

ANCIENT WORLD CIVILIZATIONS UP TO C. 500AD

Unit Introduction

This unit focuses on some of the most important civilisations of the ancient world that developed in Africa, Asia, America and Europe. It consists of three lessons. In lesson one, you will study two old civilisations of Africa, Egypt and Nubia and their economic, social and political features and enduring achievements. In lesson two, you will examine the civilisation of Mesopotamia, India and China in Asia. In lesson three, you will examine the civilisation of Inca, Maya and Aztecs in America.

In the last lesson, you will learn about the civilisations of Greece and Rome and their achievements. The students will also learn about the rise and spread of Christianity. Major points and arguments are illustrated with examples and images to facilitate your learning and make it attractive to you. The unit closes with a summary of the main points of each lesson, followed by review questions that enable you to measure your achievements of the objectives of the unit.

Unit learning outcomes

At the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- explain the major ancient world civilisation with their major achievements.
- compare and contrast the ancient civilisation of Africa with the ancient world civilisation of Asia.
- discuss how the ideas of civilisations were disseminated all over the world. examine how ancient civilisations shaped the life of humankind.
- write about the rise and spread of Christianity into different parts of the world.



Key Terms

- Pyramid
- Cuneiform
- Buddhism
- Confucianism
- Democracy
- Republic
- Monotheism

2.1 Ancient Civilisations of Africa

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- outline the major achievements of ancient African civilisation.
- analyse major achievements of ancient African civilisations.
- evaluate the impact of the ancient African civilisations on modern society.
- appreciate the ways in which ancient African civilisations shaped the life of mankind.
- appreciate the importance of the ancient African civilisations to modern society, as this will develop the learner's spirit of working hard.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about ancient African civilisation?

2.1.1 Ancient Egypt

The civilisation of Ancient Egypt began at about 3000BC. It flourished in the Nile Valley. According to tradition, Upper and Lower Egypt were unified by Menes around 3200BC. Agriculture was the basis of the Egyptian economy. The silt from the Nile replenished the fertility of the soil and allowed the production of large amounts of crops. The Egyptian peasantry produced wheat and barley. Livestock also formed an integral part of the economy. Trade was another important economic activity in the empire. The Egyptian empire was a large state ruled by an absolute king called a pharaoh. The king ruled Egypt through officials named Viziers. The Viziers acted as mayors, tax collectors and judges. The pharaohs were regarded as kings and gods. He was believed to be an incarnated god and would indeed be a god after death, watching over Egypt's welfare. The Egyptians were polytheists. They worshipped many gods. Ancient Egyptians believe in life after death. The process of preserving the body is called mummification. Mummification later developed into skilled art. As a result, ancient Egyptians also advanced in medicine.

Egyptian society was structured hierarchically.

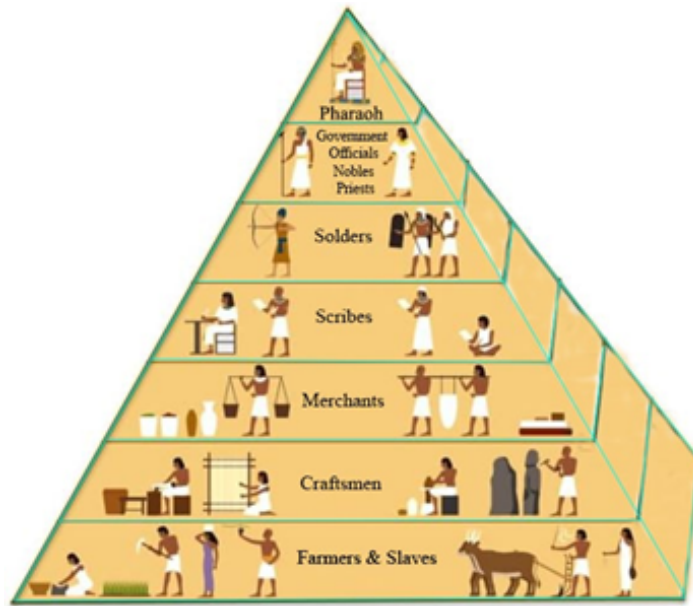


Figure 2.1 Ancient Egyptian Social Hierarchy

Peasants undertook irrigational activities. They also constructed palaces, massive temples and tombs for the Pharaohs. These tombs are known as pyramids.

