

WRITING AND CITY LIFE

Multiple Choice Type Questions

1. From which word Cuneiform is derived?
(a) Latin
(b) Greek
(c) Chinese
(d) Mayan
2. Which language replaced the Sumerian language after 2400 BCE?
(a) Mesopotamian language
(b) Akkadian language
(c) Chinese language
(d) Middle Eastern language
3. In the 2000 BCE, the city that flourished as the royal capital of Mesopotamia was
(a) Ur
(b) Mari
(c) Mohenjo-Daro
(d) Kalibangan
4. With which person, the first event of Sumerian trade is associated?
(a) The ancient ruler of Uruk City, Enmerkar
(b) The ancient ruler of Lebanon City, Enmerkar
(c) The ancient ruler of Nile City, Enmerkar
(d) The ancient ruler of Aral City, Enmerkar
5. Inanna was the Goddess of
(a) the Moon
(b) love and War
(c) wind
(d) fire

Answer

1. (a) 2. (b) 3. (b) 4. (a) 5. (B)

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Why Mesopotamia is considered important by Europeans? Give reasons. (VBQ)

Answer: Europeans considered Mesopotamian important on account of the following reasons:

- In Old Testament, there are references about it, which refer to 'Shimar', meaning the Sumer (the land of brick-built cities). It clearly refers to Mesopotamia, because early planned cities existed there.

- European scholars and travelers referred to Mesopotamia as their ancestral land.
- Archaeological discoveries also depict that Europeans had a keen interest in this region.

2. "Rivers play crucial role in the emergence of civilization". Justify this statement in context to Mesopotamia. (HOTS)

Answer: Mesopotamia is situated between the land of two rivers, i.e. Euphrates and Tigris. Both these rivers originated from Armenia mountain in present-day Turkey. They drained a vast mountain region. Although the climate of this area is dry yet agriculture is possible because of irrigation facilities. The favorable agricultural condition encouraged the people to reside in this region. The surplus food production of crops enabled the agriculturist communities to feed those people such as craftsmen, priests, rulers, soldiers, etc. who were not practicing agriculture. The nomadic pastoralist communities provided with other essential needs of daily use to these people. Thus the settlement of all these in this region paved the way for the rise of civilization.

3. Give some facts to show geographical diversities that existed in Iraq.

Answer: Geographical diversity existed in Iraq. Some of these arguments that support it are the following:

- North-east region is lush green region. It is also covered with mountain ranges with clear streams.
- There is plentiful rainfall in the region which is sufficient for growing crops.
- In Northern region there is a vast track of upland, called steppe. In this region, animal herders reside who provides better livelihood than agriculture.
- In the east, River Tigris and its tributaries flows which provides routes of communication into the mountain region of Iran.

4. Write in brief about the importance of southern and north-east regions of Mesopotamia.

Answer: Mesopotamian southern region is desert, but the rivers Euphrates and Tigris support the city life here. These rivers deposit their silt by flooding in the region and make the soil fertile. When the river Euphrates enters the desert, it gets divided into small channels. These river channels provided irrigation facilities in the past. Crops such as wheat, barley, peas or lentils were grown here, though there did not happen sufficient rainfall. In the north-east region, sheep and goats were grazed on steppe by the Mesopotamians. In this region milk, wool and meat was produced in bulk. Fish was also available in plenty. Date-palm provided fruit in summer. Considering these facts we can conclude that these regions were of utmost importance for Mesopotamia's.

5. "The use of seals played significant role in the development of trade in urbanization in Mesopotamia." Discuss.

Answer: A number of seals have been excavated from Mesopotamia. These were made of stone and were cylindrical in shape. These seals were fitted with a stick and then rolled over wet clay so that a continuous picture got engraved over it. This work was done by skilled craftsmen. The name of the owner, his God, his official, ranks, etc. were also engraved on it. Seals were used by merchants to send their goods from one place to another. Goods were first packed and a seal was put at the head of the pack to ensure its authenticity. In case seals were found tampered with, it meant the pack had been pilfered on the way otherwise it was safe and secure. Undoubtedly, we can say that the use of seals played a significant role in the growth of urbanization.

LONG ANSWER QUESTION

1. Narrate the important characteristics of Mesopotamia civilization and explain how archaeologists could explain so many things about the cities, the culture, society, and family traits of that period.

