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Social Science — Class 8

Chapter(s): The Colonial Era in India

Maximum Marks: 39

Time Allowed: 1 Hour 10 Minutes

Section A — MCQ & Assertion-Reason (1 mark each)

Q1. A district official announces a new land-revenue rule: each village will pay a fixed cash amount every year, even if the harvest fails. Which historical arrangement from the colonial era does this most closely resemble? [1 mark]

- A) Permanent Settlement, because revenue demand was fixed in cash
- B) Ryotwari System, because revenue was collected through village headmen
- C) Mahalwari System, because only the king fixed the revenue
- D) Subsidiary Alliance, because it fixed military costs instead of revenue

Q2. Two colonial reports about Indian artisans give different observations:

Report I: "We must buy cloth at low prices and ensure merchants supply Britain regularly."

Report II: "We should discourage fine handloom cloth because mills in Britain can supply cheaper cloth."

Which inference best explains how colonial trade policy affected Indian crafts? [1 mark]

- A) It protected Indian weavers by reserving the British market for Indian cloth
- B) It promoted Indian crafts by increasing prices paid to artisans
- C) It shifted demand towards British machine-made textiles, weakening Indian handloom production
- D) It ended all long-distance trade, forcing complete village self-sufficiency

Q3. Read the data table on a district's agriculture after new colonial interventions:

Table: Changes reported (1800-1840)

- Forest cleared for cultivation: High
 - Area under a single cash crop: Rising
 - Local foodgrain diversity: Falling
 - Peasant debt to moneylenders: Rising
- Which conclusion is most strongly supported by the table? [1 mark]**

- A) Commercialisation of agriculture likely increased vulnerability to price shocks and debt
- B) The village economy became independent of markets and outside credit
- C) Forest clearing automatically improved food security in all years
- D) Cash-crop cultivation reduced the need for moneylenders by ensuring stable income

Q4. In a princely state, the British Resident argues: "To keep you safe, you must accept our troops and pay for them; you must not maintain your own independent army or alliances." Which policy is being described? [1 mark]

- A) Doctrine of Lapse, because it annexed states without heirs
- B) Subsidiary Alliance, because it required supporting British troops and limited sovereignty
- C) Permanent Settlement, because it fixed land revenue through zamindars
- D) Vernacular Press Act, because it controlled newspapers in Indian languages

Q5. A historian is comparing two sources about the early colonial period:

Source X: Persian court chronicles describing rulers' achievements.

Source Y: Colonial government records classifying people by religion and describing Indian society as "backward".

Which caution is most important while using Source Y as evidence? [1 mark]

- A) It is automatically neutral because it was written by officials
- B) It may reflect colonial bias and administrative goals, so it must be cross-checked
- C) It cannot contain any factual information at all
- D) It is reliable only when it praises Indian traditions

Q6. Assertion (A): The Permanent Settlement increased the risk of peasant suffering during bad harvest years.

Reason (R): Under the Permanent Settlement, the revenue demand was fixed and had to be paid on time in cash even if crops failed. [1 mark]

- A) Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.
- B) Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- C) A is true but R is false.
- D) A is false but R is true.

Q7. Assertion (A): British officials often treated their written records as more "reliable" than Indian oral accounts.

Reason (R): They believed that only written documents could be used to produce a scientific and objective history of India. [1 mark]

- A) Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.
- B) Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- C) A is true but R is false.
- D) A is false but R is true.

Q8. Assertion (A): The commercialization of agriculture could make cultivators more dependent on moneylenders.

Reason (R): Cash-crop farming tied peasant income to market prices, while revenue demands still had to be met in cash and on time. [1 mark]

- A) Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.
- B) Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- C) A is true but R is false.
- D) A is false but R is true.

Q9. Assertion (A): Subsidiary alliances reduced the political independence of Indian rulers.

Reason (R): Under subsidiary alliances, rulers were required to accept British troops and could not negotiate freely with other powers. [1 mark]

- A) Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.
- B) Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- C) A is true but R is false.
- D) A is false but R is true.

Q10. Assertion (A): The Revolt of 1857 was limited to one region and had no connection with wider society.

Reason (R): Many sepoys belonged to peasant families, so rural discontent could influence their anger against Company rule. [1 mark]

- A) Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.
- B) Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.
- C) A is true but R is false.
- D) A is false but R is true.

