Reading

Families Who Shaped History

Read the text and match 1-6 to (A-H). There are 2 extra options you don't need to use.



Some families in history have gained great wealth and power, changing culture, politics, and business in ways we still see today.

1. _____ The Rockefeller Family

The Rockefeller family became one of the wealthiest in the world through John D. Rockefeller's oil empire, Standard Oil, which dominated the industry in the late 19th century. Known widely for their philanthropy, the Rockefellers helped fund universities, hospitals, and museums across the U.S., leaving a deep impact on American society. Surprisingly, despite their oil-based fortune, the family recently decided to move away from fossil fuels and support clean energy instead, showing their commitment to environmental causes. Their legacy also includes landmarks like New York's Rockefeller Center—a true symbol of their lasting influence on American culture and architecture.

2. _____The British Royal Family

The British royal family, known as the Windsors, is famous worldwide. They represent British culture and tradition, with Queen Elizabeth II holding the longest reign of any British monarch. Yet, despite their royal status, they have relatable, even charming moments. For example, Queen Elizabeth II loved her pet corgis and even personally cared for them. Interestingly, the family's original name was not Windsor but Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. They changed it during World War I to distance themselves from their German roots—a change that felt necessary due to anti-German sentiment at the time.

3. _____ The House of Saud

The House of Saud, the ruling family of Saudi Arabia, is best known for controlling some of the world's largest oil reserves. In recent years, some family members have led efforts toward modernizing Saudi Arabia with reforms, like allowing women to drive and promoting tourism, aiming to diversify the economy. The family's wealth is immense but distributed in a unique way, with some members receiving generous allowances, while others have to work. Perhaps the most surprising is the family's size: there are thousands of princes and princesses, though only a few hold political power, adding a unique layer to their story.

4. _____ The Medici Family

The Medici family from Italy is famous for supporting the arts during the Renaissance. They sponsored artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, leaving a lasting mark on art and architecture, especially in Florence. But they were also important in banking—they helped create some of the first big banking systems in Europe, which brought them great wealth and power. The Medici family also supported science. They were patrons of Galileo, who named four of Jupiter's moons the "Medicean Stars" to honor them. However, like many powerful families, the Medicis also had intense internal rivalries. A surprising twist in their story is their close connection to the Catholic Church. In fact, they produced several popes—one of whom, Pope Leo X, excommunicated Martin Luther, which sparked the Protestant Reformation.

Reading

5. _____ The Habsburg Family

The Habsburg family, one of Europe's oldest royal families, ruled over Austria, Spain, and the Roman Empire. They were experts at building power through strategic marriages across Europe, which kept their wealth and influence intact. However, unlike most royal families, the Habsburgs often married within their own family, leading to a unique issue. Over time, many developed the distinctive "Habsburg jaw," a trait caused by inbreeding. This condition led to health issues and eventually contributed to the family's decline, showing that even great power comes with challenges.

6. _____ The Murdoch Family

The Murdoch family, led by media mogul Rupert Murdoch, controls a vast media empire, including The Wall Street Journal, and many other international outlets. Known for their influence over public opinion, they've played a strong role in shaping world's political views. Family dynamics within the Murdochs are complex; Rupert Murdoch's children, like Lachlan and James, often have opposing views on media and politics. And interestingly, Rupert remains highly involved into his 90s, showing a remarkable level of control. This ongoing involvement leaves many wondering how the next generation will handle the empire.

Which family:

A *stepped away from their heritage?*
B *has significant control over global news?*
C *held authority over several major regions?*
D *had a planet named in their honor?*
E *highlighted their support for eco-friendly initiatives?*
F *played an important part in early finance?*
G *does not provide the same amount of money to all?*
H *consists of thousands of members with influence across the world?*