

Baghdad's Shared Ideas

Trace how cultural identity, place, and learning shaped one major city.

WG.14 "The student will apply history and social science skills to determine cultural patterns and interactions across time and place by identifying and describing characteristics that contribute to cultural identity, cultural groups..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show cultural identity or cultural groups, circle descriptions of Baghdad's cultural landscape, and number each intellectual exchange. Your marks should show how people, places, and ideas connected.

Baghdad: A Meeting Place for Cultures

- ① In the 800s, Baghdad was the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and one of the world's largest cities. Its cultural identity grew from Arabic language and Islamic traditions, yet many groups shaped daily life. Arabs, Persians, Turks, Jews, and Christians lived and worked there. Mosques stood near markets, workshops, homes, gardens, and libraries. Canals from the Tigris River supplied water, while busy roads and river traffic brought travelers and goods. These features formed a cultural landscape, the visible record of how people used and valued a place.
- ② Baghdad's scholars gathered books and ideas at the House of Wisdom, a major center for study and translation. Scholars translated works from Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit into Arabic. These texts included ideas about astronomy, geography, philosophy, and medicine. Building on Indian number symbols and earlier mathematical knowledge, the scholar al-Khwarizmi wrote influential works on calculation and algebra. Physicians compared medical writings from different traditions. Translation did not merely preserve old learning. It allowed scholars to question, organize, and add to knowledge for new audiences.
- ③ Exchange also changed life beyond libraries. Knowledge of papermaking, which had spread westward from China through Central Asia, helped Baghdad produce more books. Traders carried paper, dyes, textiles, and artistic styles along routes linking Asia, Africa, and Europe. Arabic literary culture included stories with Persian and Indian roots, adapted by writers for new listeners. Later, some Arabic scientific and medical works were translated into Latin in places such as Spain. Ideas changed as they moved, because each group selected, translated, and reshaped them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Name two characteristics that contributed to Baghdad's cultural identity.

2 Identify two features of Baghdad's cultural landscape. How did one of them connect people or support daily life?

3 How did translation at the House of Wisdom help create new knowledge instead of only saving old knowledge?

4 Trace the spread of papermaking described in the passage. What effect did this exchange have in Baghdad?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Choose a historical city or region other than Baghdad. Write five sentences that name two identity characteristics, identify two cultural groups, describe two landscape features, and explain one intellectual exchange, including what moved and how it affected people.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that show cultural identity or cultural groups, circle descriptions of Baghdad's cultural landscape, and number each intellectual exchange. Your marks should show how people, places, and ideas connected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name two characteristics that contributed to Baghdad's cultural identity.	Arabic language and Islamic traditions.
2	Identify two features of Baghdad's cultural landscape. How did one of them connect people or support daily life?	Possible features include mosques, markets, workshops, homes, gardens, libraries, canals, roads, and river traffic. Canals supplied water, and roads and river traffic brought travelers and goods.
3	How did translation at the House of Wisdom help create new knowledge instead of only saving old knowledge?	Scholars translated Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit works into Arabic, then questioned, organized, and added to the ideas for new audiences. Physicians also compared medical writings from different traditions.
4	Trace the spread of papermaking described in the passage. What effect did this exchange have in Baghdad?	Papermaking spread westward from China through Central Asia to Baghdad. It helped Baghdad produce more books.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Constantinople's identity reflected Greek language, Orthodox Christianity, and Roman government traditions. Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Italians, and others lived or traded in the city. Its harbor, city walls, churches, markets, and roads showed its role as a protected trading center. Merchants carried silk and other goods between Europe and Asia, sharing artistic styles and technical knowledge. Byzantine scholars copied Greek writings on philosophy, science, and medicine, which later reached scholars in western Europe.

Accept equivalent passage-based details for the short answers. For the open response, accept another accurate historical place if it includes all required elements and explains a plausible intellectual exchange.