

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. A stylized graphic of intersecting lines forms a starburst or network pattern behind the letter 'o'.

## The World Before Modern Times, Prehistory–A.D. 1500

### Lesson 1 *Ancient Civilizations*

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*What are the characteristics of a civilization?*

*How did patterns of civilization differ between the ancient and medieval worlds?*

#### Reading HELPDESK

##### Content Vocabulary

**monotheism** the belief in one God, rather than many

**Mandate of Heaven** claim by Chinese kings of the Zhou dynasty that they had direct authority from heaven to rule and keep order in the universe

**oligarchy** “the rule of the few,” a form of government in which a select group of people exercises control

**democratic** when people are governed by the “rule of many,” or by the people, either directly or through their elected representatives

**republic** a form of government in which the leader is not a king and certain citizens have the right to vote Academic Vocabulary

##### Academic Vocabulary

**culture** the way of life a people follows

**cycle** a series of events that recur regularly and usually lead back to the starting point

**classical** authoritative, traditional; relating to the literature, art, architecture, or ideals of the ancient Greek and Roman world

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*



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**TAKING NOTES:** Identifying

**ACTIVITY** As you read, use the table below to identify the six major characteristics of a civilization.

Civilization	
1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

### IT MATTERS BECAUSE

*Around 3000 B.C., civilizations began to emerge in Western Asia, Egypt, India, and China. They were the foundations of the great empires of the ancient world. These included the Persian and Assyrian Empires, the empire of Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire, the Mauryan and Gupta Empires in India, and a unified Chinese Empire.*

### The First Humans

**GUIDING QUESTION** What factors contributed to the establishment of organized communities?

Humanlike creatures first developed in Africa over three to four million years ago. Over a long period of time, Paleolithic people (early humans) learned to create more sophisticated tools, to use fire, and to adapt to and even change their physical environment. Paleolithic people were primarily nomads, traveling from place to place in search of food. They hunted animals and gathered wild plants to survive. Their chief work was finding food. Both men and women were responsible for it. Despite this consuming task, they created a human **culture**, or way of life, that included sophisticated cave paintings.

The agricultural revolution of the New Stone Age began around 10,000 B.C. It greatly changed human living patterns. Planting grains and vegetables provided a regular food supply. The domestication of animals added a steady source of meat, milk, and fibers such as wool for clothing. This Neolithic Revolution allowed humans to stop their nomadic ways of living. Instead, they began to form more permanent settlements. These organized communities gradually gave rise to more complex human societies.

The first civilizations emerged around 3000 B.C. in the river valleys of Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China. An increase in food production in these regions led to a significant growth in human population. It also led to the formation of cities. Efforts to control the flow of water for farming led to organized governments in these new urban civilizations. The birth of civilizations was a dramatic new stage in the story of world history.

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### PROGRESS CHECK

**Determining Cause and Effect** What were the effects of the Neolithic Revolution?

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### The First Civilizations: The Peoples of Western Asia and Egypt

**GUIDING QUESTION** What were the first ancient civilizations to emerge?

The peoples of Mesopotamia and Egypt built the first civilizations. They developed cities and struggled with the problems of organized states. They invented writing to keep records. They also created literature. Both Mesopotamians and Egyptians constructed monumental buildings to please their gods. These buildings indicate their power and have preserved their culture for all time. They developed new political, military, social, and religious systems. These systems allowed people to deal with the basic problems of human existence and organization. The first civilizations left detailed records. From these records, we can see how they struggled with philosophical questions. They addressed the nature of human relationships, the nature of the universe, and the role of divine forces in that universe. Later peoples would have different ideas about these issues, but the Mesopotamians and Egyptians first discussed and recorded them.

Much of the creativity of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations began to decline by 1500 B.C. By 1200 B.C., the decline of the Hittites and Egyptians created a power vacuum. As a result, a number of small states emerged. They flourished for a short while. One small state was that of the Phoenicians. They created a trading empire in the Mediterranean. They also developed an alphabet that was later adapted by the Greeks and the Romans.

