

## Early River Valley Civilizations

### Lesson 1

# Civilization

### Key Terms and People

**specialization** development of skills in a specific kind of work

**artisan** skilled worker that makes goods by hand

**institution** long-lasting pattern of organization in a community

**scribe** professional record keeper

**cuneiform** wedge-shaped writing developed in Sumer

**Bronze Age** time when people began using bronze

**barter** trading goods and services without money

**ziggurat** pyramid-shaped monument; part of a temple in Sumer

### Before You Read

In the last lesson, you read about the development of agriculture and a settled way of life.

In this lesson, you will read about factors leading to the rise of civilizations.

### As You Read

Use a chart to summarize characteristics of cities and civilizations.

#### VILLAGES GROW INTO CITIES

**What changed as villages grew into cities?**

Over time, farmers developed new tools—hoes, sickles, and plow sticks. These helped them grow even more food. They decided to plant larger areas of land. The people in some villages began to irrigate the land, bringing water to new areas. People invented the wheel for carts and the sail for boats. These new inventions made it easier to travel between distant villages and to trade.

Life became more complex as the villages began to grow. People were divided into social classes. Some people

had more wealth and power than others. People began to worship gods and goddesses that they felt would protect their crops and make their harvests large.

1. How did life become more complex?

---



---

#### HOW CIVILIZATION DEVELOPS

**What makes a civilization?**

One of the first civilizations arose in Sumer. It was in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers of modern Iraq. A civilization has five features.

**Lesson 1, continued**

First, a civilization has advanced cities that contain many people and serve as centers for trade.

Second, civilizations have specialized workers. **Specialization** is the development of skills needed for one specific kind of work. Skilled workers who make goods by hand are called **artisans**.

Third, civilizations have complex institutions. Government, organized religion, and an economy are examples of complex **institutions**.

A fourth feature of civilizations is record keeping, which is needed to keep track of laws, debts, and payments. It also creates the need for writing. **Scribes** were people who used writing to keep records. **Cuneiform**, which means "wedge shaped," was a form of writing invented in Sumer.

Fifth, civilizations have improved technology that can provide new tools and methods to solve problems.

Sumer had all the features of a civilization. One of the new technologies in Sumer was making a metal called bronze. The term **Bronze Age** refers to the time when people began using bronze to make tools and weapons.

2. Name the five features of a civilization.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**CIVILIZATION EMERGES IN UR**

**What was civilization like in Ur?**

One of the early cities of Sumer was named Ur. The city was surrounded by walls built of mud dried into bricks. About 30,000 people lived in Ur. Social classes included rulers and priests, traders, craft workers, and artists.

Farmers outside the city walls raised the food for them all. Some workers dug ditches to carry water to the fields. Officials of the city government planned all this activity.

Inside the city, metalworkers made bronze points for spears. Potters made clay pots. Traders met people from other areas. They traded the spear points and pots for goods that Ur could not produce. This way of trading goods and services without money is called **barter**. Sometimes their deals were written down by scribes.

Ur's most important building was the temple. Part of the temple was a **ziggurat**, a pyramid-shaped structure. Priests there led the city's religious life.

3. What social classes existed in Ur?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**DAMAGE TO ANCIENT TREASURES**

**How have the treasures changed?**

Many treasures from the past have been damaged by war. In 1991 during the Persian Gulf War, bombs caused craters near the ziggurat at Ur, and it was hit by machine gun fire. Other treasures were either stolen or destroyed.

