

Was Ancient Sumer a Civilization?

Overview

In this lesson, students first read about characteristics of civilization in a **Social Studies Skill Builder**. They use their new knowledge to analyze artifacts from ancient Sumer to determine whether ancient Sumer was a civilization. Then, in a Processing assignment, they find contemporary artifacts to use as evidence of civilization today.

Objectives

Students will

- identify characteristics of civilization.
- analyze artifacts from ancient Sumer and explain how they are examples of the various characteristics of civilization.
- identify modern-day artifacts that are examples of characteristics of civilization.

Materials

- *History Alive! The Ancient World*
- Interactive Student Notebooks
- Transparencies 5A and 5B
- Information Master 5A (several copies on card stock)
- Information Master 5B (1 transparency)
- Placards 5A–5H (2 sets)
- CD Track 6
- transparent tape



Preview

Have students turn to Preview 5 in their Interactive Student Notebooks. Review the directions with them, and answer any questions they have. After they have completed their diagrams describing characteristics of a “highly civilized” society, have them share their ideas with a partner, or have several volunteers briefly share their work with the class. Explain to students that in the following activity, they will investigate whether ancient Sumer had the characteristics of civilization.



Graphic Organizer

1 Have students read Section 5.1 of *History Alive! The Ancient World*. Have them identify what they will learn about in this chapter. Make sure they understand the meanings of the boldfaced key terms, which are defined in the Glossary. (**Note:** You may want to have students use the Prereading Handout on page xvii of this Lesson Guide to conduct a prereading of the chapter.)

2 **Introduce the graphic organizer.** Have students examine the graphic organizer on page 41. Ask, *What kind of diagram is this? What is the main topic of this spoke diagram? What characteristics of civilization are shown on this spoke diagram?*



Reading for Understanding

Have students read Section 5.2 in their books. When they are finished, ask, *What characteristics of civilization will we learn about in this chapter? What everyday objects might be examples of these characteristics? What kinds of things might ancient Sumerians have left behind that could be examples of these characteristics?*



Social Studies Skill Builder

- 1** **Prepare your classroom for the activity.** Follow these steps:
- Post the two sets of *Placards 5A–5G: Artifacts from Ancient Sumer* on the walls along opposite sides of the room.
 - Post the two copies of *Placard 5H: Artifact from Ancient Sumer* together. Place the CD player near them, and cue the CD to Track 6, “Essence Arabe.”
 - Create several dice for the activity using *Information Master 5A: Die Template*. Place the dice in a central location.

2 **Put student into mixed-ability pairs.** You may want to create a class seating chart on a transparency to show students who their partners are and where to sit.

3 Explain the objective of the activity. Tell students that in this activity they will learn about characteristics of civilization. They will determine whether ancient Sumer had each characteristic by analyzing and drawing sound conclusions from artifacts that archeologists have unearthed.

4 Explain the activity. Have students open their Interactive Student Notebooks to Reading Notes 5. Project a transparency of *Information Master 5B: Steps for Analyzing Artifacts* and review the steps for completing the activity. Answer any questions students have. (**Note:** You may want to review the definition of *primary* and *secondary sources* by having students identify which type of source the artifacts represent, and which type of source the information in their text represents. You might also briefly discuss the credibility of these sources in learning about ancient Sumer.)

5 Practice the steps for analyzing an ancient Sumerian artifact as a class. Ask students to read Section 5.3, which is about ensuring a stable food supply, and have pairs complete the steps on Information Master 5B. Encourage them to find *as many artifacts as possible* that are examples of this characteristic of civilization. Then have volunteers share their ideas from their Reading Notes with the class.

6 Conduct the Social Studies Skill Builder. Project Information Master 5B during the activity as reference. Have pairs come to you to have their work checked for the first two sections of the Reading Notes they complete. If they are following directions accurately, consider circulating around the room to spot-check work rather than checking each pair's work for every section of the Reading Notes. Tell students to play CD Track 6 when they inspect Placard 5H.

