

Name: _____

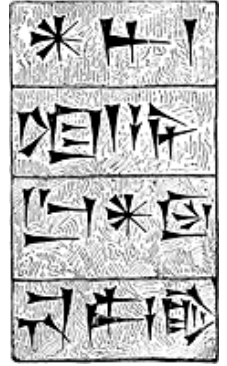
Date: _____

Writing

Ancient Sumerian record keepers marked pictographic symbols in soft pieces of clay with a pointed reed. The clay tablets were then baked to make them hard. We call the Sumerian writing system cuneiform. Cuneiform means wedged shaped because the marks in the clay were wedges.

The first pictographs were simple. A writer would draw an object such as a fish or a broom to communicate to others. A pictographic writing system worked well in a simple society, but it was difficult to describe abstract concepts such as justice or liberty in pictographs. Many Chinese people continue to use a pictographic system today, but the government has endorsed the Pinyin system of phonetic writing.

Eventually, most cultures developed phonetic writing systems where a symbol represents a sound rather than an object. English speaking people agree that the symbols **D-O-G** refer to an animal. English, French, Spanish, German and Russian are examples of phonetic languages. Phonetic languages make small typewriters and computer keyboards possible. Imagine a different key for every single word!



Writing allowed civilization to develop

- Writing allowed people to keep records of their transactions.
- Writing made it possible for people to send messages with couriers to far away lands.
- Writing allowed people to pass on their accumulated knowledge to future generations.

Answer in complete sentences

*1. Why do you think the ancient Sumerians developed writing? (The paragraph provides you with a clue, but you can also use your imagination to consider other answers.)

*2. Describe at least one advantage of the pictographic and of the phonetic writing systems. Use your creativity to give examples and explain your answer.

*3. Write a paragraph that explains how the development of writing allowed civilization to flourish. Your paragraph must include a topic sentence, at least two support sentences, and a conclusion sentence.

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.