4. How are ancient treasures destroyed?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

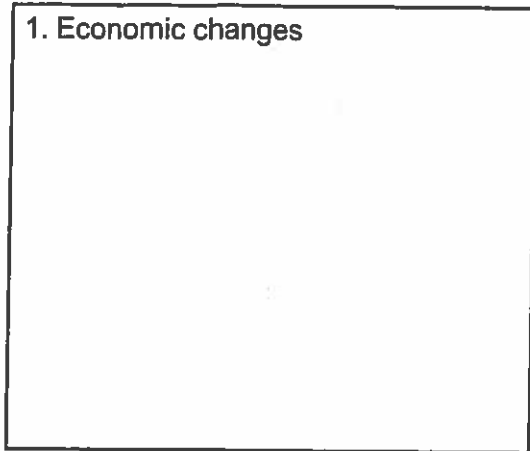
**Lesson 1, *continued***

---

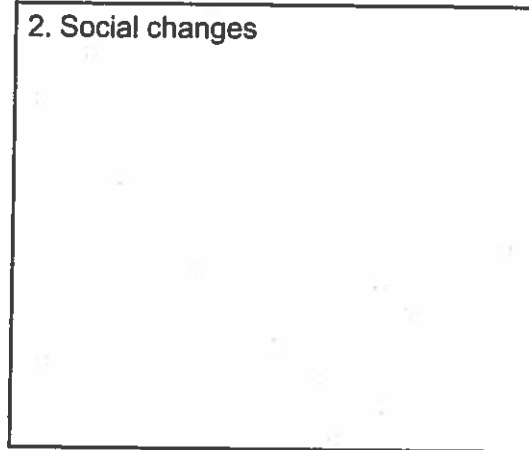
As you read this lesson, fill in the boxes below. List the social and economic changes that led to the development of cities and the rise of civilizations.

**Village and town life begin.**

**1. Economic changes**

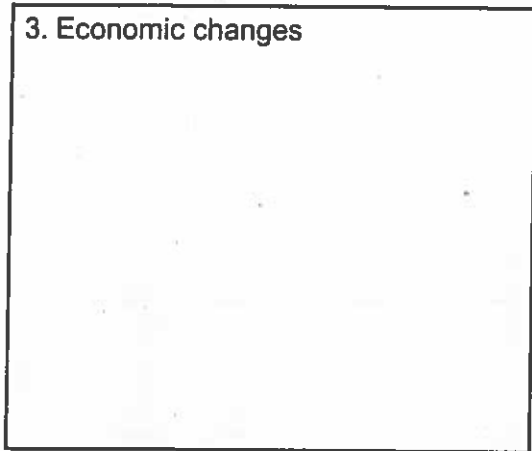


**2. Social changes**

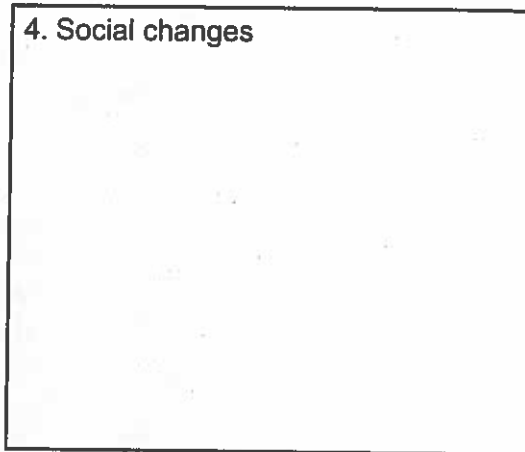


**Cities emerge and grow.**

**3. Economic changes**



**4. Social changes**



**Civilizations arise.**

## Early River Valley Civilizations

### Lesson 2

# City-States in Mesopotamia

## Key Terms and People

**Fertile Crescent** arc of rich farmland in Southwest Asia between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea

**Mesopotamia** the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers

**city-state** political unit much like an independent country

**dynasty** series of rulers from a single family

**cultural diffusion** new ideas spreading from one culture to another

**polytheism** belief in many gods

**empire** peoples, nations, or independent states under control of one ruler

**Hammurabi** Babylonian ruler famous for his code of laws

## Before You Read

In the last lesson, you read about factors leading to the rise of civilizations.

In this lesson, you will learn more about early civilization in a part of Mesopotamia called Sumer.

## As You Read

Use a chart to identify Sumer's environmental problems and solutions.

## GEOGRAPHY OF THE FERTILE CRESCENT

### What problems did the Sumerians face?

There is an arc of rich land in Southwest Asia that is called the **Fertile Crescent**. Two of its rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, flood in the spring. This flooding leaves rich mud, called silt, in the plain between the rivers. Because of this, many thousands of years ago humans began to settle in that plain, known as **Mesopotamia**. It was here that the first civilization began.

About 3300 BC, the Sumerians moved into this region and settled. They faced three problems. First, the floods were not regular, and once they passed, the hot sun quickly baked the land into clay. Second, the small farming villages had no protection against enemies. Third, the area lacked stone, wood, and metal to use for tools.

The Sumerians solved these problems. They dug irrigation ditches from the river to their fields so they could bring water to their crops. They built walls of baked mud around their villages for defense. Because they could grow more

**Lesson 2, continued**

food than they needed, they traded the extra for stone, wood, and metal from other lands.