7 Conduct a wrap-up activity. This wrap-up activity will allow students to share their ideas and emphasize that a single artifact can provide evidence for more than one characteristic of civilization. After most pairs have learned about most of the characteristics of civilization, follow these steps for the wrap-up activity "Last One Standing":

- Have each pair determine who will be their first "stander."
- Select one of the artifact placards at random and show it to the class.
- Have pairs check their Reading Notes to see if they used this artifact as evidence of *one or more* of the characteristics of civilization. If so, their stander should stand up.
- Ask a couple of standers to share their explanation of how this artifact is evidence for *one* characteristic of civilization.
- Next, ask the standers who used this artifact as evidence for *two or more* characteristics to remain standing while the others sit down. Ask a couple of them to share how this artifact is evidence for a different characteristic of civilization.

- Continue this process until one student is the “last one standing.”
- Select a new placard and repeat the activity. (**Note:** It is sufficient to do this for only a few of the eight placards.)



Processing

Review the instructions for completing Processing 5 in the Interactive Student Notebook. Answer any questions students have. When students have finished their spoke diagrams, have them share some of their modern examples of characteristics of civilization in a class discussion.



Assessment

Masters for assessment appear on the next three pages. Project *Transparency 5A: The Standard of Ur* and *Transparency 5B: Overlay for Assessment 5* for students to view while they complete Item 10.

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. B
5. C
6. D
7. A
8. B
9. *inner circle*: ziggurat, government officials, priests, slaves (belonging to upper classes); *middle circle*: craftspeople, merchants; *outer circle*: farmers, farms, irrigation ditches
10. The bulleted points can provide a rubric for this item.



Online Resources

For more information on Unit 1: Early Humans and the Rise of Civilization, refer students to Online Resources for *History Alive! The Ancient World* at www.historyalive.com/historyalive, where they will find the following resources and assignments:

- excerpts from primary sources and literature
- a biography of an individual important to the study of early civilization
- links to related Web sites for more in-depth exploration
- an Internet research project
- enrichment essays



Options for Students with Special Needs

See page 342 for tips on adapting this lesson to meet the needs of

- English language learners.
- learners reading and writing below grade level.
- learners with special education needs.
- advanced learners.

Fill in the bubble beside the best answer to each question.

1. Ancient Sumerians invented irrigation systems and plows. What did these two inventions help provide?
 - a system of government
 - a partner with whom to trade
 - a steady supply of food
 - an honor for the gods
2. What evidence shows that Sumerian society developed after the Stone Age?
 - copper blades
 - painted pottery
 - wooden plows
 - mud houses
3. What ancient Sumerian most likely spoke the words below?