Ancient Egyptians developed the art of writing known as hieroglyphics around 3000BC. It was a combination of pictograms, ideograms, phonograms and determinatives. Next, Egyptians introduced papyrus which was a paper-like substance.



Map 2.1 Map of ancient Egypt, showing the major cities and archaeological sites, (source: worldhistory.org)

Activity 2.1



1. In groups, discuss the contribution of the ancient Egyptian civilisation

2.1.2 Nubia

Kush was a kingdom along the Nile River in what is now northeastern Sudan. It existed as early as 2000 BC and lasted until about 350AD. Agriculture was an important basis for social differentiation and stratification. The Nubians cultivated cereals, vegetables and dates fruit. In addition, pastoralism formed another important base of the subsistence economy. Finally, trade was another important source of wealth and power for Nubian states. At different times, Egypt conquered and ruled lower Nubia.

Absolute kings and queens ruled the Nubian states. Nubian kings and queens were considered like the Egyptian pharaohs as divine rulers. Nubia was also known for its metal technology. Meroe was an important center of metal products such as gold, copper, silver, and iron. This indicates that Meroe had a flourishing iron industry.

The Kushites conquered Egypt about the eighth century BC. Then, at about 350AD, the Aksumite king, Ezana, invaded and destroyed Meroe.

Activity 2.2



1. Sketch a map of Africa and locate major centers of ancient Egyptian and Nubian civilization.
2. Describe the impacts of the ancient African civilisations on modern society.

2.2 Civilisations in Asia

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- outline the major achievements of ancient Asian civilisation.
- analyse major achievements of ancient Asian civilisations.
- evaluate the impact of the ancient Asian civilisations on modern society.
- appreciate how ancient Asian civilisations shaped the life of mankind.

- appreciate the importance of the ancient Asian civilisations to modern society, as this will develop the learner's spirit of working hard.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about ancient Asia civilisation?

2.2.1 Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia included the area now eastern Syria, Southern Turkey and Most Parts of Iraq. The earliest of the great river valley civilisations was the civilisation of Sumerian found between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The Sumerians began to build the first cities in the world. Sumerians used mud bricks dried in the sun in their buildings. Large temples of this kind were called Ziggurats (stepped towers).



Figure 2.2 The Ziggurat of Ur, (source: ResearchGate.net)

The soil of southern Mesopotamia was very fertile, and with flood control and irrigation, large crops were possible. The Sumerian kings had divine authority. A king ruled as representative of his city's major god. The Sumerians were Polytheists. The plough and the potter wheel first appeared in Mesopotamia. The Sumerians may have been the first to use bronze. The Sumerians developed a writing system around 3200 BC. Their writing system was known as cuneiform. Cuneiform was not an alphabet system. Instead, it was a highly complex system of ideographs. They also developed mathematics, astronomy, medicine and metal works.

2.1.1 Persia

Persia was a land that included parts of the area now called Iran and Afghanistan. The Persians called the region the "Land of Aryans", from which the name Iran is coined. The

Persians called their language Aryan. They established a dynasty known as the Persian Empire, the largest empire in the ancient world.

The first Persian Empire, founded by Cyrus the Great around 550BC, became one of the largest empires in history, stretching from Europe's Balkan Peninsula in the West to India's Indus Valley in the East. It also included parts of North Africa. They made an important contribution to government, law and religion. They built many new roads and developed the world's first postal service. Their religion was known as Zoroastrianism, founded by a prophet called Zoroaster.

Activity 2.3



1. In small groups, discuss the contribution of the ancient Mesopotamian civilisation.

2.2.2 India

The first Indian Civilisation began in the Indus Valley in Pakistan and Western India at about 2500BC and reached its apex at about 1500BC. The people had their counting, measuring, weighing, and writing systems. They dug ditches and canals around the cities to irrigate their farms. The people traded with one another and also with other civilisations like Mesopotamia.

The Indus artisans used copper and bronze to make tools, mirrors, pots, and pans and crafted gold ornaments. The ancient Indian society was hierarchically divided into different social classes according to their work and birth; it goes back some 3,000 years.