1. How did the Sumerians solve the problems they faced?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SUMERIANS CREATE CITY-STATES**

**How did the Sumerians govern?**

Several large city-states were at the center of the Sumerian world. These city-states had control over a surrounding area. They could act independently. Slowly, some people rose to power in a number of the city-states. They became rulers, as did their children after them. Rule of an area by the same family is called a **dynasty**.

As population and trade grew, Sumerians came into contact with other peoples. Their own ideas affected others. The Sumerians also got ideas from other cultures. This process of spreading ideas or products is called **cultural diffusion**.

2. Who governed the city-states?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SUMERIAN CULTURE**

**What did the Sumerians believe and accomplish?**

The Sumerians believed in **polytheism**, or many gods. Each god had power over different forces of nature or parts of their lives. Sumerians believed that people were just the servants of the gods. Souls of the dead went to a joyless place under the earth's crust. These views shaped the ideas of other peoples.

Society was divided into social classes. At the top were the priests and kings,

after whom came wealthy merchants. Next were workers in fields and workshops. Slaves made up the lowest level. Women could enter most careers and could own property. But there were some limits on them.

The people of Sumer invented the sail, the wheel, and the plow. They were the first to use bronze. They also developed the first writing system—on clay tablets. They invented arithmetic and geometry, which they used to help build large structures.

3. How was Sumerian society organized?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THE FIRST EMPIRE BUILDERS**

**Who built the world's first empire?**

Centuries of fighting between the city-states made the Sumerians weak. In 2350 BC, the conqueror Sargon defeated Sumer and captured other cities to the north. He built the world's first empire. An empire brings together several peoples, nations, or previously independent states. It puts them under the control of one ruler.

A few hundred years later, a different group of people conquered the Sumerians. These people built a capital at Babylon, establishing the Babylonian Empire. They were led by a king named **Hammurabi**. He is famous for his code of laws. It was a harsh code that punished people for wrongdoing. However, it also made it clear that the government had some responsibility for taking care of its people.

4. Why was Hammurabi's Code important?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 2, continued**

As you read about the Sumerians, fill in the chart below to explain how they solved problems they faced.

The Problems	The Solutions
1. With flooding of the rivers unpredictable, how could farmers water their fields during the dry summer months?	
2. With no natural barriers, how could villagers protect themselves?	
3. With limited natural resources, how could Sumerians get the materials for tools and buildings?	
4. How should the Sumerian city-states be ruled?	
5. What could be done to please the gods and earn their protection in life?	

List examples of Sumerian culture in the boxes below.

Religion	Literature	Architecture	Inventions

## Early River Valley Civilizations

### Lesson 3

# Pyramids on the Nile

## Key Terms and People

**delta** marshy area at the mouth of a river

**Narmer** king of Upper Egypt who united Upper and Lower Egypt

**pharaoh** Egyptian ruler thought of as a god

**theocracy** government in which the ruler is considered to be a divine figure

**pyramid** resting place for Egyptian kings after death

**mummification** process by which a body is preserved after death

**hieroglyphics** Egyptian writing system

**papyrus** plant used to make a paper-like material

## Before You Read

In the last lesson, you read about the city-states that arose in Mesopotamia.

In this lesson, you will learn about early civilization along the Nile.

## As You Read

Use a chart to summarize ancient Egyptian achievements.

### THE GEOGRAPHY OF EGYPT

**What was the key feature of early Egypt's geography?**

Another civilization arose along the banks of the Nile River of East Africa. The Nile flows to the north, toward the Mediterranean Sea. It, too, floods each year. The waters leave rich soil on the riverbanks. There, the people of ancient Egypt grew food and began to build their own culture. They worshiped the Nile as a life-giving god.

For many centuries, the people of Egypt lived in two kingdoms, Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Upper Egypt extended north from the Nile's first area of rapids, or cataracts, to the Nile delta.

The delta is a broad, marshy, triangular area of rich land. Lower Egypt began here and continued north to the Mediterranean, just 100 miles away.

1. How did the Nile create boundaries?

---

---

### EGYPT UNITES INTO A KINGDOM

**Who ruled the kingdom?**

About 3000 BC, the king of Upper Egypt, Narmer, united the two kingdoms. In the years between 2660 and 2180 BC, important characteristics of Egyptian culture emerged. Ruling

**Lesson 3, continued**

over the land was the **pharaoh**. These men and women were not only seen as kings and queens but as gods. A government in which a ruler is seen as a divine figure is a **theocracy**.

