



Reading 428

For questions 1-7, read the text about the origins of civilization and choose the best answer (A, B, C or D).

The Evolution of Civilizations

Between 4000 and 3000 B.C., significant technical developments began to transform the Neolithic towns. The invention of writing enabled records to be kept, and the use of metals marked a new level of human control over the environment and its resources. Already before 4000 B.C., craftspeople had discovered that metal-bearing rocks could be heated to liquefy metals, which could then be cast in molds to produce tools and weapons that were more useful than stone instruments. Although copper was the first metal to be utilized in producing tools, after 4000 B.C., craftspeople in western Asia discovered that a combination of copper and tin produced bronze, a much harder and more durable metal than copper. Its widespread use has led historians to speak of a Bronze Age from around 3000 to 1200 B.C., when bronze was increasingly replaced by iron.

At first, Neolithic settlements were hardly more than villages. But as their inhabitants mastered the art of farming, they gradually began to give birth to more complex human societies. As wealth increased, such societies began to develop armies and to build walled cities. By the beginning of the Bronze Age, the concentration of larger numbers of people in the river valleys of Mesopotamia and Egypt was leading to a whole new pattern for human life.

As we have seen, early human beings formed small groups that developed a simple culture that enabled them to survive. As human societies grew and developed greater complexity, a new form of human existence - called civilization - came into being. A civilization is a complex culture in which large numbers of human beings share a number of common elements. **Historians have identified a number of basic characteristics of civilizations, most of which are evident in the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations.** These include (1) an urban revolution: cities became the focal points for political, economic, social, cultural, and religious development; (2) a distinct religious structure: the gods were deemed crucial to the community's success, and professional priestly classes, as stewards of the gods' property, regulated relations with the gods; (3) new political and military structures: an organized government bureaucracy arose to meet the administrative demands of the growing population while armies were organized to gain land and power; (4) a new social structure based on economic power: while kings and an upper class of priests, political leaders, and warriors dominated, there also existed a large group of free people (farmers, artisans, craftspeople) and at the very bottom, socially, a class of slaves; (5) the development of writing: kings, priests, merchants, and artisans used writing to keep records; and (6) new forms of significant artistic and intellectual activity, such as monumental architectural structures, usually religious, occupied a prominent place in urban environments.

Why early civilizations developed remains difficult to explain. Since civilizations developed independently in India, China, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, can general causes be identified that would explain why all of these civilizations emerged? A number of possible explanations of the beginning of civilization have been suggested. A theory of challenge and response maintains that challenges forced human beings to make

efforts that resulted in the rise of civilization. Some scholars have adhered to a material explanation. Material forces, such as the growth of food surpluses, made possible the specialization of labor and development of large communities with bureaucratic organization. But the area of the Fertile Crescent, in which Mesopotamian civilization emerged, was not naturally conducive to agriculture. Abundant food could only be produced with a massive human effort to carefully manage the water, an effort that created the need for organization and bureaucratic control and led to civilized cities. Some historians have argued that nonmaterial forces, primarily religious, provided the sense of unity and purpose that made such organized activities possible. Finally, some scholars doubt that we are capable of ever discovering the actual causes of early civilization.

1. According to paragraph 2, what happens as societies become more prosperous?

- A. More goods are produced.
- B. Walled cities are built.
- C. Laws are instituted.
- D. The size of families is increased.

2. Why does the author mention Neolithic towns?

- A. To give an example of a civilization
- B. To explain the invention of writing systems
- C. To argue that they should be classified as villages
- D. To contrast them with the civilizations that evolved

3. According to paragraph 3, how was the class system structured?

- A. There was an upper class and a lower class.
- B. There were slaves, free people, and a ruling class.
- C. There was a king, an army, and slaves.
- D. There were intellectuals and uneducated farmers and workers.

4. Which of the sentences below best expresses the information in the highlighted statement in the text? The other choices change the meaning or leave out important information.

- A. Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations exhibit the majority of the characteristics identified by historians.
- B. The characteristics that historians have identified are not found in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures.
- C. Civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt were identified by historians who were studying the characteristics of early cultures.

D. The identification of most historical civilizations includes either Egypt or Mesopotamia on the list.

5. According to paragraph 4, how can the independent development of civilization in different geographic regions be explained?

- A. Scholars agree that food surpluses encouraged populations to be concentrated in certain areas.
- B. There are several theories that explain the rise of civilization in the ancient world.
- C. The model of civilization was probably carried from one region to another along trade routes.
- D. Historians attribute the emergence of early cities at about the same time as a coincidence.

6. All of the following are cited as reasons why civilizations developed EXCEPT

- A. Religious practices unified the population.
- B. The management of water required organization.
- C. A major climate change made living in groups necessary.
- D. Extra food resulted in the expansion of population centers

7. Choose the set of three characteristics from I -VI which BEST complete a summary of the whole text. The set of choices must express the most important ideas about the qualities that define a civilization according to the text. The other three do not belong in the summary because they either express the characteristics that are not in the text or they are minor points that are not as important as the three major points.

- A. I, IV, V
- B. II, V, VI
- C. I, III, VI
- D. III, IV, V

Characteristics:

- I. Free citizens who work in professions for pay
- II. Bureaucracies for the government and armies
- III. Libraries to house art and written records
- IV. A strategic location near rivers or the sea
- V. Organized religion, writing, and art
- VI. A densely populated group with a class structure

Key

1. B
2. D
3. B
4. A
5. B
6. C
7. B