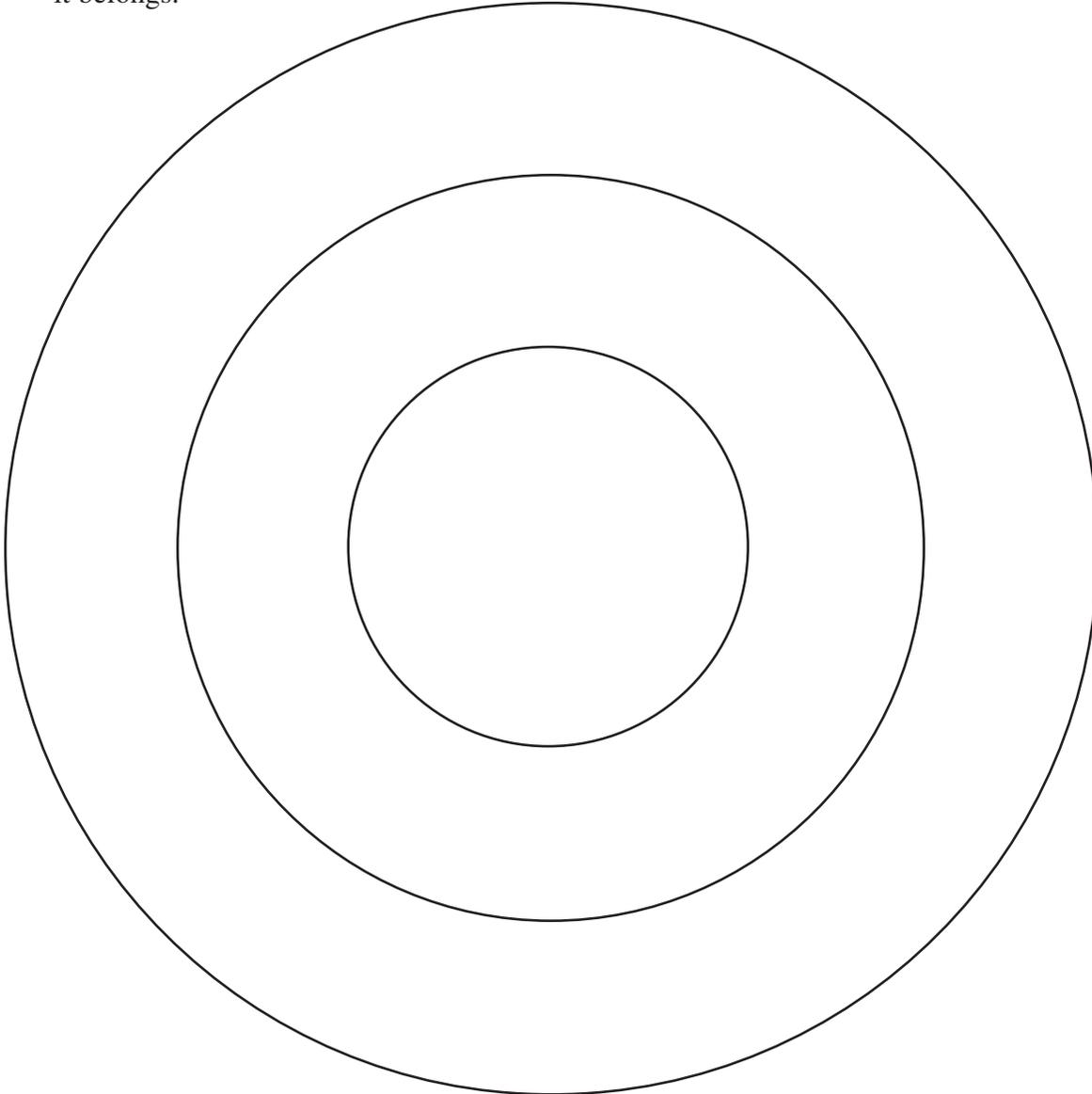
“I live in a two-story house near the center of the city. I like to throw parties where my guests eat from gold plates and drink from gold cups.”

 - a farmer
 - a government official
 - a craftsperson
 - a merchant
4. Which statement shows how Sumerian religion and government were connected?
 - Sumerians believed that merchants sold goods for the king.
 - Sumerians believed that the king got power from the gods.
 - Sumerians recorded their prayers on clay tablets.
 - Sumerians recorded the movements of the planets.
5. The Sumerians invented something that made it possible for their armies to use chariots. What was it?
 - harnesses
 - swords
 - wheels
 - horseshoes
6. What evidence shows that Sumerians were not prehistoric?
 - ziggurats
 - statues
 - irrigation ditches
 - written laws
7. Whose duty was it to do these jobs: build temples, lead the army, and enforce laws?
 - the king’s
 - the priests’
 - the scribes’
 - the governors’
8. The artifact pictured below is evidence of what part of Sumerian civilization?
 - religion
 - government
 - the arts
 - technology



Use your knowledge of social studies to complete the item below.

9. The circles below represent a Sumerian city. The inner circle is the center of the city. The two outer circles show more distant parts of the city. Put each item from the Word Bank on the part of the city where it belongs.



Word Bank		
craftspeople	government officials	priests
farmers	irrigation ditches	slaves
farms	merchants	ziggurat

Follow the directions to complete the item below.

10. The Standard of Ur is the most famous artifact ever recovered from ancient Sumer. Carefully examine the Standard of Ur on the transparency. Notice that some parts of it have been circled and numbered.

- Select three numbered parts that you think represent different characteristics of civilization.
- In each sentence below, identify one of the numbered parts you selected and complete the sentence.