Answer: The important characteristics of Mesopotamia's Civilization can be briefed as under

1. First writing style discovered by archaeologists pertains to the period 3200 BCE. It contains pictures like signs and numbers.
2. It is the first city civilization in the world. It is that of 600 years earlier than the Indus Valley civilization.
3. The first known language here was Sumerian gradually replaced by Akkadian around 2400 BCE.
4. It was the first civilization where the Cuneiform script was used in writing.
5. It was the civilization of pastoral nomads i.e. Akkadians, Amorites, Assyrians, and Aramaeans.
6. The Warka Head i.e. a female head statute exhibits that sculpture had progressed even before 3000 BCE in this civilization. It is a world-famous piece of sculpture admired for its delicate modeling of the woman's mouth, chin, and cheeks. It was modeled in a hard stone from Turkey. The sculptor has used lapis lazuli, shell, and bitumen decently in order to figurines eyes and eyebrows.
7. This was the civilization where the first-ever library established by Assurbanipal, an Assyrian king during 668 – 627 BCE. It contained several hundred clay tablets on history, epics, omen- literature, astrology, hymns, and poems. Again, it was the first civilization in which scribes were assigned with the work of writing and patronized by the rulers. They valued the writing system very first.
8. Architecture in its most progressed state, we only see, very first in this civilization. The palace of king Zimrilim at Mari is worth seeing. The plan of the palace exhibits how skillfully, the building has been constructed. The entrance gate, audience hall, outer court, inner court, kitchen, courtyard, scribes office, lavatory, and bath are the features of this splendid building. As described in the theme, these all rooms and halls were beautifully paved, and painting on the walls and ceilings is worth seeing. There were 260 rooms and a covered area of 2.4 hectares.
9. The seals here were of splendid shape and size. These were cylindrically fitted with a stick so that they could be rolled on the objects meant for sealing. Cuneiform writing and pictures of various animals, we can see on them. These seals were inscribed on stones; of special kinds perhaps, imported from Iran.
10. It was the first civilization in which the war leaders began to contribute to temple construction. He would send men out to fetch five stones and metals for the benefit of the god and community and organize the distribution of temple wealth in an efficient way by accounting for things that came in and went out. They began to build and rebuild temples at selected spots in their villages. Moon god of Ur or Ivanna (the goddess of love and war) were their main gods.

About cities, the culture, society and family traits-

(a) Cities- Cities began to develop from 5000 BCE in Southern Mesopotamia. These were developed around temples, as a center of trade, and imperial cities. These people first began to build temples. The earliest known temple was a small shrine made of unbaked bricks. Actually, temples were the center of all activities like oil processing, grain grinding, spinning, and weaving of woolen clothes. Employer of merchants and keeper of written records of distributions and allotments of grains all settled near temples. Thus, activities gradually developed in the premises of temples, and these became the main urban institutions. Mari was a trading town that was made capital by king Zimrilim during 1810 – 1760 BCE. The subjects were the pastoral people here as agriculture and cattle rearing were the main occupations. Another town was Ur where a dense settlement with unplanned construction, the archaeologists have found.

(b) Societies- As we know, geographical conditions determine the eating habits, dress, houses, or shelters of the people living in a particular land. Mesopotamia civilization developed in a place with grasslands, deserts, mountains, and in the proximity of rivers: Euphrates and Tigris. Hence, nomadic and cattle rearing people used to live here. These included the Akkadians, Amorites, Assyrians, and Aramaeans. For an instance, the kings of Mari were Amorites whose dress differed from that of the original inhabitants. The society there used to live in unplanned colonies except where a royal palace has existed.

(c) Family traits- There were nuclear family systems openly adopted although a married son and his family often resided with his parents. The father was the head of the family. As per written documents in the form of clay tablets discovered by Archaeologists, an arranged marriage system was in vogue there. A declaration was made about the willingness to marry, the bride's parents giving their consent to the marriage. Then a gift was given by the groom's people to the bride's people. The Dowry system was also in vogue as the bride was given her share of the inheritance by the father at the time of marriage.

2. What do you know about Uruk?

Answer: Situated on the bank of the river Euphrates, about 2500 kilometers south-east of modern capital city of Baghdad, Uruk is an ancient Mesopotamian city. It came into existence around 3000 BCE, and was reckoned to be the most extensive town in the contemporary world. Uruk spread over an area of 250 hectares. It was twice in size when compared to Indus valley civilization. The city expanded around 2800 BCE. This area increased to about 400 hectares. Nearly 50,000 to 80,000 people resided here at that time.

