Building Life in Ur

Trace how new ways of working helped a Mesopotamian city grow.

AWH.C.2.3 "Explain how irrigation, metalsmithing, wage labor, the domestication of animals, and inventions contributed to the growth of Mesopotamian civilizations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the five developments named in the passage, then underline a sentence or clause showing how each one helped a city grow.

A City Needs More Than Fields

1 At dawn near the city of Ur, farmers faced a problem: the rivers did not flood when every field needed water. Irrigation channels carried river water to fields, letting farmers grow more grain on land that would otherwise stay dry. But canals filled with mud and needed regular repair. The domestication of animals also changed farming. Oxen pulled plows through heavy soil, so a family could prepare more ground for planting. Sheep and goats supplied wool and milk. When farms produced food beyond what families ate, more people could live in town instead of farming.

2 Picture a workshop beside Ur's busy streets. Metalsmithing turned copper and bronze into tools, weapons, and other goods. Bronze, made by combining copper and tin, could give tools durable cutting edges, though metal had to be obtained through exchange. Skilled smiths made goods that farmers, builders, and merchants wanted, supporting specialized work and trade. Inventions also helped people move supplies. Wheeled carts drawn by animals carried loads between fields, workshops, and storehouses. Moving heavy goods more efficiently helped a city gather food and building materials from its surrounding area and exchange crafted goods with other communities.

3 Growth brought a new question: who would clean canals and build city walls while others farmed? In some Mesopotamian cities, wage labor helped organize work: hired people received payments, sometimes in barley or other goods, for particular jobs. This was not the only way labor was organized, but it gave workers food and let leaders gather crews for large projects. Writing, another invention, helped officials record supplies and payments. With food arriving from fields, goods leaving workshops, and workers maintaining shared structures, a city could support more residents and jobs. These gains depended on continuing cooperation and careful use of water.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did irrigation and domesticated oxen work together to increase the food available to Ur?

2. How did metalsmithing support jobs beyond farming and help trade?

3. Why could wage labor help a city maintain canals and walls?

4. How did wheeled carts and writing each help Ur handle the goods a growing city needed?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A growing town's main canal clogs just before planting. In six to eight sentences, explain how at least three developments in the passage could work together to restore food production and support town growth, and name one ongoing problem.

ANSWER KEY

Building Life in Ur

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the five developments named in the passage, then underline a sentence or clause showing how each one helped a city grow. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did irrigation and domesticated oxen work together to increase the food available to Ur?	**Irrigation brought water to dry fields, while oxen pulled plows so farmers could prepare more ground. Together, they helped farms produce a food surplus.**
2	How did metalsmithing support jobs beyond farming and help trade?	**Smiths made metal goods that other workers wanted. Making and exchanging those goods supported specialized jobs and trade.**
3	Why could wage labor help a city maintain canals and walls?	**Paying hired workers, sometimes with barley or other goods, helped leaders gather crews for repairs and construction while other people farmed.**
4	How did wheeled carts and writing each help Ur handle the goods a growing city needed?	**Carts moved heavy supplies among fields, workshops, and storehouses. Writing helped officials record supplies and payments.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The town could hire workers and pay them barley to clear mud from the canal. Once water reaches the fields, farmers could plant crops on land that was too dry before. Oxen could pull plows to prepare those fields more quickly. Smiths could make metal tools for difficult repair work, although obtaining metal would cost resources. Officials could use writing to record workers' payments and supplies. With a larger harvest, more people could work in shops instead of farming. The town would still need to clear the canal regularly to keep water flowing.

Accept different combinations of at least three developments if the response explains how they connect to restoring food production and supporting growth. The ongoing problem might be canal upkeep, the cost of supplies, or the need to organize workers.