Section B — Very Short Answer (2 marks each)

Q11. A village faces a sudden fall in the market price of its cash crop, but land revenue must still be paid in cash by a fixed date. Write exactly two sentences explaining (i) one immediate effect on the peasant household and (ii) one longer-term effect on rural society. [2 marks]

Q12. You are given two types of historical sources from the colonial era: (1) revenue records made by district officials and (2) folk songs describing a local rebellion. Write exactly two sentences stating one limitation of each source for a historian. [2 marks]

Q13. A princely ruler signs an agreement to keep a British force in his territory and agrees not to maintain an independent foreign policy. Write exactly two sentences explaining why this arrangement weakens the state even if there is no immediate war. [2 marks]

Section C — Short Answer (3 marks each)
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Q14. Explain in three numbered points how surveys, maps, and written records helped the colonial state strengthen control over India. Each point must have a short heading and 1-2 sentences. [3 marks]

Q15. A museum displays a large colonial-era map of an Indian district. It shows (a) village boundaries and numbered fields, (b) symbols for wells, roads and forests, and (c) a note about the "standard unit of measurement" used by surveyors. Explain in three numbered points how such mapping could change (i) land rights on the ground and (ii) the state's ability to collect revenue, even if the map contains small errors. [3 marks]

Q16. In 1857, a town has three groups reacting to Company rule: (1) sepoys posted nearby, (2) peasants facing heavy revenue demands, and (3) local zamindars whose powers were reduced by new rules. Explain in three numbered points how their different grievances could still combine into a single uprising, and mention one limitation of such a coalition. [3 marks]

Section D — Long Answer (5 marks each)

Q17. Analyse how the British reshaped India's rural economy through land-revenue systems. In your answer, compare at least two systems (such as Permanent Settlement, Ryotwari, Mahalwari) and explain how revenue demand and collection methods affected peasants' rights, agricultural choices, and village power relations. Answer in the required format. [5 marks]

Q18. Explain how colonial rule transformed Indian crafts and urban livelihoods during the 18th-19th centuries. Your answer must cover: (a) the Company's control over production/markets, (b) the role of new transport and trade policies, and (c) how these changes altered the lives of artisans and the character of towns. Answer in the required format. [5 marks]

Section E — Case Study (4 marks each)
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Q19. Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow: [4 marks]

A district report from the 1850s describes three neighbouring areas under different revenue arrangements. In Area A, revenue is collected through a set of powerful intermediaries who

must pay the government on a fixed date; if they fail, their estates can be auctioned. Cultivators complain that rents rise when the intermediary fears losing the estate. In Area B, individual cultivators are recorded as the main revenue payers; many say the assessment feels high and that in a bad monsoon they borrow from moneylenders to avoid arrears. In Area C, the village as a unit is assessed; village headmen help prepare lists of fields and families. Some small farmers allege that influential households shift a larger share of the burden onto them using the official records.

A separate note in the report says that, after a new road connected the district to a port, traders began offering advances for a cash crop. A few cultivators gained higher income in good years, but when prices fell, many households faced debt and had to mortgage land or migrate seasonally for work.

- (i) Identify the likely revenue systems in Area A and Area B based on the clues in the passage. (1 mark)
- (ii) Using evidence from Area C, state one way in which 'village-based' assessment could still produce inequality. (1 mark)
- (iii) Explain how the new road and trader advances could both benefit and harm cultivators, according to the passage. (2 marks)

Social Science — Class 8
Chapter(s): The Colonial Era in India

Section A — MCQ & Assertion-Reason (1 mark each)

A1.

Answer:

Correct option: (A)

Permanent Settlement, because revenue demand was fixed in cash

Explanation:

In the Permanent Settlement (1793), the revenue demand was fixed and had to be paid in cash on time regardless of crop conditions. This feature matches the rule described in the question. Hence, option (A) is correct.

A2.

Answer:

Correct option: (C)

It shifted demand towards British machine-made textiles, weakening Indian handloom production

Explanation:

Colonial trade policies increasingly favoured British mill-made textiles and reduced opportunities for Indian handloom products in both Indian and overseas markets. This made many artisans lose work and income over time. Hence, option (C) is correct.

A3.

Answer:

Correct option: (A)

Commercialisation of agriculture likely increased vulnerability to price shocks and debt

Explanation:

A shift towards a single cash crop with declining foodgrain diversity suggests dependence on markets for food and income. Rising debt indicates that price changes or bad harvests could trap peasants in borrowing. Hence, option (A) is correct.