Sumerian king Ermerkar was the founder of this town. He also constructed here the temple of a well-known goddess Inanna. Another famous ruler of this town was Gilgamesh. He declared Uruk as the capital city of his empire. To safeguard ground from any invasion he constructed a massive town around it. Here in Uruk the war prisoner had to do compulsory labour either for the ruler or for construction of temple. They were paid in grains in return. The common people were engaged in the extraction of stones, making mud-bricks, etc. as per the order of their ruler.

Uruk had also made unprecedented progress in the field of technology. The invention of potter's wheel led to a revolutionary change in the field of technology and also helped in utensil making on a large scale.

3. Describe the main features of the city of Babylon.

Answer: The city of Babylon had played an outstanding role in the ancient history of Mesopotamia. It was Akkad ruler, Sargon, who ruled from 2370 to 2315 BCE. Being situated on the north-west bank of river

Tigris it made tremendous progress under Humurabiera. Babylon witnessed the emergence of glorious era of its history under Keldian ruler Nabopolassor. At that time, it covered an area of more than 850 hectares. Some magnificent features of Babylon were as follows:

- A triple wall was constructed all-around the city to safeguard it from any foreign threat.
- A massive Ziggurat was the main center of attraction in Babylon.
- It was also a famous commercial center.
- The city had also made tremendous progress in the field of language, literature, science, medicine, etc.

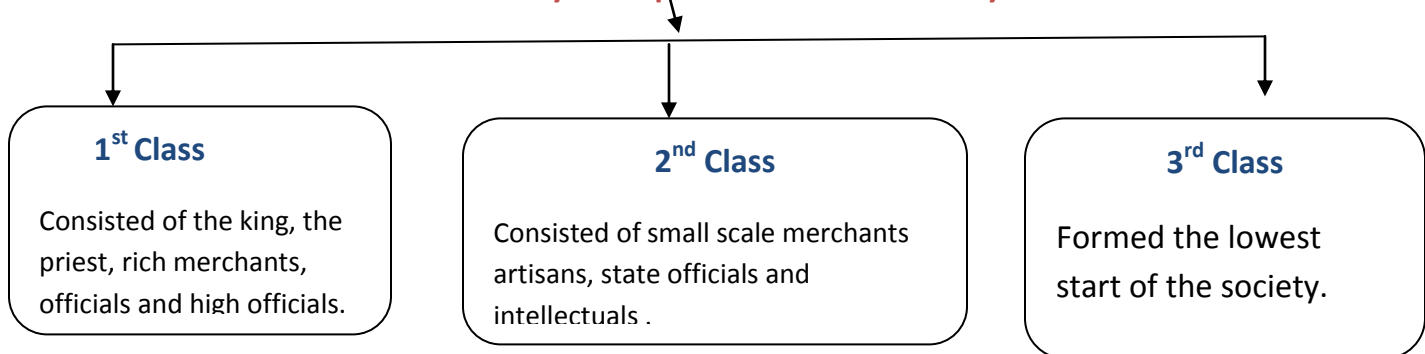
4. .Describe the nature of early urban society under Mesopotamia.

Or

“There was a great disparity among the different sections of the Mesopotamian society”?

Answer: The early urban society was divided into three classes. The first class or group of the people coming from elites and consisted of the king (Monarch), the priest, the officials, rich merchants and businessmen, high military officials, etc. They led a luxurious life and lived in magnificent buildings and palaces. They wore expensive clothes and used to eat sumptuous foods. The people of this class were served by several men and women slaves. The people belonging to second class consisted of the people such as small scale merchants, artisans, state officials, intellectuals, etc. Like upper or 1st class they also led a life of luxury. The third estate or class people constituted the lowest strata of the society. Their life was very miserable. The dead bodies of the upper class people were buried along with precious items such as gold vessels, oyster shell, lapis lazuli, etc. On the other hand, the dead bodies of common people were buried along with ordinary pots, etc. It clearly indicates that there was great disparity among the different sections of society.

Early Mesopotamian Urban Society



5. Why were there often clashes between the animal herders and farmers of Mari?

Answer: There were a number of factors responsible for their conflicts. Some of them are given below:

- The shepherds of Mari used to take their herds through the standing crops on their way when going out in search of water. It caused immense damage to the crops of the farmer.
- The shepherds (animal herders) used to invade the inhabitants of the villages by farming communities and indulged into loot and plunder.
- Sometimes the farmers used to their (animal herder's) way, which hampered their access to sources of water. It also led to clashes between them.
- Some groups of the herders used to serve as agricultural laborers or helpers in assisting in harvest. With the passage of time their income increased and they became prosperous. Then they began to live a settled life, which was not acceptable to farmers. It also led to the emergence of struggle or clashes between them.