Pharaohs believed they would rule the land after their death. So these rulers built themselves magnificent tombs. The tombs were huge **pyramids** made out of massive limestone blocks.

2. Why did pharaohs build pyramids?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**EGYPTIAN CULTURE; LIFE IN EGYPTIAN SOCIETY**

**What were the features of Egyptian culture?**

Egyptians believed in many gods and in an afterlife. One god, they thought, weighed the hearts of each dead person. Hearts judged heavy with sin were eaten by a beast. Good people, with featherweight hearts, would live forever in a beautiful Other World. To prepare for this, Egyptians preserved a dead person's body by **mummification**. This kept the body from decaying.

The pharaoh and his family were at the top of Egyptian society. Below them were people of wealth who owned large amounts of land, the priests, and members of the government and army. Then came the middle class—merchants and people who worked in crafts. At the bottom were the peasants. In later times, the Egyptians had slaves. People could move from one rank of society to another. Those who could read and write held important positions.

The Egyptians, like the Sumerians, developed a way of writing. In their writing system, **hieroglyphics** were pictures that stood for sounds or ideas. The pictures could be put together to make words and sentences. At first they wrote on stone. Later they began to make a kind of paper from the **papyrus** plant. The Egyptians invented a system of written numbers and a calendar. Their calendar had 12 months, each of which had 30 days. They were famous in the ancient world for their ideas in medicine.

3. How was Egyptian society organized?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**INVADERS CONTROL EGYPT**

**What happened after the pharaohs lost power?**

After 2180 BC, the pharaohs lost power. Egypt went through a time of troubles. Then strong rulers once again took control. They ruled for four centuries until a group of Asians called the Hyksos arrived in horse-drawn chariots. The land fell to these invaders in 1640 BC.

4. Who were the Hyksos?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**Lesson 3, *continued***

As you read about ancient Egyptian civilization, fill out the chart below by writing notes to answer the questions.

<b>Government</b>	
1. Why is Narmer a legendary hero in ancient Egyptian history?	
2. How did the role of Egyptian pharaohs differ from the role of Mesopotamian rulers?	
3. Why did the Egyptians build great pyramids for their rulers?	

<b>Culture</b>	
4. How did Egyptian religious beliefs compare with those of the Mesopotamians?	
5. What social classes made up Egyptian society?	
6. What were significant achievements of the ancient Egyptians in science and technology?	
7. How did the Egyptian writing system compare with the Mesopotamian system?	

**Early River Valley Civilizations****Lesson 4****Planned Cities on the Indus****Key Terms and People****subcontinent** landmass that is a distinct part of a continent**monsoon** seasonal wind**Harappan civilization** ancient settlements in the Indus River Valley**Before You Read**

In the last lesson, you read about the development of culture along the Nile.

In this lesson, you will learn about the first civilization in India.

**As You Read**

Use a chart to draw conclusions about Indus valley civilizations.

**THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT****What is a subcontinent?**

South Asia—modern India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—is a **subcontinent**. It is separated from the rest of Asia by tall mountains. Just below the mountains are two large plains that hold the Ganges and Indus rivers. The high mountains gave the people safety from invaders. Because they lived close to the sea, the people could travel over the water to trade with other peoples.

The people along the Indus River faced many of the same challenges that the people in Mesopotamia did. Their river flooded each year and left soil good for farming. But the floods did not occur at the same time each year. Also, the river sometimes changed course. The region's weather caused problems, too. Each winter, strong winds blew dry air across the area. Each spring, the winds

brought heavy rains. These seasonal winds are called **monsoons**.

1. What challenges did the people along the Indus River face?

---



---

**CIVILIZATION EMERGES ON THE INDUS; HARAPPAN CULTURE****What were cities like on the Indus?**

Historians cannot understand the writings of the people who settled in the Indus Valley. So, they have not learned much about these people. They do know that they were farming along the river by about 3200 BC. The culture is called **Harappan civilization** because many discoveries were made near the city of Harappa. They also know that the culture of these people covered an area larger than either Mesopotamia or Egypt.

**Lesson 4, continued**

---

About 2500 BC, these people began building their first cities. In Mesopotamia, cities were a jumble of winding streets.

In the Indus Valley, however, the builders carefully planned their cities. They made a grid of streets. They built an area called a citadel that was easy to defend. All the important buildings were here. They also had systems for carrying water and sewage.

The houses were mostly alike in the cities. Because of this, scholars think that the Indus culture did not have big differences between social classes.

