

Chapter 5 Notes: Ancient Sumer

There are 7 characteristics of a civilization.

Stable Food Supply

- Irrigation System—A system of canals and reservoirs allowed Sumerian farmers to regularly water their crops.
- The plow helped farmers prepare the soil for planting, making farming faster and producing more food.
- The Clay Tablet tells that the Sumerians raised barley.
- The Seal with Two Gods shows one of the Sumerian gods using a plow to prepare a field for planting.

Social Structure

- *Top of the social ladder:* Priests, landowners, and government officials had the nicest homes and lived in the center of the city.
- *Middle of the social ladder:* Merchants and artisans made and sold tools and luxury items. Farmers and fishers lived in small houses at the edge of the city, and farmers served in the army.
- *Bottom of the social ladder:* Slaves had no property and lived with their owners.
- The Clay Tablet relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates that there were classes of scribes and workers.
- The Seal of King relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows a class of government workers.
- The 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 that there were artisans and an upper class.

Chapter 5 Notes: Ancient Sumer

Government

- Government was more powerful because the Sumerian people obeyed the will of their gods, and the gods chose the kings.
- Government duties include recording and enforcing laws, collecting taxes, building temples, maintaining and patrolling irrigation canals, and leading the army.
- The Clay Tablet relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that government officials distributed grain.
- The Seal of King relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates that there were governors and a king.
- The Chariot relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that there was an army.
- The King with Basket relates to this characteristic of civilization because it illustrates that there was a king.
- The Lyre relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates that there was a queen.

Religion

- A religious system includes worship practices and a set of beliefs. Religion was important in Sumer because it influenced every part of daily life.
- Sumerians expressed their religious beliefs in many ways, such as building temples and ziggurats, creating statues, or participating in religious ceremonies.
- The Married Couple relates to this characteristic of civilization because it was found in a shrine and may have been a gift to the gods.
- The Seal with Two Gods relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows two Sumerian gods.
- The King with Basket relates to this characteristic of civilization because it indicates that one of the king's duties was to build temples.

Chapter 5 Notes: Ancient Sumer

Art

- Metalworkers created practical objects and decorative items.
- Architects designed temples and ziggurats.
- Musicians played instruments and sang during ceremonies. Music was an important art in Sumer because the Sumerians believed that it brought joy to the people and to the gods.
- The Married Couple relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that there were sculptors.
- The Gold Cup relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that there were skilled metalworkers.
- The King with Basket relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that there were metalworkers, and architects for the temples.
- The Lyre relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that the Sumerians had music.

Technology

- Before the wheel, people had to move goods in sledges, but after the wheel was invented, people used wheeled carts to carry heavier loads over longer distances.
- Arches added strength and beauty to Sumerian buildings.
- The Seal with Two Gods relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows the invention of the plow.
- The Seal of King relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that the Sumerians used the cylinder seal as a tool to create the image on clay.
- The Chariot relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows that the Sumerians had developed the wheel.
- The Gold Cup relates to this characteristic of civilization because it shows artisans' use of technology and resources.

Written Language

- Sumerians developed the written language of cuneiform from an earlier form of writing using pictographs. Cuneiform was a better method of communication because the Sumerians could exchange more detailed information with each other.
- The Clay Tablet, The Seal with Two Gods, The Seal of King, and The King with Basket all relate to this characteristic of civilization because they have writing on them.