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Activity Two – Reading Comprehension

Unit 3 – Reading

Ancient Civilisations: The Foundations of the Modern World

Ancient civilisations were among the first organised societies in human history. They developed governments, laws, writing systems, religions and technologies that influenced later cultures. By studying these civilisations, historians can understand how people lived, worked and organised their societies thousands of years ago.

One of the earliest civilisations was Ancient Egypt, which developed along the River Nile in north-east Africa. The Egyptians were famous for building the pyramids, which were monumental tombs for their pharaohs. They believed strongly in the afterlife and created impressive temples, statues and works of art. Egyptian civilisation also made important advances in mathematics, medicine and engineering.

Another important civilisation was Ancient Greece. The Greeks established independent city-states, such as Athens and Sparta, each with its own government. Athens is often considered the birthplace of democracy because citizens participated in political decision-making. Greek philosophers, including Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, influenced Western philosophy, while Greek scientists, mathematicians and artists made significant contributions to human knowledge.

Ancient Rome grew from a small city into one of the largest empires in history. The Romans built roads, bridges, aqueducts and public buildings that connected their vast empire. They developed an advanced legal system, many aspects of which still influence modern law. Latin, the language of the Romans, also became the foundation of many European languages.

Another early civilisation was Mesopotamia, located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in present-day Iraq. Historians often describe it as the "Cradle of Civilisation" because many important developments first appeared there. The Sumerians created one of the earliest writing systems, known as cuneiform, while the Babylonians developed one of the first written legal codes.

Although these civilisations were different, they shared many characteristics. They created organised governments, developed agriculture and trade, built cities and produced important cultural achievements. Their ideas and inventions continue to influence the modern world in areas such as politics, architecture, science and education.

Studying ancient civilisations allows us to appreciate the achievements of early societies and understand the origins of many aspects of our daily lives. Their legacy remains visible in our languages, institutions, buildings and cultural traditions.

Choose the correct answer.

1. What is the main purpose of the text?

- a) To explain why modern history is more important than ancient history.
- b) To describe the main characteristics and achievements of ancient civilisations.
- c) To compare different rivers around the world.
- d) To explain how archaeology works.

2. Why were the pyramids built in Ancient Egypt?

- a) To protect cities.
- b) To store food.
- c) To serve as tombs for the pharaohs.
- d) To celebrate military victories.

3. Which city is mentioned as the birthplace of democracy?

- a) Rome
- b) Sparta
- c) Athens
- d) Babylon

4. Which of the following was an important contribution of Ancient Rome?

- a) The invention of paper.
- b) A legal system that still influences modern law.
- c) The first pyramids.
- d) Democracy.

5. Why is Mesopotamia called the "Cradle of Civilisation"?

- a) Because it was the largest empire.
- b) Because many important developments first appeared there.
- c) Because it had the biggest pyramids.
- d) Because it discovered America.

6. Which writing system is mentioned in the text?

- a) Hieroglyphics.
- b) Latin.
- c) Cuneiform.
- d) Greek.

7. What did the four civilisations have in common?

- a) They all spoke the same language.
- b) They all built pyramids.
- c) They developed organised societies and important cultural achievements.
- d) They existed at exactly the same time.

8. According to the text, which area is NOT mentioned as being influenced by ancient civilisations?

- a) Politics.
- b) Architecture.
- c) Science.
- d) Aviation.

9. What does the word "legacy" mean in the last paragraph?

- a) A war.
- b) Something left behind from the past.
- c) A type of government.
- d) A historical monument.

10. What is the main idea of the final paragraph?

- a) Ancient civilisations no longer influence modern society.
- b) Ancient civilisations only influenced architecture.
- c) The achievements of ancient civilisations continue to affect our lives today.
- d) Historians only study Ancient Egypt.

Answer Key

1. **b)** To describe the main characteristics and achievements of ancient civilisations.
2. **c)** To serve as tombs for the pharaohs.
3. **c)** Athens.
4. **b)** A legal system that still influences modern law.
5. **b)** Because many important developments first appeared there.
6. **c)** Cuneiform.
7. **c)** They developed organised societies and important cultural achievements.
8. **d)** Aviation.
9. **b)** Something left behind from the past.
10. **c)** The achievements of ancient civilisations continue to affect our lives today.