Beliefs Shape Egypt

How religious ideas influenced rule, work, and daily life

6-9.WH.1.10 "Explain how religion and belief systems shaped the development of civilizations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two beliefs in the passage, then circle an action or decision each belief shaped. Write the same number beside each matching pair to show the connection.

Belief and Life Along the Nile

1 Along the Nile River, ancient Egyptians watched the water rise and fall each year. They believed many gods helped keep the world in balance. Egyptians called this balance ma'at, a way of describing order and justice. The pharaoh was expected to protect ma'at and was linked to the gods. This belief gave the ruler religious authority, not just political power. Pharaohs ordered temples built and led important ceremonies. When people supported these actions, they were also supporting what they saw as the proper order of the world.

2 Temples were more than places to pray. Many owned farmland and received offerings of food and goods. Priests and other workers managed these resources, and temple stores could support workers who cared for buildings and held ceremonies. At festivals, priests sometimes carried a god's statue through the streets, where people could gather to honor that god. These events made religious beliefs part of public life. The belief that gods needed honor helped shape how land, food, and labor were organized in Egyptian communities.

3 Egyptians also believed that life could continue after death. To prepare, families who could afford it paid for mummification, a process that preserved a body. They placed food, tools, and other goods in tombs for the dead to use. Wealthy people could hire craftspeople to make decorated coffins and tomb paintings, while others used simpler burials. Scribes copied prayers and instructions meant to help the dead in the afterlife. These beliefs shaped the work of embalmers, artists, and scribes, as well as the ways families spent their resources.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did belief in ma'at shape the pharaoh's role?

2. How did the belief that gods needed honor affect the use of land, food, or labor?

3. How did religious belief shape what people did together at festivals?

4. How did belief in life after death affect both families' choices and people's work?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a belief for an imaginary town that differs from the beliefs in the passage. In four or five sentences, explain how that belief changes one community rule and one kind of work.

ANSWER KEY

Beliefs Shape Egypt

GRADES 6-9 · 6-9.WH.1.10

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two beliefs in the passage, then circle an action or decision each belief shaped. Write the same number beside each matching pair to show the connection. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did belief in ma'at shape the pharaoh's role?	**The pharaoh was expected to protect ma'at, or order and justice. This gave the ruler religious authority and helped explain why pharaohs built temples and led ceremonies.**
2	How did the belief that gods needed honor affect the use of land, food, or labor?	**Temples owned farmland and received food and goods. Priests and other workers managed these resources to support temple work and ceremonies.**
3	How did religious belief shape what people did together at festivals?	**Priests sometimes carried a god's statue through the streets, and people gathered to honor that god. This made religion part of public life.**
4	How did belief in life after death affect both families' choices and people's work?	**Some families spent resources on mummification, tomb goods, or decorated coffins. The belief also created work for embalmers, artists, and scribes.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In an imaginary mountain town, people believe every stream must stay clear to keep the mountains healthy. Because of this belief, the council bans dumping waste into streams. The town appoints water watchers to check the streams and report pollution. Stoneworkers also build covered bins so families have another place to put waste.

For Part 1, accept any two correctly matched beliefs and actions from the passage. For Part 3, accept invented beliefs with clear links to both a community rule and a kind of work.