These early people left an important mark on the region. Some religious objects include symbols that became part of later Indian culture. Historians think that the people of the area had extensive trade with people in the region and with the people of Mesopotamia.

2. Name two conclusions that have been drawn about Harappan civilization.

---

---

**INDUS VALLEY CULTURE ENDS**

**How did Indus Valley culture end?**

Around 1750 BC, the cities began to show signs of decline. The Indus Valley civilization collapsed around 1500 BC. Satellite images suggest a shift in the earth's crust that caused earthquakes. Because of the quakes the Indus River may have changed its course. This would stop the good effects of the yearly floods. The people may have overworked the land. This would have left the soil too poor to produce crops.

3. Name two reasons why Indus Valley civilization may have ended.

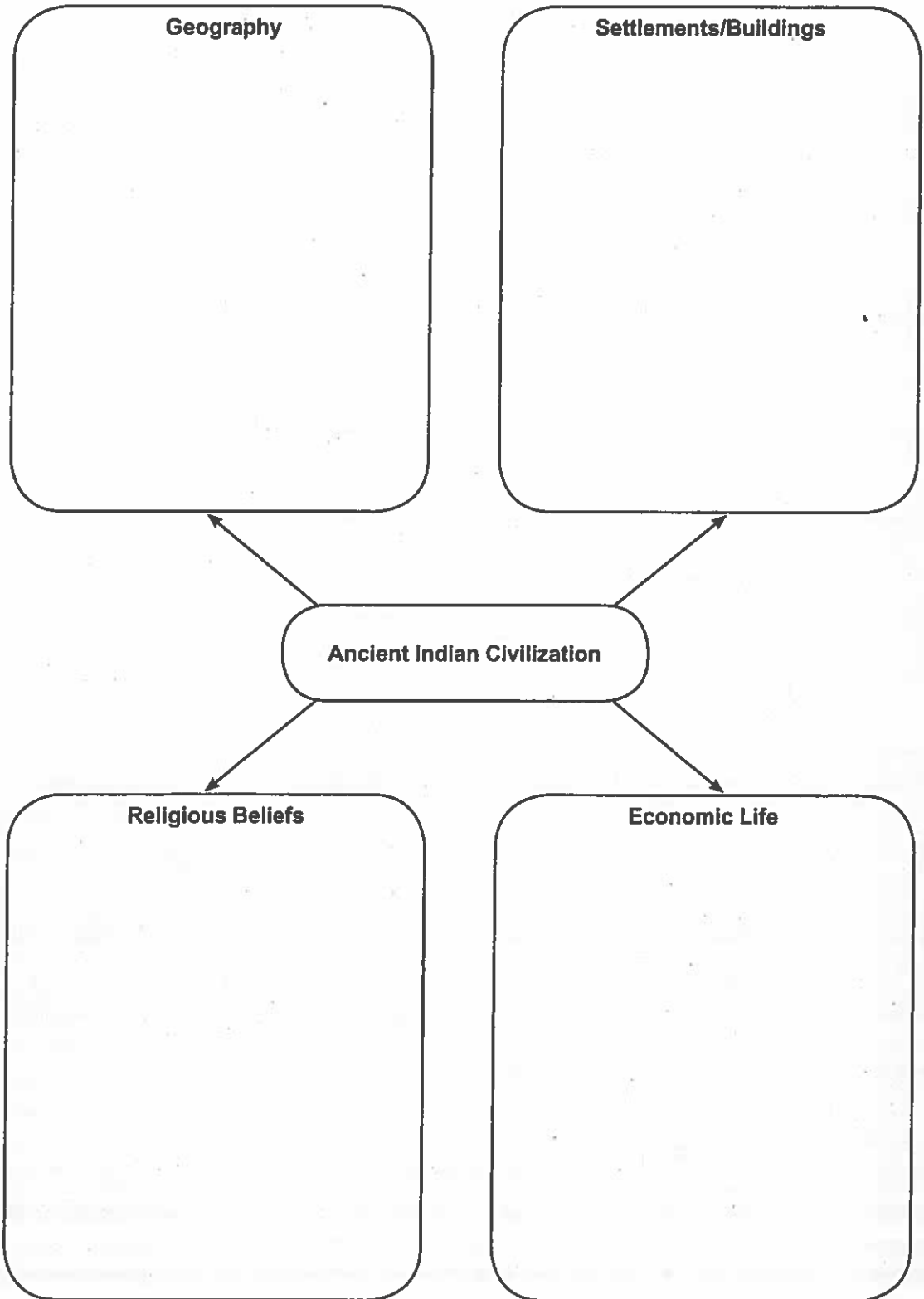
---

---

**Lesson 4, continued**

---

As you read this lesson, list the key characteristics of the first Indian civilization in the web diagram below.



