

Layers of Life

How social rank shaped work, wealth, and power in early river valley societies.

6.3d "Political and social hierarchies influenced the access that groups and individuals had to power, wealth, and jobs and influenced their roles within a society."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each group or person named in the passage. Circle words or phrases that show how that group's position affected power, wealth, jobs, or rights.

Rank and Roles

- ① In the cities of ancient Mesopotamia, society was organized in layers. Kings and high officials directed armies, collected taxes, and made major decisions. Priests held influence because temples were centers of worship and economic activity. Merchants, artisans, and farmers worked to produce or trade goods. Many farmers rented land from temples or palace estates. At the bottom were enslaved people, who had few rights and could be bought or sold. A person's position strongly affected work, property, and political power.
- ② Ancient Egypt also had a hierarchy, with the pharaoh at its top. The pharaoh claimed divine authority and controlled the government. Below him, nobles, priests, and scribes held respected positions. Scribes could read and write, so they kept records and worked for the government or temples. Most people were farmers, laborers, or craftspeople. Egyptian women generally had more legal rights than women in some nearby societies: they could own property and make contracts. Still, men usually held the highest government offices.
- ③ Hierarchies did not mean that every person had the same experience. A skilled Mesopotamian merchant might gain wealth through trade, even though kings had greater political power. In Egypt, a person trained as a scribe could move into a respected government job that most farmers could not do. Yet birth, gender, training, and social position often limited choices. Both societies depended on the labor of people lower in the hierarchy, while people near the top had more influence over decisions and resources.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did a Mesopotamian king's access to power differ from a farmer's access to power? Use details from the passage.

2 Why did Egyptian scribes hold respected positions? What jobs could their training help them do?

3 What does the passage show about Egyptian women's legal rights and men's access to the highest government offices?

4 How did people at different levels of the hierarchy contribute to society and affect decisions about resources?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose one person from Mesopotamia and one person from Egypt named in the passage. In 3 or 4 sentences, compare their likely access to power, wealth, or jobs, using at least two passage details.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each group or person named in the passage. Circle words or phrases that show how that group's position affected power, wealth, jobs, or rights. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did a Mesopotamian king's access to power differ from a farmer's access to power? Use details from the passage.	Kings directed armies, collected taxes, and made major decisions. Farmers produced goods and many rented land from temples or palace estates.
2	Why did Egyptian scribes hold respected positions? What jobs could their training help them do?	Scribes could read and write. They kept records and could work for the government or temples.
3	What does the passage show about Egyptian women's legal rights and men's access to the highest government offices?	Egyptian women could own property and make contracts, but men usually held the highest government offices.
4	How did people at different levels of the hierarchy contribute to society and affect decisions about resources?	People lower in the hierarchy provided labor that both societies depended on. People near the top had more influence over decisions and resources.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A Mesopotamian farmer who rented temple or palace land had less political power than a king or high official. An Egyptian scribe could read and write and could work for the government or temples, jobs most farmers could not do. Both people had roles that helped society, but the scribe held a more respected position.

Accept accurate comparisons that use named groups or people from both societies and support claims with passage details. For the open response, accept other valid comparisons of access to power, wealth, jobs, or rights.