The Israelites, who created a kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon, were one of these small states. By the tenth century B.C., the people of Israel divided into a northern kingdom of Israel and a southern kingdom of Judah. The rise of larger states in the region eventually led to their demise, or downfall. Even so, the Israelites left a spiritual legacy that influenced much of the later development of Western civilization. The evolution of Hebrew **monotheism**, or belief in only one god, created the major world religion of Judaism. It, in turn, influenced the development of both Christianity and Islam. The Judeo-Christian heritage of Western civilization refers to the concept of monotheism. It also includes the ideas of law, morality, and social justice that have become important parts of Western culture.

The rise of the great empires of the Assyrians and Persians overshadowed all of the small states in the region. The Assyrian Empire was built upon the effective use of military force. It had been the first to unite almost all of the ancient Middle East. The empire of the Great Kings of Persia was even larger. The Persian Empire owed much to the administrative organization developed by the Assyrians. But the Persian Empire had its own peculiar strengths. Persian rule was tolerant and efficient. Conquered peoples were allowed to keep their own religions, customs,

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and methods of doing business. The Persian Empire brought many years of peace to the Middle East. These peaceful years boosted trade and the general well-being of the peoples. Many people there expressed their gratitude for being subjects of the Great Kings of Persia.

### PROGRESS CHECK

**Making Connections** What structures did early civilizations create to deal with problems of organization and questions about their existence?

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## The First Civilizations: Ancient India

**GUIDING QUESTION** How did civilization develop in ancient India?

As in Mesopotamia and Egypt, early civilizations in India began in river valleys. The Indus River valley supported a thriving civilization between 3000 B.C. and 1500 B.C. The civilization was based on two major cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. This Harappan, or Indus, civilization prospered for hundreds of years. The peoples there made significant political and social achievements. Internal decline eventually weakened this civilization. The final blow to the cities may have been an influx, or sudden arrival, of new peoples.

The Aryans were an Indo-European-speaking nomadic people. They moved south across the Hindu Kush mountain range into the plains of northern India. The ongoing migrations of the Aryans led to interaction between them and the Dravidians—descendants of the Indus Valley people. As a result, a new and unique culture formed. A strict caste system clearly divided people into distinct classes. This system became a chief feature of the new Indian civilization.

Two of the world's major religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, began in India. Hinduism was an outgrowth of the religious beliefs of the Aryan peoples who settled in India. Hinduism taught reincarnation, or the belief in the return of a soul to live another life in a new body. The new person was born into a social position (caste) that reflected his or her development or lack thereof from a past life. As a result, Hinduism justified the caste system of India.

In the sixth century B.C., a new doctrine called Buddhism appeared in northern India. Buddhism was the product of Siddhartha Gautama. He claimed that he had awakened and seen the world in a new way. His simple message was to achieve wisdom. He created a new spiritual philosophy that rivaled Hinduism.

For most of the time between 325 B.C. and A.D. 500, India was a land of many different states. Two major empires, however, were able to create large, unified Indian states. The Indian civilization that resulted set the standard for many centuries.

The Mauryan Empire in northern India was the first of these major empires. It lasted from 324 B.C. until 183 B.C. The Mauryan Empire reached its height during the reign of Aśoka. He ruled from 269 B.C. until 232 B.C. Aśoka used Buddhist ideals to guide his rule. He is considered to be the greatest ruler in the history of India.

In 183 B.C., the Mauryan Empire collapsed. India then fell back into disunity. Then, the Gupta Empire arose. It prospered from A.D. 320 until the late fifth

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century when the Huns invaded and reduced its power. Both Indian empires built strong central governments. They also made achievements in the arts. Indian civilization was extensive. It eventually, in the form of Hinduism and Buddhism, spread to China and Southeast Asia.

### PROGRESS CHECK

**Identifying** Which two major religions began in India, and how did they influence society?

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## The First Civilizations: Ancient China

**GUIDING QUESTION** What was significant about the first civilizations in China?

China was the last of the civilizations discussed so far to fully develop. The societies in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and India had already reached an advanced level of civilization by the time the Shang dynasty began to display the first signs of an organized state. One likely reason for China's late arrival was its isolation from emerging cultural centers elsewhere. China was forced to develop on its own.

