

Comparing ancient civilisations

READING

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_2063R_EN

LANGUAGE
English



lingoda

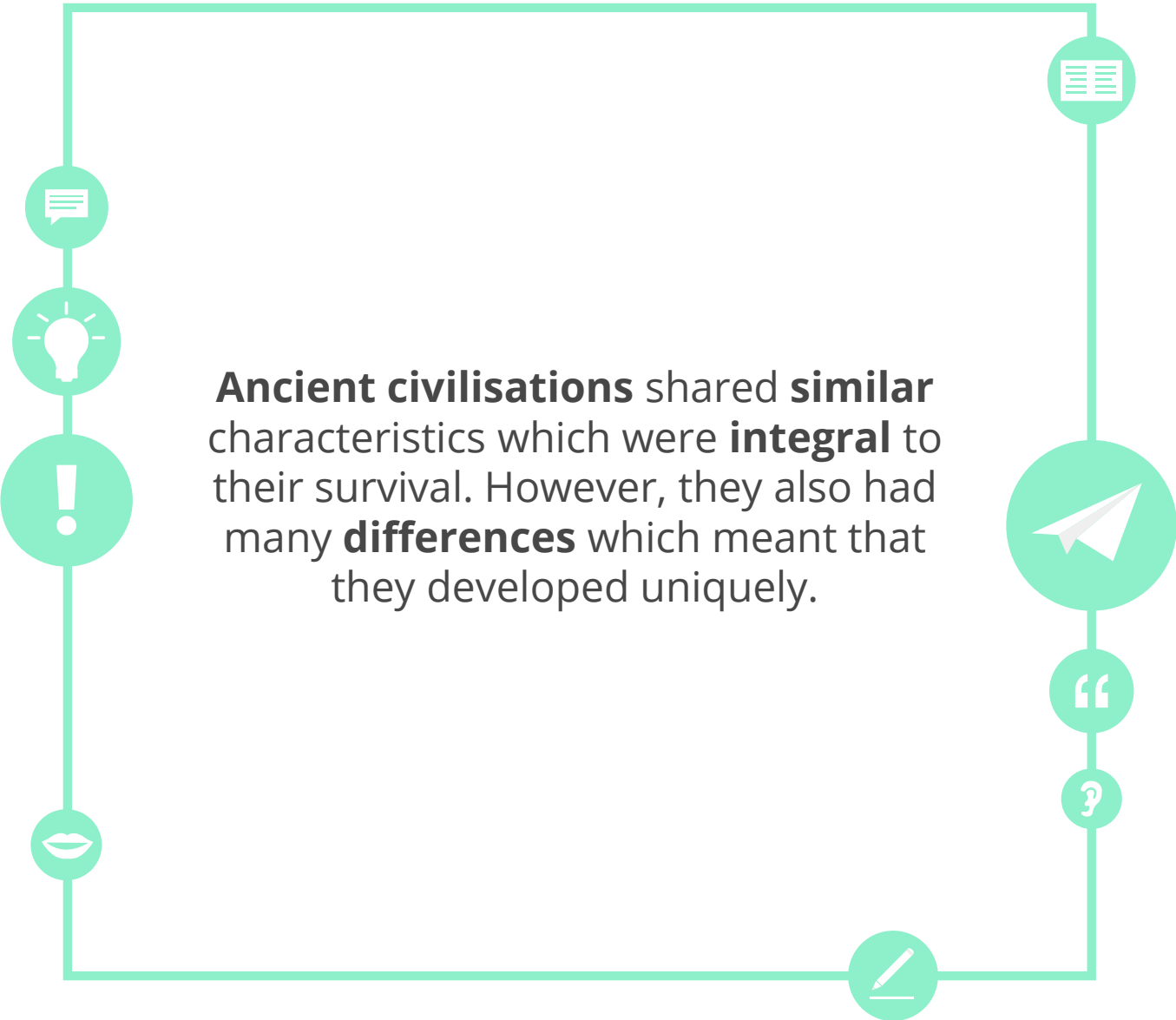




Goals

- Can read and understand a complex text about ancient civilisations.
- Can make in-depth comparisons between different ancient civilisations.





