

Secrets of the Desert: Name: _____ Prd: ____ Score: ____ /15
Sumer: Ancient Land of Mesopotamia

Directions: As you read, **highlight answers in text on the left** in order to answer the questions on the right. *Then* complete the questions using the information that you have highlighted! **Practice this highlighting skill!**

The land is a desert now. It is hot, dry & barren. Only a few poor shepherds live on it. Yet once this land had great cities, & the fields were green with **barley & wheat**. Inside the cities were the palaces of powerful kings. There were beautiful temples to honor the gods. There were schools, workshops & homes built of brick. There were even busy, crowded marketplaces.

These were the world's first cities. They were built more than 5,000 years ago in the land of **Sumer**, the *southern* portion of **Mesopotamia**.

The people of Sumer, called **Sumerians**, were first with creating many new things. They invented the wagon wheel, plow & sailboat. Plows were drawn by oxen not men, thus enabling a much larger area to be cultivated ~ which *increased crop yields* (called a **surplus**) which resulted in their *population increasing!*

Surplus food was produced *allowing* people called **craftsmen** or **artisans** to now become *specialized in one specific skill or craft*. This was called **economic specialization**.

They melted metals such as copper, silver & gold, but mostly used bronze ~ shaping them into molds. They even learned how to use numbers for the first time.

However, the *greatest* invention (3000 B.C.) of the Sumerians was writing, & their particular form of writing was called **cuneiform**. Sumerians usually made their cuneiform inscriptions on a slab (tablet) of wet clay & wrote using a tool called a **stylus**. Thousands of pieces of clay with this form of writing have been dug up from the desert. They tell us much about the life, laws & history of Sumer as do the ruins of its cities like Ur, Eridu, & Uruk ~ sites that eventually grew into cities & then independent **city-states**, or self-governing cities.

Two important crops grown in Sumer were _____ & _____.



Sumerians were *first credited with* inventing:

1) _____
 _____ & _____.

Cause & Effect: Fill in the missing words:

Invention of the _____ leads to increased _____, resulting in _____ increase!

artisans = (is another word for) _____

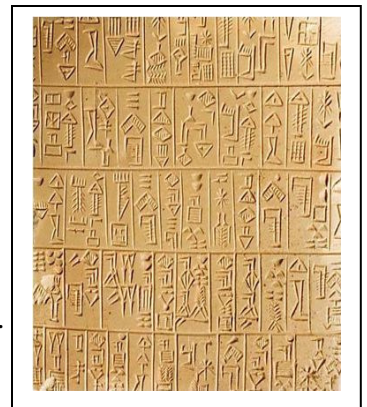
Economic specialization can be described as:

BONUS: Using the **Periodic Table** (pg. 125) in your Planner, write the give the **element symbols** for
Copper: _____ **Silver:** _____ **Gold:** _____

Egyptians : hieroglyphics :: Sumerians : _____
 cuneiform on clay ↓

In forming their writing, Sumerians used tools of _____
 & a _____.

Self-governing cities were known as _____ - _____.



These cities have been dug up in the last 100 years by men & women who study how people lived long, long ago. In 1927, an Englishman named Sir Leonard Woolley dug down into the desert sand in southern **Iraq** (what was *formerly* called Mesopotamia.) Woolley believed that the great city of Ur had once stood on this spot. Its ruins were probably buried beneath a mound of sand.

Woolley guessed that he was probably digging in a burial ground of Ur. He was right!

Aided by Arab workers, he found about 20,000 graves! Nearly all were the graves of common people, & each of the bodies were buried in the same way. *Each was lying on its side*, as if sleeping. Inside the coffins were beads, earrings, knives & pins. Outside the coffins were jars of food & water, daggers, tools, mirrors & combs. These were the things the dead would need for their trip to the next world...*so the Sumerians believed*. This was called the **afterlife**.

Woolley also found 16 very large tombs in which kings were buried! They were built of stone or brick & had one or more rooms. When Woolley entered these tombs, he could hardly believe his eyes. The tombs were like underground palaces. He found not only the bones of kings, but the bones of the many people who had served them. These people had died *with* their kings because they *believed* the kings were gods. The servants had entered their kings' tombs alive & then swallowed a drug that made death painless. They expected that they would, then, be able to serve their god-kings in the afterlife.

One of the 16 kings' tombs was very rich. At the tomb's entrance Woolley found the bodies of six guards in two neat rows. They had copper spears & helmets. Just inside the tomb were two wagons. Each was "pulled" by three oxen. The drivers were in the wagons. The leather reins were decorated with beads of silver & rich blue stones, probably **lapis**.

The land of **Mesopotamia** is now called _____.



List some of the important **possessions** (things) **found buried** with the bodies of these Sumerians:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

The **next world** was called the _____.



Sumerian burial with possessions for the afterlife ↑

BONUS: Copper ore & tin, when heated at high temperatures & melted together, form _____! (clue: ..as in the ___ Age!)

Wealthy kings & members of their **royal** families often wore **jewelry** made of _____ stones.

The bodies of nine women were leaning against one wall of the room. They were women of the king's court. All wore head coverings of rich beads, gold leaves & silver combs.

The king himself was buried in a smaller room with men servants. The passage leading to the door of the king's room was lined with the skeletons of soldiers. All had daggers. One had a bundle of four spears with gold heads. Two others had sets of silver spears. Sadly, robbers had broken into the king's room & *stolen* most of its ornaments.

The royal tombs found by Woolley in Ur were extremely old. They were built between 2700 B.C. & 2500 B.C. **What did these tombs tell Woolley & future generations about the people of Sumer at this time in history?**

Well, actually, a good deal.

- They were very skilled people ~ builders, artisans, & artists.
- Their kings were treated as gods & had great power & wealth.
- Their merchants traded with many lands. Sumer had no metals or stones & very little wood.
- Their soldiers had good weapons & were well-trained.
- They were *ahead of all other people of their time.*



← Helmets made of bronze!

Infusing English skills in Social Studies: A synonym for **stolen** is _____.

(Don't know? LOOK it up in a Thesaurus or dictionary!)

Applying power paragraphs to ancient Sumer:

Write a 3-5 sentence paragraph about the skills of the Sumerian people. _____

(2 pts)

