



# How the Nile River Led to Civilization in Ancient Egypt

The sands of the Nile River Valley hold many clues about one of the most progressive and artistic early civilizations — ancient Egypt. A great deal of evidence survives about how the ancient Egyptians lived, though mysteries remain. Something we can know is that ancient Egypt had the five major components of civilization: cities, specialized workers, government, record keeping and advanced technology.

None of the achievements of this remarkable civilization would have been possible without the Nile River. There is always a connection between landscape and how the people living there develop.

Archaeologists and historians believe humans started living along the Nile's banks starting in about 6000 B.C. Discoveries reveal that Neolithic (late Stone Age) people thrived in the Nile Valley that far back. But it wasn't until later that the valley's inhabitants began to form a more organized civilization.

## A source of life

In 3000 B.C., Egypt looked similar geographically to the way it does today. The country was mostly covered by desert. But along the Nile River was a swath of fertile land. This proved — and still proves — a life source for many Egyptians.

The Nile is the longest river in the world. It flows northward for nearly 4,200 miles. In ancient times, crops could be grown only along a narrow, 12-mile stretch of land that borders the river. Despite the lack of natural resources like forests or an abundance of farm land, a great society emerged.



For the earliest inhabitants of the Nile Valley, food was not easy to find. Over time, however, people learned that the Nile could provide plenty to eat. Along the river grew fruit trees, and fish swam in the Nile in great numbers.

Perhaps most importantly, the people there discovered that the Nile flooded for about six months every year at about the same time. As the water drew back afterward, it deposited a rich, brown layer of silt. This soil was suitable for growing wheat, beans, barley and cotton. Farmers learned to dig short canals leading to fields near the Nile. These waterways provided fresh water for irrigation. Planting immediately after a flood produced crops before the next year's flood.

## **Egyptian inventions**

Egypt's growing population required more organization and productivity. Farmers began growing extra crops, allowing others to give up farming and pursue other trades. They could become merchants or skilled workers. This development of specialized labor is a hallmark of civilization.

Egyptian artisans created new inventions like copper tools such as chisels and needles. Metalworkers learned to mix copper and tin to create bronze, a stronger metal. Evidence also suggests that ancient Egyptians invented the potter's wheel. This tool made it easier to create pots and jars for storage, cooking and decoration.

One of the ancient Egyptians' inventions, the calendar, has helped define time itself. In order to know when to plant, the Egyptians needed to track days. They developed a calendar based on the flooding of the Nile that proved remarkably accurate.

How did the ancient Egyptians make their calendars? They developed a process that turned large reeds from the Nile into a flattened material. It was called papyrus and could be written on. In fact, the English word "paper" has its root in the ancient Greek word "papyrus." Among the first things recorded on papyrus were calendars.

## **Getting their message across**

Writing set the Egyptians apart from some of their neighbors. Egyptian scribes used hieroglyphics, or pictures, to represent words or sounds.

Papyrus had many other uses. Boats were constructed by binding the reeds together in bundles. Baskets, mats, rope and sandals were also fashioned from this multipurpose material.



Even today, the landscape around the Nile is quite barren. Outside of the narrow band of greenery next to the river, there is sand as far as the eye can see. To the Nile's west stretches the Sahara, the largest desert in the world. East of the Nile are other dry lands.

## **Protected from invaders**

These deserts offered protection as the civilization of ancient Egypt grew. Few invaders could ever cross the dry sands to attack. After learning to take advantage of the Nile's floods — and not having to

fear foreign attacks — the Egyptians concentrated on improving farming. As the years passed, Egyptians discovered that wheat could be baked into bread, barley could be turned into soup, and cotton could be spun into clothing.

With many of life's necessities provided, the Egyptians were free to think more about art, government, religion and philosophy. These are other aspects of a civilization. The pharaohs emerged. These rulers led Egypt for about 3,000 years, and most were capable leaders. Eventually, pyramids and great cities became examples of this flourishing culture, one that lasted for several thousand years.

