Unit 4: Culture

ORIGINS OF WRITING

Words

Write the letter of each definition with the word it defines. If you don't know the definition, use the context of the reading passage to help you. Look for the words in bold as you read the passage.

PARAGRAPHS 1–2

Words	Definitions
1 ..... civilization[1]	**A** v., to give credit for or see as the origin of something
2 ..... attribute	**B** n., human society, its organization[2] and culture
3 ..... creator	**C** n., the first maker of something
4 ..... mythology	**D** n., person who has a great deal of knowledge about a particular subject
5 ..... settle	**E** n., set of traditional stories used to explain the origins of things
6 ..... scholar	**F** v., to establish a permanent place to live

PARAGRAPH 3

Words	Definitions
7 ..... agricultural	**G** v., to accept or start to use something new
8 ..... property	**H** adj., related to farming
9 ..... token	**I** n., an area of digging, especially to find objects from past cultures
10 ..... tablet	**J** n., something that is owned
11 ..... excavation	**K** n., a thin, flat piece of material to write on
12 ..... adopt	**L** n., an object used to represent something else

[1]BrE: civilisation
[2]BrE: organisation

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PARAGRAPHS 4–5

Words	Definitions
13 ..... carve	**M** v., to cut and shape hard material
14 ..... encompass	**N** v., to mark a surface with words or letters
15 ..... inscribe	**O** n., something that is built, such as a building or bridge
16 ..... structure	**P** v., to include

PARAGRAPHS 5–6

Words	Definitions
17 ..... deed	**Q** n., an act, especially a good or bad one
18 ..... specialized[1]	**R** n., the ability to read and write
19 ..... literacy	**S** adj., relating to a particular area or type of work
20 ..... function	**T** v., to perform well

Reading

Origins of Writing

(1) Ancient **civilizations attributed** the origins of writing to the gods. For the ancient Egyptians, their god Thoth was the **creator** of writing and, in some stories, also the creator of speech. The ancient Sumerians and Assyrians also believed that writing originated with certain gods, as did the ancient Maya. In Chinese **mythology**, the creation of writing is attributed to an ancient sage and was used for communication with the gods. Clearly, writing was highly valued even by ancient peoples.

(2) Humans began painting pictures on cave walls 25,000 years ago or more, but writing systems did not develop until groups of people began **settling** in farming communities. **Scholars** say that writing systems developed independently in at least three different parts of the world: Mesopotamia, China, and Mesoamerica.

(3) The oldest known writing system developed among the ancient Sumerians in Mesopotamia around 3000 B.C. Along with the rise of **agricultural** societies came the development of **property** ownership and the need to keep records of it. In early agricultural societ-

[1]BrE: specialised

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ies, property consisted largely of land, livestock such as cattle, and grain. Originally, clay **tokens** of various shapes were used to count these possessions. From this developed a system of impressing the shapes onto clay **tablets**. One of the earliest clay tablets of this type was found in **excavations** in Mesopotamia and dates from the time of the Sumerian culture. Scribes then began using reeds instead of tokens to mark the clay, developing a system of wedgelike shapes to represent the tokens. This system of writing using wedge shapes is known as cuneiform. It was later **adopted** by other cultures and became the basis for other writing systems. Originating in a system that used pictures to represent objects, cuneiform writing eventually developed into systems that used symbols to represent the sounds of language.

(4) The oldest form of Chinese writing dates from around 1500 B.C. It is called oracle bone script because it was **carved** on animal bones and shells that were used for predicting the future. At a later period, Chinese writing appeared on bronze vases and later still developed into a system that was used to record government affairs. The Chinese writing system was also the original basis for both the Japanese and Korean writing systems.

(5) In Mesoamerica, a region that **encompasses** parts of Mexico and Central America, it is the ancient Mayans who are famous for the writing they **inscribed** on temple walls and other religious **structures**. However, scholars believe that writing in that part of the world may have begun before the rise of the Mayan civilization. The Zapotec culture, centered[1] on Oaxaca, Mexico, was already using writing around 400 B.C., or possibly earlier. The Olmec culture may have developed a writing system even earlier than that. Recent discoveries show that the Mayans may have begun writing around 2,300 years ago. They used a system of symbols that represented words and syllables to record information about the **deeds** of their rulers as well as information connected to their calendar and astronomy. Their system of writing survived until the time of the Spanish Conquest in the 1500s.

(6) In ancient times, only **specialized**[2] people such as scholars, priests, or government officials used writing. Today, close to three-quarters of the world's adult population can read and write, and **literacy** is considered a basic skill necessary to **function** in the modern world.

[1]BrE: centred
[2]BrE: specialised

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Answer the questions about **Origins of Writing**.

Questions 1–7

Do the following describe the ancient Sumerians, the ancient Chinese, or the ancient Maya?

Write the correct letter, ***A***, ***B***, *or* ***C***.

A Ancient Sumerians

B Ancient Chinese

C Ancient Maya

..... **1** inscribed symbols on bones

..... **2** inscribed symbols on religious structures

..... **3** inscribed symbols on clay tablets

..... **4** used tokens to keep records of their property

..... **5** used writing to record the deeds of their rulers

..... **6** wrote on metal

..... **7** used reeds as a writing tool

Questions 8–10

Do the following statements agree with the information in the reading passage?

Write

TRUE *if the statement agrees with the information.*
FALSE *if the statement contradicts the information.*
NOT GIVEN *if there is no information on this in the passage.*

..... **8** The ancient Mayans attributed the origin of writing to the gods.