A4.

Answer:

Correct option: (B)

Subsidiary Alliance, because it required supporting British troops and limited sovereignty

Explanation:

The Subsidiary Alliance forced Indian rulers to accept British troops (a subsidiary force) and pay for them, while surrendering key aspects of independence like foreign relations and military power. The statement matches this mechanism. Hence, option (B) is correct.

A5.

Answer:

Correct option: (B)

It may reflect colonial bias and administrative goals, so it must be cross-checked

Explanation:

Colonial records often served administrative control and were shaped by the officials' assumptions and political aims. Therefore, historians must read them critically and corroborate with other sources. Hence, option (B) is correct.

A6.

Answer:

Correct option: (A)

Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

Explanation:

A fixed cash demand that does not fall in years of poor harvest forces cultivators to borrow or sell assets, deepening distress. This is precisely why a bad harvest could translate into severe hardship under the Permanent Settlement. Hence, option (A) is correct.

A7.

Answer:

Correct option: (A)

Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

Explanation:

Many colonial administrators and historians privileged written archives and thought they enabled a more systematic, "scientific" history. This belief explains why they often downgraded oral traditions as less dependable. Hence, option (A) is correct.

A8.

Answer:

Correct option: (A)

Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

Explanation:

When income depends on market prices, a price fall or crop failure reduces cash earnings, but revenue obligations remain. This mismatch often pushed cultivators to borrow, increasing dependence on moneylenders. Hence, option (A) is correct.

A9.

Answer:

Correct option: (A)

Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A.

Explanation:

Accepting British troops and losing control over external relations directly limited sovereignty. These conditions explain how subsidiary alliances made rulers dependent and politically constrained. Hence, option (A) is correct.

A10.

Answer:

Correct option: (D)

A is false but R is true.

Explanation:

The revolt spread across several centres and was linked to multiple social groups and grievances, so the assertion is incorrect. The reason is correct because sepoys' ties to peasant society helped transmit rural resentments into the army. Hence, option (D) is correct.

Section B — Very Short Answer (2 marks each)

A11.

Answer:

Immediately, the household may have to borrow from a moneylender or sell grain/cattle to pay the revenue on time despite low crop income. Over time, repeated borrowing can increase indebtedness and lead to loss of land or forced dependence on landlords and moneylenders.

A12.

Answer:

Revenue records can reflect the priorities and biases of the colonial administration, so they may understate peasant hardship or resistance. Folk songs preserve popular memory but may mix facts with emotion and exaggeration, so they need corroboration with other evidence.

A13.

Answer:

The ruler loses key powers of sovereignty because decisions about diplomacy and security become dependent on British interests rather than local needs. Paying for the subsidiary force also strains the state's finances, reducing money available for administration and welfare.

Section C — Short Answer (3 marks each)
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A14.

Answer:

- 1) Boundary-making and control: Surveys and maps fixed boundaries of districts and routes, making it easier to move officials and troops and to govern a large territory.
- 2) Revenue assessment: Measuring fields and recording land use helped classify land and decide revenue demand, increasing the state's ability to extract taxes systematically.
- 3) Knowledge as power: Written records created categories of people and resources, allowing the government to plan laws and policing based on what it claimed to "know" about society.

A15.

Answer:

- 1) Fixing and 'freezing' boundaries: By drawing clear village and field boundaries, the map converted flexible, locally negotiated use-rights into fixed lines, so some families could lose access to grazing, forests or shared water points if these were not recorded.
- 2) Making claims verifiable in paperwork: Numbered fields and standard units let officials link each plot to a written record, so landholding and liability became easier to prove or challenge in courts and offices, often favouring those who could produce documents.
- 3) Strengthening revenue extraction and control: Roads, wells and forests helped officials plan taxation and enforcement (who owes, how much, and how to reach them), so even minor mapping errors could still raise revenue pressure by treating disputed or shifting land as clearly taxable property.

A16.