**1 Which of the following sentences from the article BEST develops the idea that ancient Egypt was an advanced civilization?**

- (A) Despite the lack of natural resources like forests or an abundance of farm land, a great society emerged.
- (B) Over time, however, people learned that the Nile could provide plenty to eat.
- (C) Farmers began growing extra crops, allowing others to give up farming and pursue other trades.
- (D) They developed a calendar based on the flooding of the Nile that proved remarkably accurate.

**2 What is the connection between the sections "A source of life" and "Protected from invaders"?**

- (A) Both sections describe how the landscape contributed to the development of ancient Egyptian civilization.
- (B) Both sections outline why the Nile River was essential to the development of ancient Egyptian civilization.
- (C) Both sections explain how ancient Egyptian civilization affected the Nile River and the surrounding environment.
- (D) Both sections provide evidence to show that ancient Egyptian civilization was not affected by the desert landscape.

**3 Which of the following selections from the article is BEST reflected in the map?**

- (A) None of the achievements of this remarkable civilization would have been possible without the Nile River. There is always a connection between landscape and how the people living there develop.
- (B) In 3000 B.C., Egypt looked similar geographically to the way it does today. The country was mostly covered by desert. But along the Nile River was a swath of fertile land. This proved — and still proves — a life source for many Egyptians.
- (C) The Nile is the longest river in the world. It flows northward for nearly 4,200 miles. In ancient times, crops could be grown only along a narrow, 12-mile stretch of land that borders the river.
- (D) Outside of the narrow band of greenery next to the river, there is sand as far as the eye can see. To the Nile's west stretches the Sahara, the largest desert in the world. East of the Nile are other dry lands.

**4 How does the image of hieroglyphics contribute to the article?**

- (A) It indicates that ancient Egyptian civilization was the first to recognize the role of communication in society.
- (B) It emphasizes the importance of writing in ancient Egyptian civilization and shows that writing helped the society to thrive.
- (C) It demonstrates the sophisticated writing system ancient Egyptians developed and supports the idea that they had a highly developed culture.
- (D) It provides a point of comparison between the development of writing in ancient Egyptian civilization and modern writing systems.

# The First Civilizations Emerge on the World Stage



During the same sliver of cosmic time, cities, states, and civilizations emerged independently in several places around the world. The first agrarian civilizations developed in about 3200 BCE. These early farming societies started in three areas: Mesopotamia; in Egypt and Nubia (now northern Sudan); and in the Indus Valley. More appeared in China a bit later and in Central America and along the Andes Mountains of South America at about 2000–1000 BCE. Why and how did this occur?

To have a meaningful discussion, let's define the words "city," "state," and "civilization." A "city," with tens of thousands of people, is larger than a town which contains only thousands of people. A village is made of just hundreds. In cities, people work in specialized jobs, instead of being farmers. Their food is grown by farmers nearby. A "state" is a city, or several cities, plus surrounding villages and farms. A state could include hundreds of thousands of people, even millions. It would have political, social, and economic hierarchies, with a few elite people at the top. Elites typically make up no more than 10 percent of the population, and have more wealth and power than the remaining 90 percent. States were ruled by elites who exercised the right to use force, if necessary, to keep order and collect taxes or tribute. Out of states arose empires, in which a single ruler controlled large territories of cities and farmland. These large states are often called "civilizations." This word has previously been used to imply superiority or advancement; historians now try to use it simply to mean that civilizations share certain characteristics. All civilizations have dense populations and are controlled by elites. This does not mean they are better than other kinds of societies, but they are, by definition, more complex. Since these early civilizations always depended on the farming around them, we call them "agrarian civilizations." Places of early civilizations Four of the earliest agrarian civilizations occurred in fertile river valleys. They used as their foundations plants and animals that had been domesticated earlier. The first of these formed in Mesopotamia, in what is now Iraq. What made this area so fertile was the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The valleys of these rivers had no large trees, no big stones, and no metals. But, with irrigation, people could grow large crops of wheat and barley, grasses that had been domesticated earlier in the mountains nearby. They also grew lentils and chickpeas and herded sheep and goats.