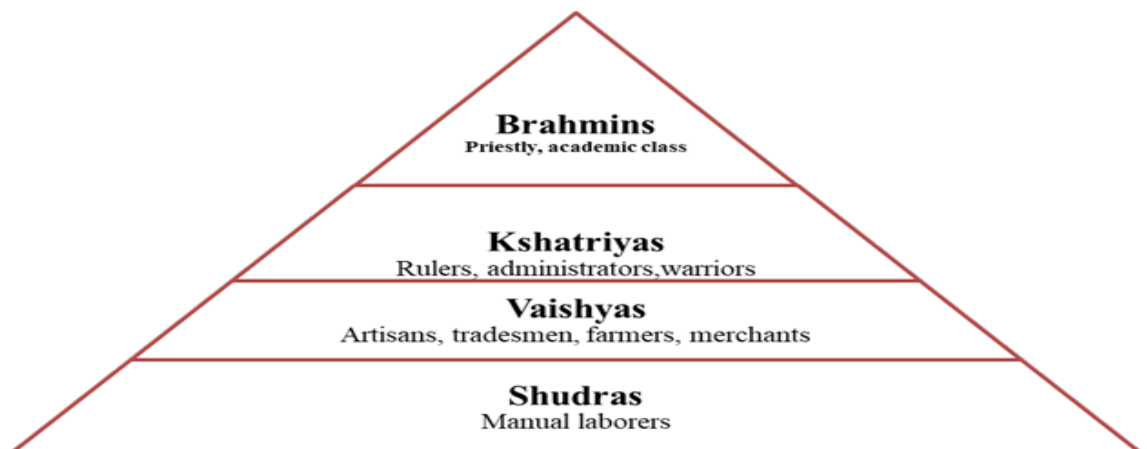


Figure 2.3 Social hierarchy of ancient India

Hindu religion was developed from the beliefs of the early Indo-Aryans. Buddhism emerged from Hinduism as a reform movement. It spread outside of India to South East Asia, China and Japan.

2.2.3 China

The civilisation of ancient China first developed in the Yellow River Region of Northern China in the third millennia BC. Chinese civilisation expanded over time to present-day China's central and southern parts. Ancient Chinese civilisation reached its height about 3000 BC. in the Valley of Hwang Ho. The first dynasty in China was called the Shang dynasty (c. 1700-1122BC). Its achievements included the creation of bronze vessels, war chariots, and a writing system.

At about 1122BC., the Chon dynasty overthrew the Shang dynasty and established its own rule over China until 256BC. As a result, Chinese literary classics developed, and Chinese philosophy emerged.

Confucius (551-479BC) was the most influential and respected philosopher in Chinese history, and his teaching was Confucianism. Confucianism teaches the importance of a well-ordered society in which parents rule their children; men lead women and the educated judge ordinary people. The ancient Chinese constructed the Great Wall of China to keep out invaders from central Asia. It extends about 7,400 Kilometers across southern China.



Figure 2.4 The Great Wall of China, (source: arrajol.com)

The Chinese developed their system of writing called logographic, which meant the use of pictorial symbols to represent words of the Chinese language.

Activity 2.4



1. Explore the internet or other available sources that relate to Asian civilizations. Then, write a short report about their contributions to human society.
2. Why did the Chinese construct the Great Wall? Is there a tradition of constructing walls among your society? Discuss in a group.

2.3 Ancient Civilisation of Latin America

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- outline the major achievements of Latin American civilisations.
- analyse major achievements of Latin American civilisations.
- evaluate the impact of the Latin American civilisations on modern society.
- appreciate how Latin American civilisations shaped the life of mankind.
- appreciate the importance of the Latin American civilisations to contemporary society.

2.3.1 Maya

Brainstorming

- What do you know about ancient Maya civilisation?

The Maya were Native American people who developed a magnificent civilisation in the western hemisphere before the coming of the Europeans. This civilisation was at its peak from about 250-900AD. The Maya produced remarkable architecture, painting, pottery, and sculpture. They made outstanding achievements in astronomy mathematics and developed an accurate yearly calendar. They developed an advanced form of writing. The Maya worshipped many gods and goddesses.

The Maya built tall pyramids of limestone with small temples on top. The Spanish had captured the southern part of the area in the 16th Century. Spanish domination of the entire

Maya region was completed in the late 17th Century.

2.3.2 Inca

The Inca were a South American native people. They ruled one of the largest and richest empires in the Americas. The Inca Empire began to expand at about 1438. It included present-day Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. Its capital was Cusco, in southern Peru.