Ancient civilisations shared **similar** characteristics which were **integral** to their survival. However, they also had many **differences** which meant that they developed uniquely.



Ancient civilisations

What ancient civilisations have you heard about? Did you learn about any of them at school?



Language for comparison: which terms do you recognise?



On the one hand, they **have much in common**.

On the other hand, they **differ** greatly.



He's much **happier in contrast to** her.

This one is beautiful, **as opposed to** that one which isn't.





Language for comparison: which terms do you recognise?



I can see the **similarities**.

The **differences** are **far greater**.



This baby is **much younger**.

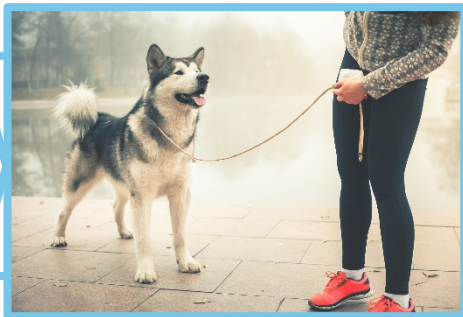
There's **little difference** between them.





Comparing and contrasting

Practise comparing and contrasting looking at these pictures.



a husky



a cat



the ocean



the forest



Comparing ancient civilisations



The great ancient civilisations had many things in common, but also some key differences. We are going to look at the civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and the Indus Valley for examples of what they had in common and how they differed.



Comparing ancient civilisations



Firstly, one of the most important things the ancient civilisations had in common was that they were built around rivers. From the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, to the Indus and Ganges in India, rivers were **integral to** the survival of these civilisations. These societies relied on rivers for drinking water, for cooking, for the irrigation of crops, and as a means of transportation, which **facilitated** trade. In Egypt, the predictable flooding of the Nile River provided **irrigation** and supported a dense population, while in China the flood plains gave fertile conditions for the growth of rice, which could support large populations.



Comparing ancient civilisations

The structure of the four societies was also remarkably similar. All relied on social **stratification** to support the civilisation. They were all ruled by an upper class, made either of priests or kings. The two were often connected, as in Mesopotamia and Egypt, where the kings or pharaohs were seen as gods themselves, or as having **divine** approval. Farmers and unskilled workers were often in the lower classes of society. Slaves were a feature of the societies of Mesopotamia and Egypt, while in India, **untouchables** were seen as unfit to be members of society, and performed such jobs as skinning animals and handling dead bodies.



Comparing ancient civilisations

One of the most important things these societies had in common was that they all had systems for writing. From hieroglyphics in Egypt, Sanskrit in the Indus Valley, Cuneiform in Mesopotamia, and in China a script that developed into the writing system of today, these societies relied on writing to keep records, such as those for taxes, and as a form of communication. This was important in keeping the population under control.



Vocabulary

These words appeared in the text. Do you know what they mean? Discuss with your teacher.



divine

stratification

untouchable

irrigation

integral to

to facilitate



Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences in your own words based on what you read.

1. The four civilisations I read about are...
2. All of the societies are described as stratified. This means...
3. Flooding was important for...
4. Untouchables were...
5. Writing was necessary for...



What do you know?

**Have you heard
about any of the four
societies before?
What do you know
about them?**

religion

life expectancy

work



Gods and kings

Why do you think it was important to conflate the kings and pharaohs with gods in some of the societies? Which other societies have done the same thing?





Comparing ancient civilisations



Religion in these civilisations was both similar and different. The Mesopotamians worshipped many gods, and prayed to them for **bountiful** harvests and favourable weather. However, they did not believe in the **afterlife**. This is quite unlike the Ancient Egyptians, whose most famous structures, the pyramids, were built to house their dead, and who believed fully in life after death and furnished the pyramids with great treasures in order to ensure a good afterlife. Like the Mesopotamians, however, they were also **polytheistic**.



Comparing ancient civilisations



In the Indus Valley, people believed in a form of Hinduism. Unlike the Egyptians, they did not bury their dead with riches, preferring to keep their wealth in the present life. In Ancient China, people mainly worshipped their ancestors and asked them for guidance, though great treasures were built for leaders in the afterlife.



