Name _____ Date _____

The Indus Valley: Planned Cities

Directions: Read the passage about two ancient cities and the civilization they belonged to. Some questions ask about details, and others ask about the passage as a whole.

Cities of the Indus

About 4,500 years ago, large cities grew up along the Indus River and nearby rivers in South Asia. Historians call this the Indus, or Harappan, civilization. It covered parts of today's Pakistan and northwest India. Two of its best-known cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, are in Pakistan.

Each year the rivers flooded the plains and left fresh soil behind. Farmers grew wheat and barley in this soil. They also grew cotton.

The cities show careful planning. Main streets were laid out in a grid and crossed at right angles. Many buildings were made of baked brick, and several cities used bricks of the same standard sizes. In Mohenjo-daro, most houses had a small bathroom. Waste water flowed into covered brick drains under the streets. Merchants weighed goods with stone weights that followed one standard.

Indus traders traveled far. Seals and beads from the Indus have been found in Mesopotamia, far to the west.

Many small stone seals carry carvings of animals and short rows of signs. These signs are known as the Indus script. No one has yet learned to read it. Much about who ruled the cities and what people believed is still unknown.

After about 1900 BCE, the large cities began to empty, and in time they were abandoned. Historians are not sure why. Some think changes in rainfall and rivers played a part. Many people moved east and lived in smaller farming villages.

1. Complete the sentences about where the Indus civilization grew.

Word bank

Indus • Egypt • Nile • Pakistan

The civilization grew up along the _____ River and nearby rivers. Two of its best-known cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, are in today's _____.

2. How did the yearly floods help Indus farmers?

A. The floods carried the farmers' crops to Mesopotamia.
B. The floods filled the city drains with drinking water.
C. The floods left fresh soil on the plains where crops grew.
D. The floods dried out the land so roads could be built.

3. Which detail from the passage best shows that the Indus cities were carefully planned?

A. Some think changes in rainfall and rivers played a part.
B. Seals and beads from the Indus have been found in Mesopotamia, far to the west.
C. Farmers grew wheat and barley in this soil.
D. Main streets were laid out in a grid and crossed at right angles.

4. Several Indus cities used bricks of the same standard sizes, and merchants used weights that followed one standard. What do these facts most likely suggest?

A. The Indus people did not trade with anyone.
B. The cities shared common rules for building and trade.
C. Each city measured goods in its own way.
D. Every house in every city was exactly the same size.

5. What does the passage say about the signs on Indus seals?

A. They list the names of the kings who ruled Harappa.
B. No one has yet learned to read them.
C. They were copied from Egyptian hieroglyphs.
D. They explain why the cities were abandoned.

6. What evidence shows that Indus traders traveled far from home?

A. Their bricks were made in standard sizes.
B. Seals and beads from the Indus have been found in Mesopotamia.
C. Their writing lists the cities they traded with.
D. Their farmers grew cotton.

7. According to the passage, which of these is still unknown about the Indus civilization?

A. How waste water left houses in Mohenjo-daro
B. What crops the farmers grew
C. Who ruled the cities and what people believed
D. Where Harappa and Mohenjo-daro are today

8. Which two statements about the end of the large Indus cities match the passage?

☐ A. A single flood wiped out every city in one year.
☐ B. Many people moved east to smaller farming villages.
☐ C. An invading army destroyed the cities in one battle.
☐ D. Everyone in the Indus Valley disappeared.
☐ E. Historians are not sure why people left the cities.

9. Which sentence best states the central idea of the passage about the Indus cities?

A. Seals from the Indus have been found in Mesopotamia.
B. The Indus cities were destroyed by a great flood.
C. The Indus people built large, carefully planned cities, but much about them is still unknown.
D. Indus farmers grew wheat, barley and cotton.

10. A student wrote these sentences for a summary of the passage. Which one should be left out of an objective summary?

A. Most houses in Mohenjo-daro had a small bathroom.
B. Seals carry carvings of animals and short rows of signs.
C. After about 1900 BCE, the large cities began to empty.
D. Life in the Indus cities must have been more fun than life anywhere else.