

Mesopotamia's Big Ideas

Identify achievements and explain why they mattered.

SS.6.W.2.7 "Summarize the important achievements of Mesopotamian civilization."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each sentence that names an achievement, and circle words that tell how it helped people or cities. Then number the three achievements you think are most important for a summary.

Achievements Between Two Rivers

- ① Between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, Mesopotamian peoples built some of the world's first cities. Sumerian city-states such as Uruk had crowded streets, temples, markets, and walls. Farmers dug canals to move river water to dry fields. This irrigation let them grow extra grain, which supported craft workers, traders, priests, and government leaders. Managing canals and storing food required organized labor. These achievements helped city life grow, even though floods and droughts could still threaten the land.
- ② Mesopotamians also developed cuneiform, a writing system made by pressing wedge-shaped marks into clay tablets. At first, scribes used it to record goods, taxes, and trade. Later, writing preserved stories, letters, and school lessons. Written records helped leaders keep track of a growing city's needs. One famous literary work, the Epic of Gilgamesh, was written in Mesopotamia. Writing was an important achievement because information could be saved and shared beyond one person's memory over time.
- ③ Babylonian scholars built on earlier Mesopotamian knowledge of numbers and measurement. They used a base-60 number system, which still influences how people divide an hour into 60 minutes and a circle into 360 degrees. Builders used math to plan structures, while astronomers recorded patterns in the sky. Law was another achievement. King Hammurabi had laws carved on a stone monument so people could see the rules and penalties. The laws were not equal for everyone, but the code showed that rulers could publish written laws.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 How did irrigation help Mesopotamian cities grow?

2 Why was cuneiform an important achievement? Give two ways writing was used.

3 Summarize the Mesopotamian achievement involving math. Include one use of math and one influence that remains today.

4 What did Hammurabi's code show about written laws, even though the laws were not equal for everyone?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a three-sentence summary of Mesopotamian achievements. Include at least three achievements from the passage and explain how each helped people or cities.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each sentence that names an achievement, and circle words that tell how it helped people or cities. Then number the three achievements you think are most important for a summary. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did irrigation help Mesopotamian cities grow?	Canals brought water to dry fields, allowing farmers to grow extra grain. The extra food supported workers, traders, priests, and leaders.
2	Why was cuneiform an important achievement? Give two ways writing was used.	Cuneiform allowed information to be saved and shared over time. It was used to record goods, taxes, and trade, and later to preserve stories, letters, and lessons.
3	Summarize the Mesopotamian achievement involving math. Include one use of math and one influence that remains today.	Mesopotamians used a base-60 number system. Math helped builders plan structures and astronomers record sky patterns, and base 60 still affects the 60-minute hour and 360-degree circle.
4	What did Hammurabi's code show about written laws, even though the laws were not equal for everyone?	It showed that rulers could publish written laws so people could see rules and penalties.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mesopotamian farmers used irrigation canals to grow extra food, helping cities support many kinds of workers. Cuneiform writing saved records and ideas so they could be shared over time. Babylonian math aided builders and astronomers, and Hammurabi's written code made laws public.

Accept summaries that accurately include at least three passage-based achievements and explain their effects. Students may select irrigation, cities and organized labor, cuneiform, math, astronomy, or written laws.