

EXAM-DAY · 90-MIN REVISION CARD

Writing and City Life (Mesopotamia)

Print this · Fold it · Carry to the exam-hall gate · Revise once · Then walk in.

FORMULAS & KEY RESULTS

Mesopotamia = Greek 'land between rivers' (mesos + potamos) — between the EUPHRATES and the TIGRIS, in modern IRAQ.

Regions: Sumer + Akkad (south), Babylonia (centre), Assyria (north).

Time-span: farming villages from c.7000 BCE; first cities from c.3500-3000 BCE; writing c.3200 BCE.

Earliest writing: c.3200 BCE at URUK — clay tablets listing temple goods (oxen, fish, grain).

CUNEIFORM = wedge-shaped script (Latin cuneus = 'wedge'); pressed into wet CLAY with a reed STYLUS.

Began as PICTOGRAPHS → developed into signs for syllables/words (NOT an alphabet; hundreds of signs).

City = specialisation + DIVISION OF LABOUR + interdependence (NOT just large size).

The TEMPLE was the early organising institution — owned land/herds, collected + redistributed goods.

URUK = the great early temple-city; UR = a well-excavated city (narrow winding streets, no town-planning like Harappa).

No metal / stone / timber in the south → long-distance TRADE drove imports (copper, tin, stone, wood, gems).

ZIGGURAT = stepped mud-brick TEMPLE-TOWER (NOT a tomb; unlike the Egyptian pyramid).

Legacy 1 — WRITING itself;
Legacy 2 — the BASE-60 (sexagesimal) division of time (60 min, 60 sec) and the circle (360°).

TOP 5 PYQ PATTERNS

1 Why did writing develop in Mesopotamia + its importance

8 marks · 80% of years

Purpose (record-keeping, c.3200 BCE, Uruk temple goods) → form (pictograph → cuneiform on clay with stylus) → society (scribes, hard to learn, specialisation) → legacy (law, maths, astronomy, Gilgamesh).

2 What is city life? Why was the city important?

4 marks · 65% of years

Define by specialisation + division of labour; link to temple redistribution, trade and writing; conclude on why the city mattered for civilisation.

3 Source-based passage on temple / writing / city life

5 marks · 55% of years

Underline named terms; answer identify in 1 line, explain in 2; finish the evaluate sub-question with a chapter fact.

4 Why was trade important? / effect of lack of resources

4 marks · 45% of years

South had silt + grain but NO metal/stone/timber → exported textiles + grain, imported copper, tin, stone, wood, gems. Scarcity drove trade.

5 Legacy of Mesopotamia to the modern world

4 marks · 40% of years

Writing; the base-60 division of time and the circle (360°); the calendar/astronomy; the Epic of Gilgamesh. Give 3-4 concrete legacies.

90-MIN REVISION FLOW

0-15 min

Draw the map from memory: Euphrates + Tigris, modern Iraq, Sumer/Akkad/Babylonia/Assyria, and mark Uruk and Ur. Write the key dates beside it: c.7000 BCE villages, c.3500-3000 BCE cities, c.3200 BCE writing.

15-30 min

Write the writing story in four steps: WHY (record temple goods) → FORM (pictograph → cuneiform on clay, reed stylus) → WHO (scribes, hard to learn) → LEGACY (law, maths, Gilgamesh). Say the 8-mark answer aloud.

30-45 min

Define 'city life' by specialisation + division of labour. List the supports of the city: temple (redistribution), trade (because of no metal/stone/timber), writing (records). Draw the city-as-system web.

45-60 min

List the four legacies (writing, base-60 time + 360° circle, astronomy/calendar, Epic of Gilgamesh) and distinguish ziggurat (temple-tower) from the Egyptian pyramid (tomb).

60-75 min

Take the 15-MCQ Quick Drill under a 20-minute timer. Target >= 12/15.

75-90 min

Review every wrong answer; re-read the matching notes-slide. Re-draw the map once more. Done.

Legacy 3 — the EPIC OF GILGAMESH (world's earliest long poem); Legacy 4 — early ASTRONOMY + the STANDARD OF UR.

Source type: most evidence is ARCHAEOLOGICAL (mud-brick mounds = 'tells') + CLAY TABLETS that survived because clay hardens.

Class 11 = SCHOOL annual/ term paper (not an externally-set board paper); ~6-8 marks for this chapter.

Confidence, not anxiety. You've practised this all year. Trust your steps. Don't change strategy on exam morning.
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