The oldest urban civilizations existed in the Fertile Crescent. Within the Fertile Crescent, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers was called Mesopotamia. These two rivers, and the Nile River, provided abundant resources for early civilizations.

Nearly all Fertile Crescent peoples were polytheistic and had strict class systems. Powerful families dominated society, and it was impossible to move up economically.

Sumer was a collection of city-states. Sumerians developed the first system of writing, called cuneiform, used wheeled vehicles, and created a lunar calendar.

The Babylonian Empire lasted for about three hundred years. Its most important contribution was Hammurabi’s Code, a set of written laws that were publicly displayed. The laws provided for protections and an orderly society that did not change with different rulers. Written law is found in all important western civilizations from this point on.

The Hittites conquered the Babylonians with superior iron weapons. Hittite laws were also publicly displayed, but differed from Hammurabi’s Code: instead of severe physical punishments, fines were levied when the law was broken.

The Phoenicians established a society of merchants and sea traders on the Mediterranean Sea. The Phoenicians also developed the world’s first alphabet; all words could be represented by 22 symbols. The Phoenician alphabet became the basis for written languages in Greece, Rome, Europe, India, and parts of Asia.

The Hebrews were the first monotheists. According to the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, God told Abraham he would be the father of a great nation and then later God gave Moses 613 laws, known as the Torah. Among these were the Ten Commandments.

The Hebrew Kingdom was at its height under Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. Judaism, the religion of the ancient Hebrews, is the foundation for religious belief in the western world and predates Christianity and Islam.

The Assyrians built a large empire using a cavalry and the battering ram. Assyrian King Ashurbanipal built a large library in Ninevah and Assyrians built the ziggurat, a pyramid shaped temple.
1. This lesson suggests one reason for the emergence of ancient civilizations in the Fertile Crescent was:
   a. the belief in one God.
   b. the invention of the lunar calendar.
   c. the development of writing.
   d. the existence of major rivers.

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

2. What is one thing Hammurabi’s Code and Hittite laws had in common?
   a. They were both written in cuneiform.
   b. They both could be read by citizens.
   c. They were both used by the Hittites.
   d. If any law was broken, fines had to be paid.

   Which sentences best support the answer? _____, _____

3. Number the following in chronological order.
   a. _____ The Hittites
   b. _____ The Sumerians
   c. _____ The Chaldeans
   d. _____ The Hebrew empire ends.

4. Mark each statement T for true or F for false.
   a. _____ Cuneiform, the Phoenician alphabet, and hieroglyphics were invented by Fertile Crescent civilizations.

   Which sentences best support the answer? _____, _____, _____

   b. _____ The Persians were monotheists.

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

   c. _____ The Egyptian Empire lasted longer than any other Fertile Crescent empire.

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

   d. _____ Buddhism was the Hebrew religion.

   Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

5. What is one thing all the civilizations of the Fertile Crescent shared in common? ________________

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6. Hebrews believe the Ten Commandments are thought to have originated from:
   a. King Nebuchadnezzar.
   b. God.
   c. Abraham.
   d. Moses.

Which sentences best support the answer?
   _____, _____

7. Mark each statement F for fact or O for opinion.
   a. _____ The Hebrews are the most important people of the Fertile Crescent civilizations.
   b. _____ The Chaldeans were the best mathematicians of the Fertile Crescent civilizations.
   c. _____ The Egyptians had the longest lasting political organization of the Fertile Crescent civilizations.
   d. _____ Sounds represented by characters are more useful than ideas represented by pictures, because new words can be created by combining characters together.

Which sentence best supports the answer?
   _____

8. Which society was known for having the technology to break city walls?
   a. Sumerians
   b. Hebrews
   c. Assyrians
   d. Egyptians

Which sentence best supports the answer?
   _____

9. Where did the Phoenicians create trading routes?
   a. Mediterranean Sea
   b. Nile River
   c. Tigris River
   d. Euphrates River

Which sentence best supports the answer?
   _____

Written Response Question

10. What is one important contribution from each ancient civilization?

   Sumerians: ________________________________________________________________

   Babylonian Empire: _________________________________________________________

   Hittites: __________________________________________________________________

   Phoenicians: ______________________________________________________________

   Hebrews: __________________________________________________________________

   Assyrians: __________________________________________________________________

   Chaldeans: __________________________________________________________________

   Persians: __________________________________________________________________

   Egyptians: __________________________________________________________________
Fertile Crescent Review: Lessons 1-8 Answers

1. d, sentence 3
2. b, sentences 9, 13
3. a. 2  
   b. 1  
   c. 4  
   d. 3
4. a. T, sentences 7, 15, 34  
   b. F, sentence 30  
   c. T, sentence 31  
   d. F, sentence 21
5. Key points: They settled along the Tigris, Euphrates, or Nile rivers.
6. b, sentences 18, 19
7. a. O  
   b. O  
   c. F  
   d. O
8. c, sentence 22
9. a, sentence 14
10. Key points:

   Sumerians: created the world’s first wheeled vehicles.  
   Also acceptable: They created the first system of writing.

   Babylonian Empire: contributed Hammurabi’s Code (written laws).

   Hittites: laws were written and publicly displayed.

   Phoenicians: established a great trading center.  
   Also acceptable: The first alphabet.  

   Hebrews: were the first monotheists.

   Assyrians: army used horses and the battering ram to conquer other peoples.  
   Also acceptable: They had a large library and built the ziggurat.

   Chaldeans: divided the circle into 360 degrees.  
   Also acceptable: They developed astrology.

   Persians: built the Royal Road.

   Egyptians: invented a system of geometry and a number system based on the number 10. 
   Also acceptable: The Rosetta Stone allowed modern man to read hieroglyphics.