Part _____ of the Standard of Ur represents _____
(characteristic of civilization)

because _____

_____.

Part _____ of the Standard of Ur represents _____
(characteristic of civilization)

because _____

_____.

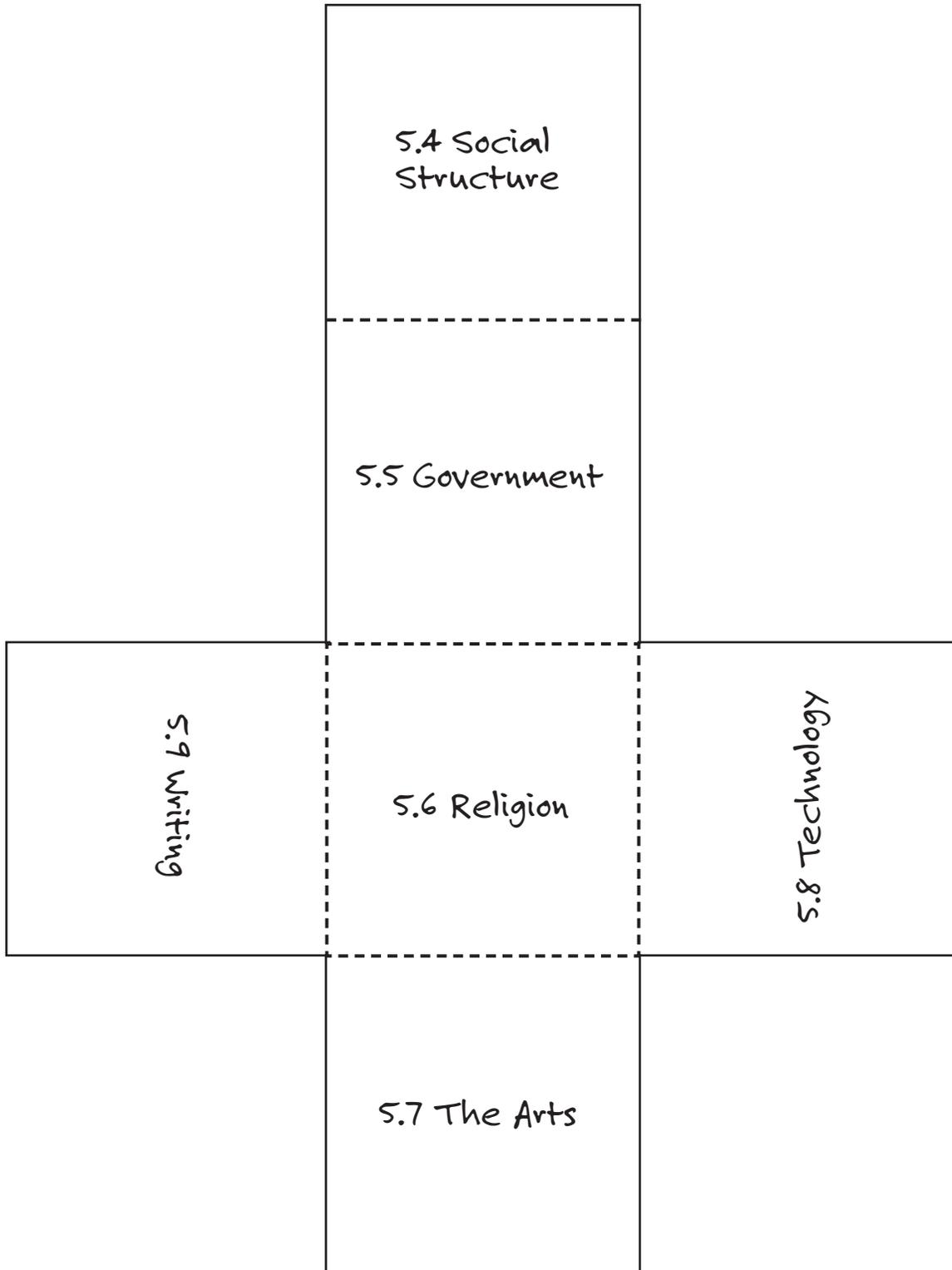
Part _____ of the Standard of Ur represents _____
(characteristic of civilization)

because _____

_____.

Die Template

To create a die, copy this page onto card stock. Cut the template along the solid lines, fold it along the dashed lines, and tape it together to create a cube.