The next three places where agrarian civilizations emerged were in the Nile River Valley in Egypt and Nubia, the Indus River Valley in India, and the Huang He (Yellow) River Valley in China. Each river valley had its own distinctive plants and animals, which had been domesticated nearby. The Egyptians and Nubians had wheat, barley, cattle, fish, and birds. The Indus Valley people raised cattle and cotton, as well as wheat, barley, lentils, sheep, goats, and chickens. In China, wheat was grown in the north, with rice cultivated later in the south. Pigs, chickens, and soybeans also formed the staple foods in China. Large states emerged a couple of thousand years later in the Americas, where the food options were quite different. People in Central America domesticated maize (corn), peppers, tomatoes, squash, beans, peanuts, and cotton. Their only domestic animals were dogs and turkeys. Along the Andes Mountains in South America, people used llamas and alpacas for wool and transportation; for food they depended mostly on potatoes and quinoa, a grain rich in protein. They had guinea pigs, and fish brought up from the coast, where seafood had supported earlier dense coastal populations. Why and how did states emerge?

After people learned to domesticate plants and animals, they gradually learned to utilize animals for a variety of things. Instead of eating animals right away, they used them for their milk, wool, manure, and muscle power. The increased cultivation and development of available resources caused the world's population to grow dramatically. In 8000 BCE, it stood at perhaps 6 million. By 3000 BCE, it was maybe 50 million. At the same time, the climate was changing dramatically. The Earth had reached a stable level of warmth by about 8000 BCE. It had been gradually warming since the height of the last Ice Age, which was about 20,000 BCE. After 8000 BCE, the climate in the northern hemisphere generally became drier, as the monsoon belt shifted southward (possibly due to slight changes in the Earth's orbit). This dryness drove people from upland areas down into river valleys, where access to water was more certain. Floods deposited rich soil in these valleys, helping them to produce abundant food. As density and food surpluses increased, the social structure changed. A small part of the population became much wealthier and more powerful than the rest. Why did the majority of people allow this to happen?

We can only guess that people needed leadership to manage projects like large-scale irrigation or distributing surplus food. They also needed armed protection against neighboring groups. At the same time, ambitious priests and rulers could take opportunities to control the food surpluses to increase their own power. Gradually, they were able to formalize their power, forming political or religious groups that held significant control over the land and its people. Areas without early civilizations Some areas of the world did not produce full-blown cities and states early on. Even so, the trend toward agriculture seems to have been present everywhere. In sub-Saharan Africa, people were separated from the northern coast by the harsh desert. Rain forests covered much of the land, with lots of tropical diseases. The Bantu people, in the eastern part of modern Nigeria, cultivated yams, oil palm trees, millet, and sorghum and herded cattle. Eventually, camels replaced horses and donkeys for travel across the Sahara. Muslim merchants could now make their way across the desert to the west coast. Small regional states and kingdoms emerged, but never a major agrarian civilization. Small islands in



the Pacific did not have the resources to create full-scale agrarian civilizations, but their smaller states and chiefdoms had features similar to those around the world. In Australia, agriculture never really materialized. Soils were poor, and the island was isolated. New evidence suggests that trends toward the development of agriculture might have continued had European colonists not arrived. Archaeologists have long thought that the basin of the Amazon River didn't contain the resources to support dense human societies. But recent evidence suggests that people there found ways to fertilize the soil by adding charcoal. The rain forests there today may even have once been orchards that supported large populations. Comparing early agrarian civilizations All of the earliest agrarian civilizations developed many similar characteristics beyond the defining ones of hierarchical force and coerced taxation or tribute. It seems that only centralized state can effectively integrate and support large populations of people. Other common characteristics of civilizations include the following: —Storage of surplus food —Development of a priestly class; a state religion based on supernatural gods/goddesses —Central authority (such as a king, pharaoh, or emperor) —Specialized occupations and division of labor —Social divisions based on wealth, ancestry, and occupation —Increased trade —Systems of writing or recording information; increased collective learning —Standing armies; increased warfare —Monumental public architecture (such as temples or pyramids) —Increased inequality between men and women; patriarchy.