The Shang dynasty created the first flourishing Chinese civilization. Under the Shang, China developed organized government, a system of writing, and advanced bronze-working skills. During the Zhou dynasty, China adopted many of the features that characterized Chinese civilization for centuries. The **Mandate of Heaven** was especially important politically. It gave kings a divine right to rule. The Mandate of Heaven was closely tied to the pattern of dynastic **cycles**. China was ruled by a series of dynasties from the beginning of Chinese history to A.D. 1912. The Zhou dynasty lasted for almost eight hundred years. Others did not last as long, but the king of each dynasty ruled with the Mandate of Heaven. The family also emerged as a powerful economic and social unit during the Zhou dynasty.

Between 500 B.C. and 200 B.C., three major schools of thought emerged in China—Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism. All three sought to explain the principles, or beliefs, that would create a stable order in society. All three had an impact on Chinese civilization that lasted until the twentieth century.

After two hundred years of civil war, the new Qin dynasty created an era of Chinese unity. But the first Qin Emperor was also the last of his dynasty. The Han dynasty then set up a vast empire that lasted over four hundred years. During the height of the Han dynasty, China extended its empire far into Central Asia and southward along the coast of the South China Sea into modern-day Vietnam. Chinese culture appeared unrivaled. Its scientific and technological achievements were unsurpassed.

China's striking success is due partly to its ability to survive invasions by nomadic peoples along the northern frontier. However, the Xiongnu, a tribal league of nomadic peoples in Central Asia, became a serious threat by the end of the second century B.C. Tribal warriors began to nip at the borders of the empire. While the dynasty was strong, the problem was manageable. When internal difficulties began to weaken the unity of the state, China became vulnerable to the threat from the north. It then entered its own time of troubles.

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### PROGRESS CHECK

**Outlining** What differentiated the first three major dynasties in China?

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### The Civilization of the Greeks

**GUIDING QUESTION** What contributed to the rise and fall of the civilization of the ancient Greeks?

Unlike the centralized Persian and Chinese empires, ancient Greece was made up of many small, independent city-states. The polis, or city-state, was a community ruled by its male citizens. The two most famous city-states were Sparta and Athens. Sparta was a militaristic polis ruled by an **oligarchy**, or a few select people. Athens became known for its **democratic** institutions in spite of the fact that many slaves and women had no political rights.

The Greek city-states reached their height in the Classical era of the fifth century B.C. The century began with the Persian wars. For a short time they unified the Greeks, who were victorious against the powerful Persian Empire. But the growth of an Athenian Empire in that same century led to a mighty conflict with Sparta. The Great Peloponnesian War led to a weakening of the Greek city-states. It also opened the door to an invasion by Philip II of Macedonia. His victory put an end to Greek freedom in 338 B.C.

Despite the small size of their city-states, the ancient Greeks created a civilization that became the source of Western culture. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle established the foundations of Western philosophy. Western literary forms are largely derived from Greek poetry and drama. Greek ideals of harmony, proportion, and beauty have influenced Western art. Ancient Greeks conceived the rational method of inquiry that is so important to modern science. Many political terms are Greek in origin. So too are concepts of the rights and duties of citizenship, especially as they were conceived in Athens. It was the first great democracy the world had seen. During the Classical era, the Greeks debated fundamental questions about the purpose of human existence, the structure of human society, and the nature of the universe. These questions have concerned thinkers ever since.

The Greeks, however, were unable to rise above internal rivalries. In the end, these rivalries slowly weakened their civilization. Although the Greeks lost their freedom to Philip II, Greek culture itself did not die. The new Hellenistic age eventually came into being.

The Hellenistic era began with Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire. He was the young successor to his father, Philip II. Alexander vowed to avenge the Persian attacks on Greece. He crossed into Asia Minor with his army in 334 B.C. Within four years, the Persian Empire was defeated. But Alexander was never at rest. He moved eastward into India. There a mutiny, or outbreak against him, by his exhausted troops forced him to return to Babylon. He died there in 323 B.C. Alexander was a great military leader. However, he was not a good political administrator. He failed to establish any definite structure for the empire

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he had conquered. Four Hellenistic kingdoms eventually emerged as the successors to Alexander.

