Cities Across Rivers

Compare how three societies met the needs of large communities.

7.C.5.2.B "Explain that complex societies and civilizations in different regions share common characteristics (e.g., agricultural innovations, written language, and early systems of law and government)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In each paragraph, underline a farming method, circle a use for writing, and number one government or law detail (1 for Ur, 2 for Egypt, 3 for Han China) to show what the societies share.

Three Societies, Shared Needs

1. Around 2100 BCE, the city of Ur stood beside the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia. Farmers dug canals to move river water onto dry fields, which helped feed people who did not farm. In busy markets, scribes pressed wedge-shaped marks into clay tablets. These marks, called cuneiform, recorded grain supplies and trade. Ur's rulers also used written rules. A law collection linked to King Ur-Nammu listed penalties for some offenses. Canals, records, and rules helped people work together in a city larger than a farming village.

2. Across the desert, people in ancient Egypt built towns beside the Nile River. Around 2000 BCE, farmers used canals and basins to guide floodwater to fields. More food supported builders, craft workers, and officials. Scribes wrote in hieroglyphs on stone and in other scripts on papyrus to record harvests and taxes. Egypt's pharaoh led the government, and officials collected taxes and settled disputes. These jobs connected distant communities along the river. Egypt's writing looked unlike Ur's clay marks, but both societies used records to manage resources.

3. Much later, during China's Han dynasty, farmers along the Yellow River also needed ways to manage water. Officials supported canals and dikes that reduced some flood damage and carried water to fields. Scribes used Chinese characters on bamboo strips to record taxes and government orders. Han emperors appointed officials to carry out laws across a large territory. Ur, Egypt, and Han China did not share the same language or rulers. Even so, each depended on food production, written records, and organized government to support a complex society.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did farmers in Ur and Egypt use water in similar ways, and how did that help people who did not farm?

2. How did writing help people manage resources in both Egypt and Han China?

3. What did Ur and Han China each use to guide how people were governed?

4. Why were farming methods, written records, and organized government useful to all three societies?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a riverless island society. In four to six sentences, describe your own way it grows food, a way it keeps written records, and a rule or government system. Explain how all three help a large community.

ANSWER KEY

Cities Across Rivers

GRADE 7 · 7.C.5.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each paragraph, underline a farming method, circle a use for writing, and number one government or law detail (1 for Ur, 2 for Egypt, 3 for Han China) to show what the societies share. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did farmers in Ur and Egypt use water in similar ways, and how did that help people who did not farm?	**Both used canals to bring water to fields. The food they grew helped support people with other jobs.**
2	How did writing help people manage resources in both Egypt and Han China?	**Egyptian scribes recorded harvests and taxes. Han scribes recorded taxes and government orders.**
3	What did Ur and Han China each use to guide how people were governed?	**Ur had written rules, including a law collection listing penalties. Han emperors appointed officials to carry out laws.**
4	Why were farming methods, written records, and organized government useful to all three societies?	**Farming methods helped produce food, records helped track resources or government work, and governments used rules and officials to coordinate people.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On my riverless island, families collect rain in covered tanks and use it to water terraced gardens. Storekeepers write food amounts on reusable wooden boards, so every neighborhood can see what is available. Each neighborhood chooses a council member to help set rules for sharing stored water. Judges chosen by the council settle arguments when someone takes more than the agreed amount. Together, the gardens, written counts, and shared rules help many people live on the island without running out of supplies.

Accept other passage-supported comparisons for the short answers. For the island society, look for distinct, plausible details for food production, written records, and government, with an explanation of how each supports a large community.