Comparing ancient civilisations

One of the greatest differences for these civilisations was their geographical position. Although they all relied heavily on rivers for survival, there were many other differences. Egypt and China were fairly **isolated**, the former by the Sahara desert, the latter by the Himalayas. This meant that these societies survived for a long time, protected from their conquerors. By contrast, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley were exposed, and were conquered by other societies such as Persia and Greece. The isolation of the former societies, however, did not stop them from trading with other nations; the Silk Road is a famous example from China, and the Egyptians also traded with surrounding settlements.



Comparing ancient civilisations

The great cities and buildings of these civilisations are especially memorable. Babylon, in Mesopotamia, is thought to have been the first city to reach over 200,000 inhabitants, and the ruins are still visible today. Egypt's pyramids, and the Great Wall of China, were their most famous building projects **respectively**, both now seen as wonders of the Ancient World. Recently, ruins of large cities have been found in the Indus Valley, challenging the notion that great building projects did not occur here.

Each of the **variables** – geography, political structure, writing – make the societies look fairly similar, though their vastly different development may suggest **otherwise**.



New vocabulary

integral to

Organisation is **integral to** the running of a business.

respectively

The growth in population affects the health system and education system **respectively**.

variable

There are so many **variables** involved that it's hard to say when the party will finish.

otherwise

Otherwise known as the Land Down Under, Australia contains vast expanses of desert.



For each of the statements, decide which civilisation is being referred to

They did not believe in the afterlife.

They did not bury their dead with treasure.

Their greatest city was Babylon.

They were surrounded by the Sahara.

They asked their ancestors for guidance.

Great building projects have recently been found.



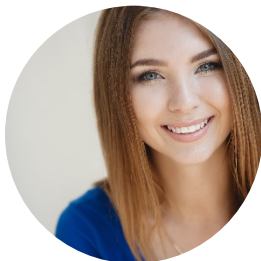
Ancient monuments



Have you visited any of the ancient buildings or monuments mentioned in the text?
Would you like to? If you had to choose just one, which would you choose?

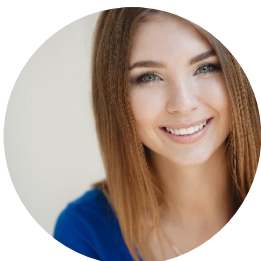


Read through and continue the dialogue between people discussing similarities and differences in the civilisations



I think the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians have the most in common in that they both relied on slaves to uphold society.

I have to disagree. I think the Egyptians and the Chinese were far more similar as they buried their dead with treasures.



I think we can both agree that those in the Indus Valley were quite unlike the other societies because...



Comparing the civilisations

Of the four civilisations you have read about, which do you think have the most in common? Which are the most different?

...have little in common because...

...as opposed to...

Having said that...



Writing

Using language from the discussion you just had, write a short text of about 100 words comparing two of the ancient civilisations.

In contrast to...

...have some similarities



A blank sheet of lined paper with a vertical margin line on the left and horizontal lines for writing.



Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





Answer key

Exercise p. 12

divine - holy or touched by the gods
stratification - separation, in this case societal
untouchable - a member of the lowest group in the Indian class system
irrigation - the water system that makes agriculture possible
integral to - necessary for
to facilitate - to make something possible