Follow these steps to analyze the artifacts from ancient Sumer:

1. Roll one of the dice to determine which characteristic of civilization you will read about. If you have already read this section, roll again.
2. Read the corresponding section in Chapter 5 of *History Alive! The Ancient World*.
3. Carefully examine the artifacts posted around the room and read the accompanying archeologist's notes. Find *as many artifacts as possible* that are examples of the characteristic of civilization you just read about.
4. Complete the corresponding section of your Reading Notes. *For each artifact you choose*, remember to make a simple sketch and to complete the sentence about how it relates to that characteristic of civilization.
5. Bring your Reading Notes to your teacher to be checked. Then start over at Step 1.



GUIDE TO READING NOTES 5

After reading one section of Chapter 5 in *History Alive! The Ancient World* and analyzing all the artifacts from ancient Sumer, follow these steps:

1. Find the oval in the diagrams on this and the following three pages that corresponds to the section you read.
2. In the space around that oval, make a simple drawing of *each artifact* you analyzed that you think is an example of that characteristic of civilization.
3. Next to each drawing, complete this sentence: (*Name of artifact*) *relates to this characteristic of civilization because...*
4. Complete the spoke diagram by connecting each drawing to the oval with a line.

Possible answers:



The clay tablet relates to this characteristic of civilization because it tells that the Sumerians raised barley.

The stone seal showing plowing relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows Sumerians preparing fields.



5.4 Social Structure

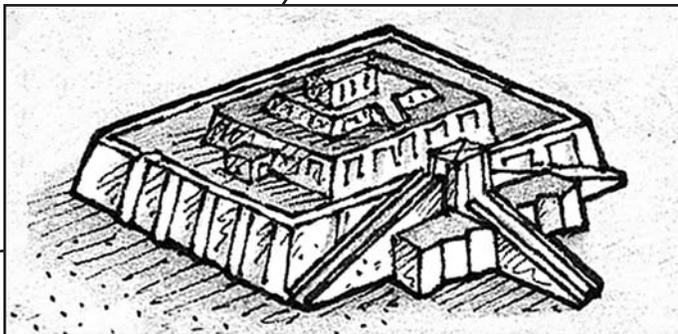
The clay tablet relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates a class of scribes and workers.

The clay seal of the king appointing a governor relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows a government class.

The statue of a chariot relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows a military class.

The gold cup relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates a craftsperson and an upper class.

The lyre relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates a craftsperson and an upper class that is entertained by music.



Characteristics of Civilization

5.5 Government

The clay tablet relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that government officials distributed grain.

The clay seal relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates there were governors and a king.

The copper statue of a chariot relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows there was an army.

The statue of a king carrying a basket relates to this characteristic of civilization because it illustrates there was a king.

The lyre relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates there was a queen.



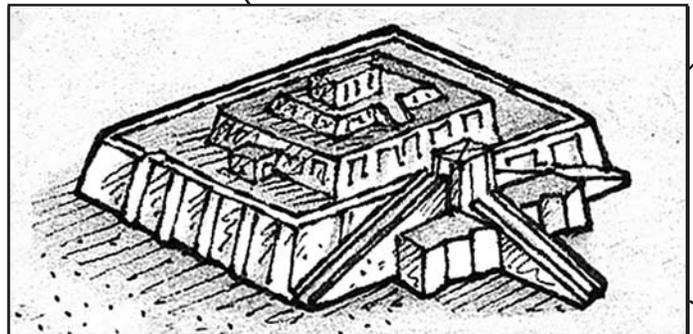
Possible answers:

5.6 Religion

The statue of a married couple relates to this characteristic of civilization because it was found in a shrine and might have been a gift to the gods.

The statue of a king carrying a basket relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates that one of the king's duties was to build temples.

The stone seal relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows two gods.



Characteristics of Civilization

5.7 The Arts

The statue of a married couple relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows there were sculptors.

The gold cup relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows there were skilled metalworkers.

The statue of a king carrying a basket relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows they had metalworkers and architects for the temples.

The lyre relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows Sumerians had music.



5.8 Technology

The copper statue of a chariot relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows the Sumerians had developed the wheel.

5.9 Writing

The clay tablet relates to this characteristic of civilization because it has writing on it.

The stone seal relates to this characteristic of civilization because it has writing on it.

The statue of a king carrying a basket relates to this characteristic of civilization because it has writing on it.

The clay seal relates to this characteristic of civilization because it has writing on it.