Despite all these similarities, early civilizations differed significantly. Perhaps most importantly, the civilizations in northern Africa and Eurasia were connected with each other soon after they began. Together they formed an Afro-Eurasian zone where people traded goods and exchanged ideas and technology. Connecting roads went east-west through similar latitudes, and there were sea routes between numerous ports. In contrast, early civilizations in the Americas were hardly connected at all. They had fewer kinds of transport animals. Fewer routes existed over difficult terrain that separated the north-south changes in latitude. This difference would prove important when sailors from Europe arrived on the shores of the Americas with horses, guns, and steel swords. They also carried with them germs they had picked up from their domestic animals to which they became immune. The Europeans' animals and technologies were the result of collective exchanges among several early AfroEurasian civilizations. Early civilizations shared many characteristics that made them successful. If we take a closer look, we can see fascinating details that made them different. All the early civilizations developed some form of writing — except the Inca in the Andes. They instead used a system of tying knots in different colored string, called quipu, to record their transactions and possibly even their stories. All early civilizations engaged in warfare — except, perhaps, in the Indus Valley. Some arrowheads and spears have been found there, but no swords, helmets, shields, or chariots. Every civilization with writing started by using pictographs but switched to some form of alphabet — except the Chinese. To this day, they still use pictographs in their writing. Every civilization practiced human sacrifice, but the Aztecs used it on a much larger scale than others. They believed that the world would end if the chief god did not receive his daily offering of human blood to keep the Sun shining. While early civilizations shared many common features, the differing details form a mosaic of human culture.

**5. Which of the following BEST supports the idea that large civilizations could not develop without fertile land for farming?**

- (A) The Bantu people, in the eastern part of modern Nigeria, cultivated yams, oil palm trees, millet, and sorghum and herded cattle.
- (B) Muslim merchants could now make their way across the desert to the west coast.
- (C) In Australia, agriculture never really materialized. Soils were poor, and the island was isolated.
- (D) The rain forests there today may even have once been orchards that supported large populations.

**6. What is the relationship between the following selections from the article?**

*The Egyptians and Nubians had wheat, barley, cattle, fish, and birds.*

*The Indus Valley people raised cattle and cotton, as well as wheat, barley, lentils, sheep, goats, and chickens.*

*Pigs, chickens, and soybeans also formed the staple foods in China.*

- (A) Each demonstrates a main idea that there was social structure in different civilizations.
- (B) Each demonstrates a main idea that successful civilizations need to be near water.
- (C) Each demonstrates a main idea that successful civilizations farmed both plants and animals.
- (D) Each demonstrates a main idea that the same crops were grown by different civilizations.

**7. Read the last two paragraphs of the article. Which answer choice is a summary of the MAIN idea of these two paragraphs?**

- (A) Though far apart, all early civilizations developed basically the same practices.
- (B) Though they had different languages, all civilizations shared writing with pictographs.
- (C) Though civilizations shared traits, social practices were different from place to place.
- (D) Though civilizations all developed weapons, very few of them appear to have been violent

# Keeping 2026's History Skills Sharp

Civilization #1	Civilization #2	Civilization #3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arid climate</li> <li>• Hot and dry summers, cool and wet winters</li> <li>• Dependent upon Tigris and Euphrates rivers</li> <li>• Syrian and Arabian deserts to the south</li> <li>• Zagros mountains to the east</li> <li>• Heavily dependent on irrigation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediterranean climate</li> <li>• Hot/dry summers, cool/wet winters</li> <li>• Rugged, mountainous terrain</li> <li>• Pindus mountains runs throughout the country</li> <li>• Aegean Sea to the east, Ionian Sea to the west</li> <li>• Depended on the sea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humid/subtropical climate in the east, arid/highland in the west</li> <li>• Yellow river and Yangze river</li> <li>• Used irrigation to help control Yellow river</li> <li>• Farming in part of the country, nomadic lifestyle in other parts of the country</li> </ul>