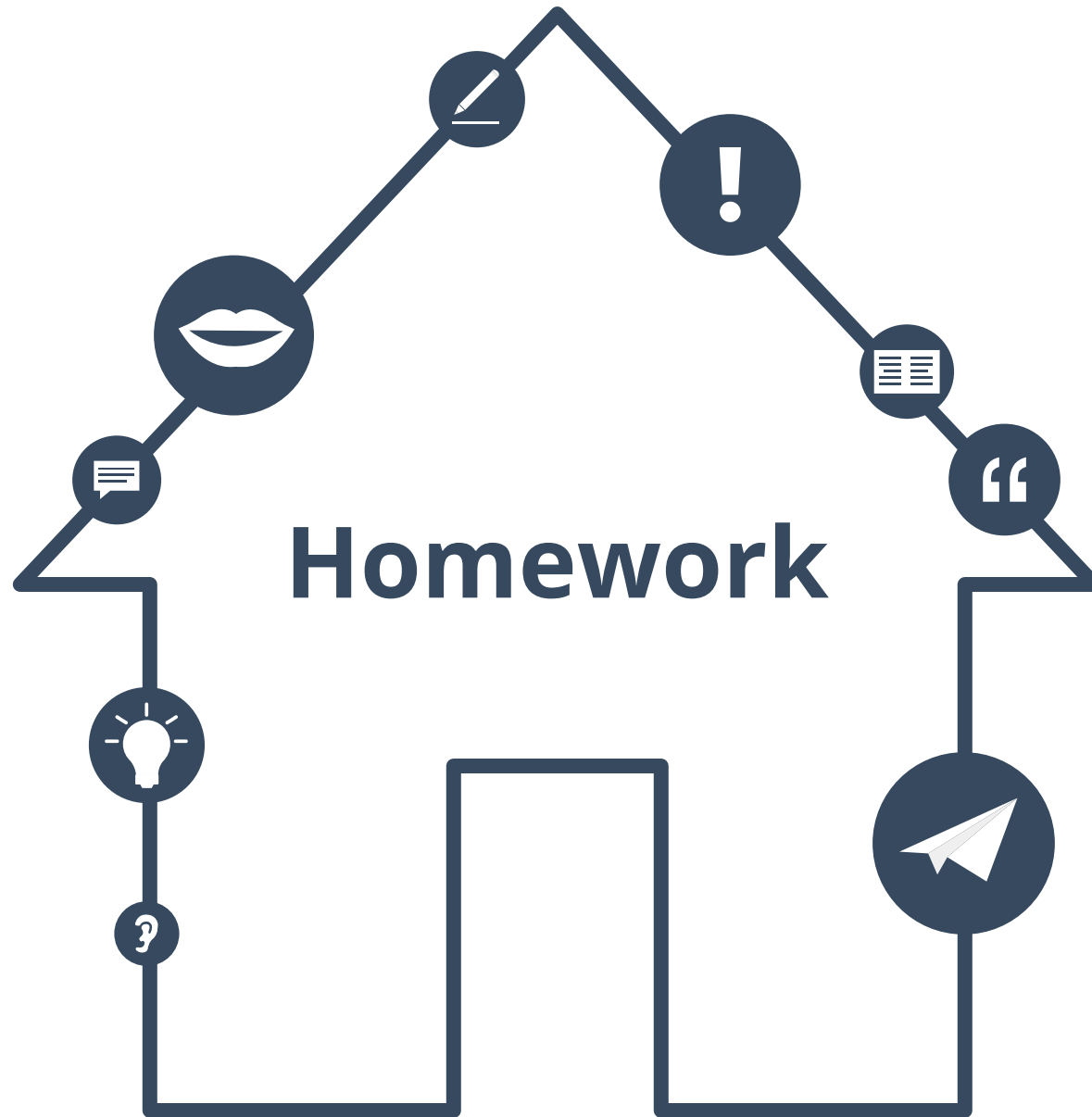
Exercise p. 13

1. Egypt, Indus Valley, Mesopotamia, China
2. Society was divided into different classes.
3. Irrigation

4. Seen as unfit to be members of society, handed the undesirable jobs and tasks in society.
5. Keeping records, communication, control

Exercise p. 21

Mesopotamia, Indus Valley, Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Indus Valley





Fill in the gaps

1. A society built around water is called _____.
2. The Chinese and Egyptians relied on _____ to irrigate their crops.
3. All societies relied on social _____ for survival.
4. The Mesopotamians prayed for _____ harvests.
5. Most of the societies were in some way _____.
6. Egypt and China were geographically _____.

isolated

bountiful

alluvial

stratification

flood plains

polytheistic



Comparing ancient civilisations

Write two lists, one of things the ancient civilisations had in common, and one of ways in which they differed.

Similarities

Differences



Homework answer key

Exercise p. 29

1. alluvial, 2. flood plains, 3. stratification, 4. bountiful, 5. polytheistic, 6. isolated



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