Rivers and Rulers

How water, power, and beliefs shaped early civilizations

7.H.1 "Identify and explain the conditions that led to the rise of early river valley civilizations and evaluate how the achievements in art, architecture, written language..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways rivers helped people settle and circle one challenge a river created. Number three examples of how a leader, belief, or social group shaped something people built or wrote.

What the Rivers Made Possible

1. Imagine trying to build a city where rain rarely falls. In Mesopotamia, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers supplied water, but floods could arrive at unpredictable times. Farmers dug canals to bring water to fields and built banks to limit damage. In Egypt, the Nile flooded more regularly, leaving rich soil beside the river. Both regions could grow extra food, so some people became builders, priests, or officials instead of farmers. Villages grew into cities as leaders organized water projects and decided how to store and share grain.

2. In southern Mesopotamia, many cities had their own rulers. A city might raise a ziggurat, a tall temple platform, to honor its chief god. Priests oversaw temple activities, while rulers directed workers and collected supplies for large projects. Scribes pressed wedge-shaped marks called cuneiform into clay tablets to record grain deliveries and other business. These records helped officials track goods that farmers and traders owed or exchanged. The towering temple and the tablets show how religion, government, and workers with different roles shaped city life.

3. In Egypt, pharaohs ruled a kingdom along the Nile and were linked to the gods. Some pharaohs ordered huge pyramids as royal tombs. Skilled workers built them, while officials managed materials and food for the crews. In tombs, artists painted scenes of daily life and offerings meant to help the dead in the next life. Scribes used hieroglyphs on tomb walls and other surfaces to record names and prayers. These works show that royal power and beliefs about life after death shaped what many people made.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the rivers help villages grow into cities in both regions? Include one difference between the rivers.

2. How did a ziggurat reflect religion and the roles of different groups in a Mesopotamian city?

3. How did writing serve people with different roles in Mesopotamia and Egypt?

4. What do Egypt's pyramids and tomb paintings reveal about the pharaohs' power and Egyptian beliefs?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a river settlement different from those in the reading. In 4 to 5 sentences, describe one benefit and one challenge of its river, then propose a public structure and a use for writing that show who leads and how different people contribute.

ANSWER KEY

Rivers and Rulers

GRADE 7 · 7.H.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways rivers helped people settle and circle one challenge a river created. Number three examples of how a leader, belief, or social group shaped something people built or wrote. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the rivers help villages grow into cities in both regions? Include one difference between the rivers.	**The rivers supplied water and helped farmers grow extra food, allowing people to take other jobs. The Nile flooded more regularly, while floods on the Tigris and Euphrates were less predictable.**
2	How did a ziggurat reflect religion and the roles of different groups in a Mesopotamian city?	**The ziggurat honored a city's chief god. Priests oversaw temple activities, rulers directed projects, and workers built the structure.**
3	How did writing serve people with different roles in Mesopotamia and Egypt?	**Mesopotamian scribes recorded business on clay tablets so officials could track goods. Egyptian scribes wrote names and prayers on tomb walls, reflecting beliefs about the dead and the importance of royal tombs.**
4	What do Egypt's pyramids and tomb paintings reveal about the pharaohs' power and Egyptian beliefs?	**Pharaohs had the power to order large tombs and have officials organize their construction. Tomb paintings of offerings show belief in life after death.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In my imagined settlement, river water feeds bean fields, but sudden floods can ruin paths. An elected council orders a raised storehouse to keep extra food dry. Builders raise it on stone supports, while farmers supply the food. Record keepers post flood warnings and bridge repair schedules on wooden boards. The storehouse and notices show that the council directs projects while other groups help protect the settlement.

Accept other accurate links between river conditions, specialized roles, and achievements. For the open task, look for an invented structure and use of writing that each connect to leadership or group roles.