Answer:

- 1) Linking grievances through shared targets: Sepoy anger at service conditions and loss of respect could merge with peasant distress over cash demands because both blamed Company officials, courts and revenue agents as the immediate faces of oppression.
- 2) Leadership and resources through local elites: Displaced zamindars could provide networks, funds, and authority to mobilise villages and coordinate attacks, turning scattered discontent into organised action.
- 3) Rapid spread through communication and imitation: News of defiance by one group encouraged others to join, so a military mutiny could quickly gain civilian support and become a wider revolt.
- 4) Limitation-unequal aims and mistrust: The groups did not always want the same future (e.g., restoring old privileges vs. reducing burdens), so internal conflicts and weak coordination could break the alliance under pressure.

Section D — Long Answer (5 marks each)

A17.

Answer:

The British land-revenue arrangements changed farming from a community-based livelihood into a revenue-paying enterprise tied to the colonial state.

1) Permanent Settlement: fixed demand, new landlord class

Under Permanent Settlement, revenue was fixed and collected from zamindars, treating them as owners. This strengthened a landlord class that often raised rents and enforced collection through coercion, increasing insecurity for cultivators.

2) Ryotwari: direct state-peasant link, but heavy pressure

Ryotwari recognised individual cultivators (ryots) as revenue payers, making the state the immediate creditor. High and rigid assessments, plus the threat of sale of land for arrears, pushed many peasants into debt and forced sales.

3) Mahalwari: village-based assessment with internal inequality

Mahalwari assessed revenue on a village or estate (mahal), claiming to reflect "village communities." In practice, powerful headmen and dominant groups controlled records and distribution of burden, so small cultivators bore disproportionate pressure.

4) Cropping decisions: shift towards cash crops and risk

To meet cash revenue demands on time, cultivators often shifted from food grains to marketable crops when prices looked attractive. Price crashes, crop failures, or transport disruptions then made repayment impossible, deepening cycles of arrears.

5) Power relations: courts, records, and intermediaries

New surveys, written records, and courts made paperwork decisive, benefiting moneylenders, landlords, and officials. Traditional negotiations weakened, while auctions and legal recovery methods made loss of land more common.

Overall, these systems increased monetisation, insecurity, and inequality in villages, linking rural life tightly to colonial revenue priorities rather than local welfare.

A18.

Answer:

Colonial rule did not only conquer territory; it reorganised production and trade in ways that weakened many crafts and reshaped towns.

1) Company as a powerful buyer and controller

The Company increasingly acted as a dominant purchaser, using contracts and advances to control what was produced and at what price. This reduced artisans' bargaining power and made them dependent on a single, politically backed buyer.

2) Coercive procurement and restricted markets

In many regions, producers faced pressure to supply goods at low rates, while free selling was curtailed through rules and local agents. When artisans could not recover costs, they reduced output or abandoned the craft.

3) Trade policy and imported manufactures

Colonial trade policies favoured the import of factory-made goods into Indian markets while Indian producers faced disadvantages. Cheaper machine-made textiles and other items undercut handcrafted products, shrinking local demand.

4) Transport changes: rail/roads as double-edged forces

New transport connected interior markets to ports and distant cities, integrating India into global trade. While this expanded circulation, it also enabled mass distribution of imported goods into small towns, intensifying competition for artisans.

5) Urban change: decline of craft centres and new occupations

Older craft towns often lost importance as artisan households migrated in search of work. Some towns grew in new directions-administration, cantonments, port trade, or rail-linked commerce-shifting livelihoods from production to services and wage labour.

Thus, by controlling markets, favouring imports, and reorganising transport-linked trade, colonial rule transformed artisans into more insecure workers and altered the economic purpose of many Indian towns.

Section E — Case Study (4 marks each)
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A19.

(i) Identify the likely revenue systems in Area A and Area B based on the clues in

the passage.

Answer:

Area A resembles the Permanent Settlement system (zamindari intermediaries with risk of auction for non-payment), and Area B resembles the Ryotwari system (individual cultivators recorded as direct revenue payers).

(ii) Using evidence from Area C, state one way in which 'village-based' assessment could still produce inequality.

Answer:

Because headmen and influential families controlled record-making, they could manipulate the lists so that small farmers carried a larger share of the revenue burden, even though the village was assessed as one unit.

(iii) Explain how the new road and trader advances could both benefit and harm cultivators, according to the passage.

Answer:

The road improved market access, and advances made it easier to shift to a cash crop and earn more in years of good prices and harvests. But when market prices fell or harvests failed, the same advances turned into debt; households then had to mortgage land, face arrears, or migrate for wage work, increasing insecurity.