**8. Based on the information provided above, which of the following correctly identifies the civilizations above?**

- A. Civilization #1- Egypt Civilization #2- Mesopotamia Civilization #3- China
- B. Civilization #1- Mesopotamia Civilization #2- Greece Civilization #3- Egypt
- C. Civilization #1- Mesopotamia Civilization #2- Egypt Civilization #3- China
- D. Civilization #1- Mesopotamia Civilization #2- Greece Civilization #3- China

Civilization #1	Civilization #2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion- Polytheistic</li> <li>• Government- Theocracy</li> <li>• City-states ruled by patron gods/goddesses and interpreted by political leaders and priestly class</li> <li>• Forces of nature chaotic and unpredictable</li> <li>• Priests responsible for keeping gods happy</li> <li>• People at mercy of gods/tried to please the gods</li> <li>• Important gods included: Anu (sky), Enlil (storm/earth), and Shamash (sun)</li> <li>• Religion part of everyday life</li> <li>• Earth divided into heaven (<i>an</i>) and earth (<i>ki</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion-Polytheistic</li> <li>• Government-Theocracy</li> <li>• Political leader believed to be a living god</li> <li>• Gods seen as kind and generous</li> <li>• Important gods included: Amun (king of gods), Ra (sun), and Osiris (Nile/dead)</li> <li>• Political leader worked with gods to create divine order (<i>maat</i>)</li> <li>• Religion part of everyday life</li> <li>• Believed in pleasant afterlife</li> </ul>

**9. Based on the information in the chart above, which of the following accurately identifies the civilizations above?**

- A. Civilization #1- Greece Civilization #2- Egypt
- B. Civilization #1- Mesopotamia Civilization #2- China
- C. Civilization #1- Mesopotamia Civilization #2- Egypt
- D. Civilization #1- Greece Civilization #2- Mesopotamia

**10. In ancient Mesopotamia, why did luxury items arise?**

- A. Mesopotamians feared the gods so the priest made items to make the gods happy.
- B. Luxury items made growing crops easier
- C. Nomads invaded Mesopotamians so they developed government and religion to keep social order.
- D. Due to the food surplus caused by innovations in agriculture, Mesopotamians had more free time

## **Civil Rights Leaders: Martin Luther King Jr.**



### **Early Years, Education And Spiritual Growth**

Born as Michael King Jr. on January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King Jr. was the middle child of Michael King Sr. and Alberta Williams King. (Father and son both changed their names when Martin Luther King Jr. was a boy.) The King children grew up in a secure and loving household.

Martin Luther King Jr. entered school at age 5 and skipped two grades in high school. In 1944, at age 15, he entered Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. King was a popular student but not motivated, and he floated through his first two years.

In 1948, King attended the Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. He graduated first in his class in 1951 and was elected student body president.

While working on his doctorate at Boston University, he met Coretta Scott, a singer and musician. They were married in June 1953 and had four children. In 1954, King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church of Montgomery, Alabama.

### **Montgomery Bus Boycott**

On December 1, 1955, 42-year-old Rosa Parks boarded a bus to go home from after a day at work. In the South, at that time, public transportation was segregated, meaning blacks and whites had to sit separately. The bus driver demanded that Parks and several other African-Americans give up their seats to white people. Three other African-American passengers gave up their places, but Parks remained seated. The driver asked her again to give up her seat and again she refused. Parks was arrested and jailed.

