The Rise of Civilization

Reading a Time Line

Time lines are often used to provide a visual organization of events in chronological order, or the sequence in which the events occurred. To read a time line, determine the years covered and the intervals into which the time line is divided. Study the sequence of events, and look for relationships between different developments.

The time line below shows important developments that led to changes in the way prehistoric peoples lived. Answer the questions that follow.

The Growth of Civilization

- Neolithic period begins.
- City-states emerge in Sumer.
- Great Pyramid is built as the tomb for the pharaoh Cheops.
- Harappan civilization arises.
- Menes unites all of Egypt into one kingdom.
- Olmec civilization emerges in Mesoamerica.

1. What period of time does this time line cover?

2. When did city-states emerge in Sumer?

3. Which happened first—construction of the Great Pyramid in Egypt or the development of the Olmec civilization in Mesoamerica?
The First Empires

Identifying Sources of Evidence

In order to evaluate information found during research, historians must be able to identify the sources of their evidence. They must determine who wrote the material; whether the information is found in a journal, government report, newspaper, or other source; what information the material provides; and how the information can be used.

Egyptians carefully prepared for life after death. In addition to food, clothing, jewelry, and weapons, they also placed papyrus copies of The Book of the Dead in the tomb to guard the soul on its journey to final judgment by the god Osiris. Read the following selection from The Book of the Dead and answer the questions that follow.

I have done no hurt unto man, nor have I wrought harm unto beasts. . . . I have had no knowledge of evil; nor have I acted wickedly. Each day have I laboured more than was required of me. . . . I have caused no wrong to be done to the servant by his master. I have caused none to feel pain. . . . I have not committed murder. . . . I have not carried away the offerings made unto the blessed dead. . . . I have not stolen from the orchards; nor have I trampled down the fields. I have not added to the weight of the balance; nor have I made light the weight in the scales. . . . I have not driven the cattle from their pastures. . . . I have not thwarted the processions of the god. I am pure. I am pure. I am pure. . . . May no evil happen unto me in this land in the Hall of Double Right and Truth, because I know, even I, the names of the gods who live therein and who are the followers of the great god.

From The Book of the Dead. Translated by E. A. Wallis Budge.

1. Identify this document. What is its origin? Is it a government record, letter, diary, or prayer?

2. Is this excerpt a primary or secondary source? Explain your answer.

3. How might this excerpt from The Book of the Dead be useful in the study of ancient Egyptian beliefs?
Chapter 2, Skills Activity, continued

4. Why do you think the person's deeds are being recorded?


5. List the virtues of this person.


6. What does this source of evidence tell you about how ancient Egyptian society defined good and evil?


7. How does the source provide evidence about how Egyptians viewed death?


The Persian and Greek World

Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

In the study of history, it is important to be able to distinguish fact from opinion. To identify a fact, decide whether a piece of information can be proved and checked for accuracy by direct observation or in a history book, an encyclopedia, or some other reference work. To determine whether a statement is an opinion, check for phrases indicating a belief or conviction, comparisons not supported by facts, and words that imply a judgment or evaluation.

Read each of the statements below. Then, in the space provided, write an F if the statement is a fact or O if the statement is an opinion.

_____ 1. Most Greek city-states were small in size and population.

_____ 2. Zoroaster was smarter than most other Persians.

_____ 3. The Greeks should have allowed women to participate in the Olympic games.

_____ 4. Persian judges were expected to be fair to all people.

_____ 5. The Royal Road allowed news to travel quickly across the Persian Empire.

_____ 6. Athens was a better place to live than Sparta.

_____ 7. Spartans placed too much emphasis on discipline.

_____ 8. Leonidas was a better leader than Themistocles.

_____ 9. The helots were the lowest group of Spartans.

_____ 10. Democracy in Athens meant that all male citizens could take part in the government.

_____ 11. More than half of all Athenians were farmers.

_____ 12. Many Greeks sought advice from the oracle at Delphi.

_____ 13. Darius reformed and reorganized the Persian Empire.

_____ 14. Indo-Iranians built qanats because water was very scarce on the Plateau of Iran.

_____ 15. Vases made by Athenians are the most beautiful in the world.

_____ 16. Pericles was right to use the Delian League's treasure for Athenian projects.

_____ 17. The polis was the basis of Greek political organization.

_____ 18. Homer was a better writer than Thucydides.

_____ 19. Comedies are harder to write than tragedies.

_____ 20. Cyrus II overthrew the Median king and established the Achaemenid dynasty.