## Early River Valley Civilizations

### Lesson 5

# River Dynasties in China

## Key Terms and People

**loess** fertile soil

**oracle bone** animal bone used by ancient Chinese priests to communicate with the gods

**Mandate of Heaven** divine approval of the ruler

**dynastic cycle** pattern of rise, fall, and replacement of dynasties

**feudalism** political system in which nobles or lords are granted the use of lands that belong to the king

## Before You Read

In the last lesson, you read about Indus Valley culture.

In this lesson, you will learn about the earliest cultures in China.

## As You Read

Use a chart to describe key features in early Chinese dynasties.

### THE GEOGRAPHY OF CHINA

**How did geography affect China's past?**

China's geography caused it to develop apart from other cultures. A great ocean, huge deserts, and high mountains isolate China.

There are two rich rivers within China—the Huang He and the Yangtze. Almost all the good farmland in China lies between these rivers. The Huang He deposited huge amounts of silt when it overflowed. This silt is fertile soil that is called loess.

1. Why did China develop apart from other cultures?

---

---

### CIVILIZATION EMERGES IN SHANG TIMES

**What was the Shang Dynasty?**

A few thousand years ago, some people began to farm along China's rivers. About 2000 BC, the first dynasty of rulers brought government to China.

Around 1500 BC, a new dynasty, the Shang, began to rule. This dynasty left the first written records in China.

Objects found in their palaces and tombs also tell us much about their society. Chinese people built their buildings of wood, not mud-dried brick as the other early cultures did. Huge walls made of earth surrounded these buildings to protect them. The walls were needed because it was a time of constant war.

Lesson 5, *continued*

The king and the nobles who helped him fight these wars were at the top of Shang society. Peasants were at the bottom. They worked hard on the farms, using wooden tools because the Shang believed that bronze was too good to be used for farming.

2. What were three features of Shang culture?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CULTURE**

**What beliefs shaped Shang society?**

Shang society was held together by a strong belief in the importance of the group, and not any single person. The most important part of society was the family. Children grew up learning to respect their parents.

The family played a central role in Chinese religion, too. The Chinese thought that family members who had died could still influence the lives of family members who were alive. The Shang also asked for advice from the gods. They used **oracle bones** to do this. These were animal bones and shells.

In the Chinese system of writing, symbols stood for ideas, not sounds. This allowed the many different groups in China to understand the same writing even though each had a special spoken language. The written language had thousands of symbols, however. Only specially trained people learned to read and write.

3. Name three important values of Shang culture.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**ZHOU AND THE DYNASTIC CYCLE; SANXINGDUI CULTURE**

**What is the Mandate of Heaven?**

About 1027 BC, a new group, the Zhou, took control of China. They adopted Shang culture. They also started an idea of royalty that was new to China. Good rulers, they said, got authority to rule from heaven. This was known as the **Mandate of Heaven**. They claimed the Shang rulers were not just and had lost the favor of the gods. That is why they had to be replaced. From then on, the Chinese believed in divine rule. However, it also meant that disasters such as floods or war pointed to a ruler that had lost the support of the gods and needed to be replaced. Until the early 1900s, the Chinese had one dynasty after another. This pattern of rise, fall, and replacement of dynasties is known as the **dynastic cycle**.

The Zhou gave members of the royal family and other nobles the rights to large areas of land. They established **feudalism**. Feudalism is a political system in which the nobles owe loyalty to the king.

Eventually the Zhou rulers lost all power. The nobles fought each other for control of China in a period called the "time of the warring states." It lasted for many hundred years. The Chinese people suffered during this time.

Another civilization, Sanxingdui, also shaped Chinese culture. Not much is known about the people who lived here.

4. Name two important changes brought about by the Zhou.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 5, *continued***

As you read this lesson, fill out the chart below by describing key features of ancient China under the Shang Dynasty.

<p><b>1. Geographic features</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>2. Environmental challenges</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>3. Settlements</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>4. Social classes</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>5. Role of family</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>6. Religious beliefs</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>7. Writing system</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>8. Technological advances</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>9. Artistry</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>