Within those kingdoms, the resulting society is known as Hellenistic, meaning Greek-like or “to imitate Greeks.” The Greek language became dominant as Greek ideas became influential. Greek merchants, artists, philosophers, and soldiers found opportunities and rewards throughout the Middle East. It was now a world of kingdoms rather than independent city-states.

The Hellenistic period was a vibrant one. New cities arose and flourished. New philosophical doctrines, such as Epicureanism and Stoicism, gained popularity. Significant achievements occurred in literature and science. Greek culture spread throughout the Middle East and made an impact wherever it was carried. The Hellenistic era achieved a degree of political stability, but signs of decline were beginning to multiply by the late third century B.C. The growing power of Rome eventually put the Hellenistic world in danger.

### PROGRESS CHECK

**Understanding Relationships** What was the legacy of the Greeks to Western civilization?

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## The World of the Romans

**GUIDING QUESTION** What characteristics defined Roman rule?

A group of Latin-speaking people built a small community called Rome on the Tiber River in Italy in the eighth century B.C. Between 509 and 264 B.C., Rome expanded and brought most of Italy under its control. Roman diplomacy was as important as its armies in achieving this goal. Roman rule allowed local autonomy, or self-rule, and gradually granted Roman citizenship to non-Romans. During this time of conquest, Rome also developed the **republic** ruled by an aristocratic oligarchy.

Rome had no master plan for expansion. However, strained relationships with neighbors outside Italy soon led to new wars. Rome’s first challenge was Carthage and the Carthaginian Empire in Spain and Africa. Rome was victorious after the three long and bloody Punic Wars. In the east, Rome conquered Macedonia and took control of the Greek states. Between 264 and 133 B.C., Rome expanded to the west and east. It then controlled the Mediterranean Sea.

Rome’s political system was not adequate for ruling an empire. The government began to break down. Ambitious people such as Pompey, Crassus, and Julius Caesar saw opportunities for power unparalleled in Roman history. They gave in to the temptation. At the beginning of the first century, military reforms, or changes, happened. The changes allowed the creation of professional armies that were loyal to the generals who recruited them, rather than to the state. Bloody civil war followed as powerful individuals fought for even more power. Peace was finally achieved when Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra.

After a series of bloody civil wars, Octavian created a new order that began the Roman Empire. Octavian took the title of Augustus. He did not declare the

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Republic dead and continued to give the Senate a role in governing. But most of the political power remained in his hands. Octavian became the first Roman emperor. The army swore loyalty to him. The return of peace soon made the new political order acceptable to most people in the empire. In the second century, five emperors maintained a period of peace and prosperity. During their reign, trade flourished, and the provinces were governed efficiently. Within their empire, the Romans achieved many remarkable things.

Roman achievements were fundamental to the development of Western civilization. Western civilization was made up mostly of European lands conquered by the Romans. As a result, Roman culture and political ideals gradually spread there. The Romance languages of today—French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian—are based on Latin. Western practices of impartial justice and trial by jury owe much to Roman law. As great builders, the Romans left monuments to their skills throughout Europe. Some of these structures, including aqueducts and roads, are still in use today. Other monuments provided models for public buildings in the West for hundreds of years. Aspects of Roman governing practices survived in the Western world for centuries. The Romans also preserved the intellectual heritage of the ancient Greco-Roman world.

By the third century, however, the Roman world suffered an era of decline. Generals fought each other in civil wars. German tribes and Persian armies invaded the empire. There were plagues, population decline, and economic problems. At the same time, the new religion of Christianity spread throughout the empire. Christianity began among the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. It slowly gained acceptance with its promise of salvation and its universality as a religion for all—rich and poor, men and women, Greek and Roman. Christian ideals of spiritual equality and respect for human life grew. As a result, a slow transformation, or change, took place in Rome’s last two hundred years. The Germanic invasions quickened this process. They brought an end to the Western Roman Empire in 476. Many aspects of the Roman world continued, but a new civilization emerged. It carried on yet another stage in the development of human society.

**PROGRESS CHECK**

**Summarizing** How and why did Rome make the transition from a republic to an empire?

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