run the looms but do not own them. Marx and Engels called the owners the bourgeoisie and wage workers the proletariat. They argued that owners profit from workers' labor and that these groups have opposing interests over wages, working hours, and control of production.

2. The manifesto opens by claiming that the history of societies has been a history of class struggles. It describes conflicts between oppressor and oppressed, such as nobles and serfs under feudalism. Marx and Engels argued that the way people produce goods shapes social relationships and that conflicts within those relationships drive historical change. This approach later became known as dialectical materialism, although the manifesto itself does not use that name. It treats economic conflict as a force in history.

3. In their view, capitalism expands production but also brings workers together in factories, where they can recognize shared interests and organize. Marx and Engels predicted that the proletariat would eventually replace bourgeois rule. They called for ending private ownership of the means of production, such as factories, not for banning personal possessions. They envisioned a society without classes in which production would serve common needs. These were the authors' arguments and predictions, not an agreed account of how history must unfold.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the textile mill show a conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat?

2. Why do Marx and Engels include conflicts between nobles and serfs in their claim about history?

3. How does the idea later called dialectical materialism connect the production of goods to historical change?

4. How would the change Marx and Engels proposed address the mill workers' lack of control?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a delivery company where owners control the vehicles and couriers earn wages. In three sentences, explain how Marx and Engels might describe the groups' conflict, how it could lead to change, and what change they would propose.

Who Owns the Mill?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the authors' claim about history, circle the two classes in the mill, and number the two steps that could lead from workers' shared interests to a change in power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the textile mill show a conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat?	**Owners control the machines and pay wages, while workers operate the looms without owning them. The groups have opposing interests over wages, hours, and control.**
2	Why do Marx and Engels include conflicts between nobles and serfs in their claim about history?	**They use an earlier conflict between oppressor and oppressed to support their claim that class struggles run through history.**
3	How does the idea later called dialectical materialism connect the production of goods to historical change?	**How people produce goods shapes social relationships. Conflicts within those relationships can drive historical change.**
4	How would the change Marx and Engels proposed address the mill workers' lack of control?	**Ending private ownership of factories would put the means of production under common control rather than leaving them with the owners.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Marx and Engels might call the owners the bourgeoisie and the couriers the proletariat, with opposing interests over wages and control of the vehicles. If couriers recognized their shared interests and organized, their struggle with owners could change who holds power. Marx and Engels would propose common rather than private ownership of the vehicles used for work, so production could serve shared needs.

Accept answers that accurately connect ownership and wage labor to conflicting class interests, then explain change as a possibility in Marx and Engels's view. Students need not endorse the authors' predictions.