The Inca were skilled in engineering and crafts. For example, they built a network of roads. Inca craftworkers made fine artefacts from gold, silver and other materials. The Inca also wove fine cotton and woollen cloth. Spanish forces conquered the Inca Empire after 1532.

2.3.3 Aztecs

The Aztecs were another Native American people who ruled a powerful empire in Mexico during the 15th and 16th centuries. The center of the Aztec civilisation was the valley of Mexico. The Aztecs empire included many cities and towns. The largest city was the capital Tenochtitlan, which stood on the site of present-day Mexico -City.

Agriculture formed the basis of the Aztec economy. The Aztecs worshipped hundreds of gods and goddesses. They used a form of writing called pictographic writing. Unfortunately, their empire was destroyed by the Spaniards in 1521.

Activity 2.5



1. What are the major achievements of ancient American civilisations?
2. What arts did the Aztecs practice?
3. When did the Spanish destroy Mayan culture?

2.4 Civilisations in Europe

Lesson learning outcomes

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- outline the major achievements of ancient European civilisation.
- analyse major achievements of European civilisations.
- evaluate the impact of the ancient European civilisations on modern society.
- appreciate how ancient European civilisations shaped the life of humankind.

Brainstorming

- What comes to your mind when you hear or read the word Greek?

2.4.1 Ancient Greek Civilisation

Ancient Greece, which emerged about 2500 years ago, was the birthplace of western civilisation. Greeks' culture developed chiefly in small city-states called Polis. A city-state consists of a city or town and the surrounding villages and farmland. The best-known city-states were Athens and Sparta. The city-states never became united into a nation. However, they all had a common language, religion and culture. The Greeks called themselves Hellens and their land Hellas.

Greek cultural achievements were outstanding in the classical period and were the ancient legacy to Europe and the world. Some of the accomplishments were:

- Architecture. The temple of Athena in Athens (the Parthenon) is the finest example.
- Literature and Drama. The Greeks invented drama (theatre).
- Sculptures. The Greeks made statues of gods and heroes in marble and bronze.
- History writing. The two great Greek historians were Herodotus and Thucydides. Herodotus wrote about countries and civilisations outside Greece but is also our best source for the Persian Wars. Thucydides wrote a good account of the Peloponnesian War, without bias though he was Athenian.
- Medicine. Hippocrates began the tradition of modern medicine in Europe. He identified symptoms, classified diseases and suggested sensible remedies (for example, fresh air and a good diet).
- “Democracy”, “Psychology”, “Olympic”, and “Marathon” all have Greek origin.
- Philosophy. The two greatest philosophers of ancient Greece, who taught in Athens, were Plato and later Aristotle. The modern philosopher Bertrand Russell stated, “Plato and Aristotle were the most influential of all philosophers, ancient, medieval or modern.”

Activity 2.6



1. Explain how the ancient Greece civilisations shaped the life of man kind.
2. Write the Greek city state that has the most historic contribution to the present world. List down the contributions.

2.4.2 Ancient Roman Civilisation

Brainstorming

- What have you learned about ancient Rome in your lower grades?

The Roman civilisation was started in present-day Italy around 753BC on the hills above the River Tiber. Ancient Rome had a significant influence on the development of western civilisation. Roman law had become the foundation for the legal systems of most countries in Western Europe and Latin America. Roman roads, bridges, and aqueducts served as a model for engineering. Ancient Romans built public baths and amphitheatres (outdoor arenas). The most famous theatre in the city of Rome was the Coliseum.



Figure 2.5 The Coliseum (oval Amphitheatre in the center of the city of Rome),
(source: Euro-royal.com)

A series of kings ruled ancient Rome at the beginning. The Roman Republic was established in 509BC after the Roman nobles overthrew the king. Two elected officials called Consuls headed the government of the republic. A Consul served for only a year. The Senate was the most powerful government body of the Roman Republic, and senators served for life. The Roman Republic lasted nearly 500 years, until 27BC. The Roman Empire was established after the republic was destroyed by the twenty years of civil war. The empire lasted until Rome fell in 476AD.

Activity 2.7



1. How did the Romans law ensure that leaders would not place themselves above the law? Read secondary sources and write a half page report.