Led by King, the African-American community boycotted Montgomery and refused to ride the bus. The bus boycott would last more than 380 days. Montgomery's African-American community had to endure long walks to work, threats and violence. In early 1957, the city of Montgomery gave in and ended segregated public transportation.

## "I Have A Dream"

Through the late 1950s and early 1960s, King led protests at department store lunch counters, marches and demonstrations. In the spring of 1963, he organized a demonstration in downtown Birmingham, Alabama. The event turned violent, and city police turned dogs and fire hoses on families of protesters. King was jailed along with many other demonstrators. He was heavily criticized for putting children in danger. From his jail cell, King explained that nonviolent protest is designed to create a crisis, so that a community is forced to face its problems and deal with them.

On August 28, 1963, King's huge demonstration at the nation's capital, called the March on Washington, drew more than 200,000 people. It was here that King made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. It emphasized his belief that someday all men could be brothers. It included the famous lines, "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

King's actions strongly affected public opinion. All over the country people began questioning the nation's segregation laws and the unfair way African-American citizens were treated. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act outlawed segregation in public places. That same year Martin Luther King received the Nobel Peace Prize.

## Assassination And Legacy

In 1968, King was shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee. His death sparked riots across the country. In 1969, his killer, James Earl Ray, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 99 years in prison. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life had an earth-shattering effect on the United States. He is the most widely known African-American leader of his time. His life and work are honored with a national holiday. Schools and public buildings have been named after him, as well as a memorial in Washington, D.C. He was a complicated man. He had flaws, but he was deeply committed to achieving social justice through peaceful means.

### 1. Which of the following BEST summarizes the section "Montgomery Bus Boycott"?

- A. Rosa Parks played an essential role in ending segregation on public transportation in Montgomery.
- B. Parks and MLK led efforts that resulted in the end of segregation on public transportation in Montgomery.
- C. Public transportation in Montgomery was segregated until Parks took action by refusing to give up her seat.
- D. The African-American community in Montgomery worked for over a year to end segregation on the city's public transportation.

### 2. With which of the following statements would King most likely AGREE?

- A. Only in rare situations is violence the most effective course of action.
- B. Peaceful protests emphasize community issues so they can be resolved.
- C. People of different races are fundamentally different and have different needs.
- D. Laws are the most important factor in determining how people treat one another in society.

### 3. What are the names of MLK's parents?

- A. Michael and Coretta King
- B. Michael and Rosa King
- C. Michael and Alberta King
- D. Rosa and Coretta King

**4. How did MLK’s “I Have a Dream” speech impact America? Include the following:**

- Echo the question and provide reason
- Include context to explain the impact of MLK’s speech
- Complete sentences
- Minimum of 4

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## **Excerpt from MLK’s Letter from Birmingham Jail**



You may well ask, Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. I just referred to the creation of tension as a part of the work of the nonviolent resister. This may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. So the purpose of the direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. We, therefore, concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue...

We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy, and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

**5. According to MLK, why does nonviolent direct action seek to create a crisis? (3 complete sentences)**

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**6. Why does MLK think it is necessary to create “constructive nonviolent tension” in society? ( 3 complete sentences)**

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**7. Which of the following would MLK agree with based on the document above?**

- A. African-American must be patient in their journey to achieve equal rights
- B. Violent response is justified when nonviolent response does not work
- C. Any time is the right time to stand up for what you believe is right
- D. The purpose of nonviolent response is to anger white supremacists and force them to stop harassing African-Americans

## Above and Beyond!!

"These problems are above and beyond questions to sharpen your skills when we return on April 7th. If we were to be out longer than through April 7th for any reason, these are no longer Above and Beyond and should be completed by all students."

1. What is the period of time when humans learned to farm?

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2. What are the people called who moved place to place looking for resources?

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3. What is the leader of Egypt called?

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4. What three things determine social class?

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5. What two things determine how humans live?

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# Ancient Greek Thinkers, Truth-Seekers

The citizens of Athens were fed up with the old "wise" man.

