

River Civilizations Compared

Compare shared features and distinctive contributions in early river valley societies.

9.1c "Complex societies and civilizations shared common characteristics of religion, job specialization, cities, government, language/writing systems, technology, and social hierarchy, and they made unique contributions."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a shared characteristic in each paragraph. Circle one distinctive contribution per civilization and label it M, I, or S.

Three River Valley Civilizations

- ① Mesopotamian city-states along the Tigris and Euphrates depended on farming. Kings and priests held high status; farmers, merchants, scribes, and enslaved people occupied different social positions. Temples supported religious activity, while specialized workers produced goods and maintained canals. Cuneiform writing on clay tablets recorded trade, laws, and grain supplies. This distinctive writing system helped officials and merchants manage complex activities.
- ② Indus cities such as Mohenjo-daro and Harappa also depended on farming and trade. Planned streets, wells, and covered drains reveal organized construction, a distinctive feature of these cities. Standardized weights, craft workshops, and seals point to trade and specialized work. The Indus script remains undeciphered. Buildings and objects suggest social organization, but the identities of rulers and details of religious beliefs remain uncertain.
- ③ Shang society included kings, nobles, warriors, farmers, artisans, and laborers. Ancestor worship and divination linked religion to royal authority. Diviners heated animal bones or turtle shells to produce cracks that they interpreted; inscriptions recorded questions, predictions, and sometimes outcomes in early Chinese writing. These oracle-bone records are a distinctive Shang contribution. Bronze workers also made ritual vessels and weapons. Like Mesopotamia, Shang society combined government, religion, writing, technology, and social hierarchy.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** Identify two characteristics that both Mesopotamian and Shang societies shared. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

- 2** Why does the passage describe the Indus system of streets, wells, and covered drains as a distinctive contribution?

- 3** How did Shang oracle-bone inscriptions connect religion and writing?

- 4** Contrast the evidence of social hierarchy in Mesopotamia with the evidence of social hierarchy in Shang society.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Compare two civilizations in three or four sentences. Explain one shared characteristic and one distinctive contribution from each, using specific passage details.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline a shared characteristic in each paragraph. Circle one distinctive contribution per civilization and label it M, I, or S. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Identify two characteristics that both Mesopotamian and Shang societies shared. Use details from the passage to support your answer.	Both had rulers, religious practices, specialized jobs, writing, technology, and social ranks. For example, Mesopotamian cuneiform and Shang oracle-bone inscriptions both recorded information.
2	Why does the passage describe the Indus system of streets, wells, and covered drains as a distinctive contribution?	It was a planned urban system that revealed organized public construction.
3	How did Shang oracle-bone inscriptions connect religion and writing?	Diviners interpreted cracks to seek guidance, and inscriptions recorded questions, predictions, and sometimes outcomes in early Chinese writing.
4	Contrast the evidence of social hierarchy in Mesopotamia with the evidence of social hierarchy in Shang society.	Mesopotamia had high-status kings and priests, with farmers, merchants, scribes, and enslaved people in other positions. Shang society included kings, nobles, warriors, farmers, artisans, and laborers, with religion linked to royal authority.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mesopotamia and the Indus civilization both used writing systems and depended on farming and trade. Mesopotamian scribes used cuneiform on clay tablets to record supplies and laws. A distinctive Mesopotamian contribution was cuneiform writing. A distinctive Indus contribution was its planned streets, wells, and covered drains.

Accept equivalent shared characteristics when students support them with accurate passage details. For Part 3, responses should name one shared feature, one distinctive contribution for each selected civilization, and at least two specific details.