Rome expanded beyond Italy in aggressive wars. The bloodiest wars of Rome were the repetitive Punic wars (264-146) fought against Carthage. Rome then extended its empire, step by step, all around the Mediterranean Sea and beyond (Gaul, which is modern France, Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands).

The main difference between the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire was that the former was a democratic society, and the latter was run only by one man. Also, the Roman Republic was in an almost constant state of war, whereas the Roman Empire's first 200 years were relatively peaceful.

Rome left behind an important legacy, which it passed on to the world in its culture and institutions. Some of the most important ones include the following:

- The Latin Language. Latin developed into the “Latin languages” of Europe and Latin America.
- Latin literature, authors like Cicero, Caesar (he wrote the history of his wars) and the poets Vergil, Horace and others.
- Roman law was revived in the European Middle Ages.
- The Julian calendar, introduced by Julius Caesar is the base for the current Gregorian calendar.

Activity 2.8

1. Identify the difference between the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire.
2. Explain the contributions of ancient Roman civilisation.

2.5 The Rise and Spread of Christianity**Lesson learning outcomes**

At the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

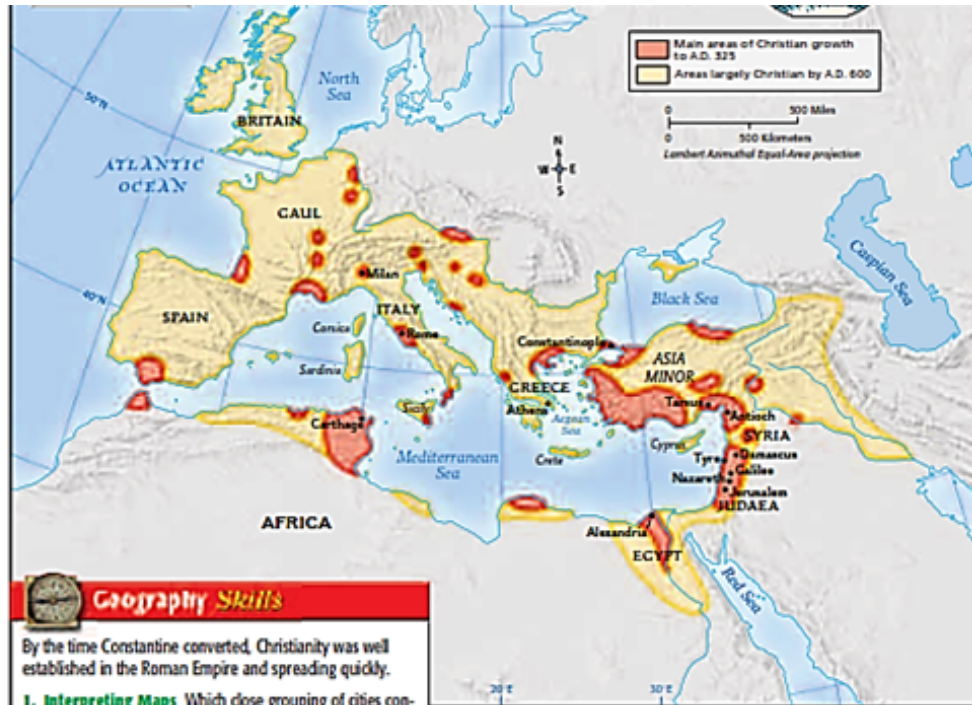
- describe the origin of Christianity.
- explain spread of Christianity into different parts of the world.

Brainstorming

- What do you know about the origin of Christianity?

Christianity began in Palestine in the first century AD. It was a religion based on the teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the Judea part of Palestine, under the Roman Empire. The Roman governments considered the Christians as a threat against the unity of the Empire and persecuted them. The Roman government began persecuting Christians during the reign of Nero (AD 54–68).

In 312, Emperor Constantine became a Christian and made Christianity the favoured religion of the Roman Empire. So naturally, this made Christianity spread even faster. In the fourth century AD, Emperor Constantine ordered religious toleration in the Edict of Milan in 313AD. Thus, Christians gained freedom from persecution. Then, under Theodosius the Great, who ruled from 378 to 395, the Romans adopted Christianity as their official religion in 392AD.