Socrates, one of ancient Greece's most knowledgeable philosophers, found himself on trial for his teachings. The prosecutor accused Socrates of corrupting the youth of Athens. A jury of hundreds found Socrates guilty and sentenced him to death.

At the age of 70, Socrates willingly drank hemlock, a powerful poison that put an end to his controversial life. How did it happen that Athenians put to death a great philosopher such as Socrates?

## **Inquisitive Socrates**

Throughout his entire life, Socrates questioned everything from Athenian government to Greek religion and the gods themselves. His goal was to find the truth, which he believed could be reached through reason and knowledge. Socrates was a teacher, but he did not have a classroom. Instead, Socrates lectured publicly, and anyone who was interested in what he had to say was invited to listen. Socrates practiced a style of teaching that has since become known as the Socratic method. Essentially, Socrates taught through questioning, starting with simple questions and then progressing to more complicated, deeper questions. Through the use of reason and logic, Socrates revealed answers to many questions that led to a greater understanding of the world. Problems arose because Socrates often questioned the very fundamentals and traditions of Greek society. His constant questioning and searching for the truth were seen as dangerous by many and ultimately led to his death.

## **Plato's "Republic"**

Plato, a student of Socrates, also achieved greatness as a philosopher. Unlike Socrates, however, Plato chose to write down his ideas. In one of his most renowned works, "The Republic," Plato outlined his vision of the ideal state.

Surprisingly, Plato's republic was not very democratic. Plato was greatly disturbed at the way the mass of Athenians had agreed to put to death his brilliant teacher and guide, Socrates. Plato believed that uneducated people should not have right to make important decisions for everyone. Instead, Plato envisioned a society with many classes in which each class contributed what it could. In his ideal society, farmers grew the food for the republic, soldiers defended the republic and a group of intelligent, educated philosophers ruled the republic. Not surprisingly, Plato lived

at a time when democratic society in Athens was in decline.

### **Aristotle had much to share**

One of Plato's students, Aristotle, also distinguished himself as a thinker. Aristotle wrote about and studied many subjects, including biology, physics, metaphysics, literature, ethics, logic, art and more. He emphasized the importance of observation and the gathering of information. Although Aristotle made important discoveries in many areas, his explanation concerning the movement of heavenly bodies was wrong. Aristotle believed that the Earth was the center of the universe, and that all heavenly bodies revolved around the Earth. This makes sense from a strictly observational standpoint. Looking up at the sky, it seemed to Aristotle that everything (sun, moon, stars) circled the Earth. In this case, Aristotle's dependence on observation led him astray. In reality, the Earth revolves on its own axis, creating the false impression that it is the center of everything.

### **A golden age of thought**

Besides the three great philosophers described above, ancient Greece produced many other important thinkers. In the realm of science, Hippocrates applied logic to the field of medicine and collected information on hundreds of patients. His work helped to advance people's understanding of the causes of disease and death.

Greek thinkers applied logic to mathematics as well. Pythagoras deduced multiplication tables as well as the Pythagorean theorem relating to right triangles. Euclid revolutionized the field of geometry, and Archimedes worked with the force of gravity and invented an early form of calculus. In the realm of the social sciences, Herodotus is often credited with being the first modern historian. Another historian, Thucydides, tried to be as objective as possible in reporting the history he recorded.

### **A democracy evolving**

Many of these advancements and discoveries seem obvious by today's standards. But 2,500 years ago, most humans were concerned with providing food and protection for their families and little else. Most of them were ruled by kings or pharaohs who had supreme decision-making power. The Athenian democracy encouraged countless innovative thoughts among its citizens. To the ancient Greeks, thinking was serious business.

1. **According to the text, how did Socrates gain and create knowledge?**

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## **Mr. McCain's Challenge to 2026!**

*Write down 5 or more history facts you have learned this year. For those who go above and beyond, you will earn extra points! (Example: 15 facts=2 extra points)*