Map 2.2 Spread of Christianity, (source: Glencoe World-History)

Christianity replaced the Roman Empire as a unifying force in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. During the early Christian era, Rome and Constantinople competed for religious power. The Pope or Bishop of Constantinople asserted authority over Church affairs in the East. They also had conflicting views on Church language and rituals. These disagreements finally created a split in the Christian Church. In 1054 the Church split into two distinct parts the Roman Catholic Church at Rome and Greek Orthodox Church at Constantinople. The Greek Orthodox Church was later divided into several Eastern Orthodox churches.

The Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches retained separate identities today. In 1517, a Reformation movement began, and Western Christianity was divided into the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism.

Activity 2.9

1. Explain the term monotheism.
2. Discuss the major reasons for the spread of Christianity.

Unit Summary

This unit showed that Egypt had a long civilisation dating from the early 4th millennium BC. The civilisation was divided into Pre-dynastic and Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, during which successive Egyptian pharaohs supported by civilian officials ruled the kingdom.

The Egyptians were polytheists; the pharaohs were themselves considered gods. The Egyptians made important contributions in the areas of building technology and writing. Nubia was also a vital kingdom ruled by powerful kings and queens. Like Egypt, its economy was dependent on agriculture, pastoralism and trade. In addition, Egypt and Nubia had influenced each other politically and culturally. Besides its building technology, Nubia was famous for its iron industry.

Like Egypt, Sumerian civilisation developed in the fertile regions between the Euphrates and Tigris. Unlike Egypt, however, Sumerian civilisation was a civilisation of warring city-states rather than one unified kingdom. The Sumerians invented the plough, a writing system and the wheel. They were also skilled builders of temples using mud bricks.

The unit also added to your knowledge of ancient Greece by learning about the wars of Greece against Persia, the Peloponnesian War and Greek culture in the classical and the Hellenistic Age. Many provincials, but not the Jews of Palestine, felt loyalty to Rome, and later, all free males became Roman citizens. Finally, the unit explained how Christianity rose, and its spread, especially after Constantine made it the Roman Empire's official religion.

Unit Review Questionns

Part I: Write true if the statement is correct and write false if the statement is in correct.

1. Ancient Egypt believed in life after death.
2. Hindu religion was developed from the beliefs of the early Chinese.
3. The Chinese constructed the Great Wall of China during the Shang dynasty.
4. The Roman Republic was established in 509BC after the king overthrew nobles.
5. Christianity began in Palestine in the first century AD.

Part II: Match major achievements of world civilisation under column "A" with peoples or areas under column "B"

A**B**

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Made advanced iron tools and weapons of bronze | A. Phoenicians |
| 2. Invented the system of writing called cuneiform | B. China |
| 3. They developed an efficient system of postal service | C. Greece |
| 4. Their government declared Christianity as a state religion | D. Egyptians |
| 5. Birthplace of Western Civilisation | E. Nubia |
| | F. Romans |
| | G. Persians |
| | H. Sumerians |

Part III: Choose the Correct Answer from the given Alternatives for the Questions

1. Mesopotamia used sun baked clay to write whereas Egyptians used
 - A. Paper
 - B. Papyrus
 - C. Wall of caves
 - D. Stone
2. The Roman Emperor who ordered religious toleration to stop the Christians' persecution was:
 - A. Theodosius
 - B. Herodotus
 - C. Nero
 - D. Constantine

3. Which one of the following is not correct about ancient civilisation of the world?
 - A. It began over the world at different time.
 - B. Most of the ancient civilisations were found in southern hemisphere.
 - C. Most of them were confined near and around river valleys.
 - D. They had significant effect on current development.
4. Identify the wrong statement about the year 1054AD. It was:
 - A. When the church split into two
 - B. found in the 10th century
 - C. found in the opening of second millennium
 - D. found in the 11th century
5. Which one is a politico-religious creation of the ancient Egyptian civilisation?
 - A. Hieroglyphics
 - B. Papyrus
 - C. Pharaohs
 - D. Pyramids
6. The body of government that headed the Roman Republic for one year was:
 - A. Senators
 - B. Consuls
 - C. Senate
 - D. Noble

Part IV: Further Activities

1. In group, list the important historical events that occurred during the ancient civilizations on historical timeline. (*Hint*: use 1000 years intervals to draw a timeline).
2. Draw a map of the world and mark the events you listed above.
3. Research several events on the historical timeline events from different regions and write a short description of each event and present it to the class.