..... **9** Scholars have discovered similarities between Zapotec and Mayan writing.

..... **10** Literacy was common in most ancient civilizations.

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Word Families

A

Complete each sentence with the correct word from the word family chart. Make nouns plural where necessary. Use the correct form of verbs.

noun	adjective	adverb
agriculture	agricultural	agriculturally

1 Wheat was one of the first ..... products.

2 People settled in Mesopotamia because it was a good area for ..... .

3 ..... Mesopotamia was an important part of the world.

noun	noun	verb	adjective	adverb
creator	creation	create	creative	creatively

4 Some ancient peoples recorded information ....., using pictures to represent words.

5 Ancient peoples developed ..... ways to record information.

6 The ancient Sumerians used clay and reeds for the ..... of property records.

7 The ancient Maya were the ..... of temples and other beautiful structures.

8 The ancient Sumerians ..... tokens out of clay.

noun	noun	verb
excavation	excavator	excavate

9 ..... found a clay tablet that dates from the time of the ancient Sumerians.

10 When they ..... the area, they found some ancient oracle bones.

11 Early clay tablets and clay tokens have been found in ..... in Mesopotamia.

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noun	noun	adjective	adjective
literacy	illiteracy	literate	illiterate

12 ..... was not considered necessary before modern times.

13 Few people were ..... in the ancient world.

14 An ..... person cannot read or write.

15 ..... is a problem throughout the modern world.

noun	noun	adjective
mythology	myth	mythological

16 The Maya included ..... creatures in their writing system.

17 Today we read the ..... that were told in ancient times.

18 ..... was very important in ancient civilizations.

noun	noun	verb	adjective
specialty	specialization	specialize	specialized

19 With the growth of agriculture, came the ..... of work.

20 That scholar's ..... is ancient Mayan culture.

21 Scholars with ..... skills can identify ancient objects found in excavations.

22 Some scholars ..... in ancient studies.

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Word Families

B

Choose the correct word family member from the list below to complete each blank.

1	Excavations	Excavators	Excavates
2	agriculture	agricultural	agriculturally
3	creation	creators	created
4	specialty	specializes	specialized
5	literacy	illiterate	literate
6	mythology	myths	mythological

1..... working at ancient sites uncover objects that give us clues about life in the past. Household objects and tools that were used for **2**..... can tell us a lot about how people lived long ago. Ancient people used a variety of materials to make the objects they used in daily life. Tools that were carved from wood, stone, and bone, and jars that were **3**..... from clay are some examples of objects that have been found. Some of these objects are quite beautiful, and it is clear that they were made by people with **4**..... skills. In ancient times, most people were not **5**..... . However, traditional stories were an important part of ancient civilizations, and people told the **6**..... ...of their culture to their children and grandchildren.

Paraphrases

Read the sentence from the reading passage. Then, choose the sentence that has the same meaning.

1 *In early agricultural societies, property consisted largely of land, livestock such as cattle, and grain.* (paragraph 3)

A In early societies, people ate mostly meat and grain.

B The first farmers mostly owned things such as land, animals, and grain.

C Ancient farmers needed large areas of land to raise animals and grain.

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2 *In Mesoamerica, a region that encompasses parts of Mexico and Central America, it is the ancient Mayans that are famous for the writing they inscribed on temple walls and other religious structures.* (paragraph 5)

A Most ancient temples in Mexico and Central America were built by the Mayans.

B The ancient Mayans wrote about their journeys to the temples of Mesoamerica.

C The ancient Mayans of Mexico and Central America wrote on the walls of their buildings.

Dictionary Skill

PARTS OF SPEECH

The word *function* can be a verb or a noun.

Read the definitions below. Then read the sentences and write the letter of the correct definition for each sentence.

func-tion [FUNGK-shun]
A *verb.* to perform well
B *noun.* purpose, role

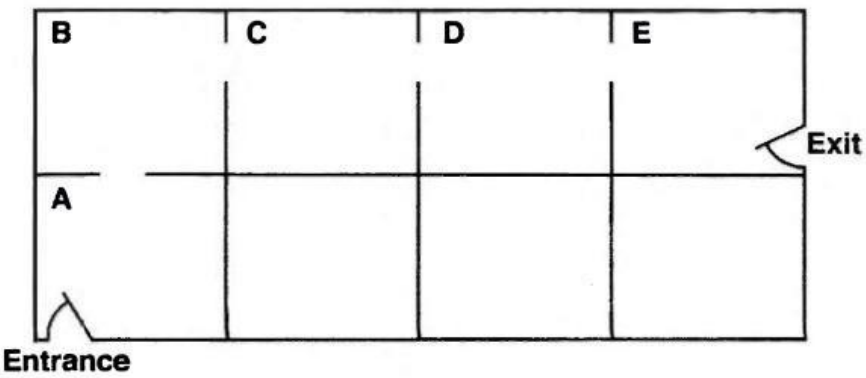
..... **1** The skills needed to *function* in modern society are very different from those needed in the ancient world.

..... **2** Mythology had an important *function* in ancient cultures.

Listening

Track 10

*Listen to the talk. Look at the map below labeled A–E. Look at the list of places and write the correct letter, **A–E**, next to numbers **1–5**.*



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..... **1** Visiting Scholars' Room

..... **2** Agricultural Tools Exhibit

..... **3** Recent Excavations Exhibit

..... **4** Mythology Exhibit

..... **5** Gift Shop

Writing (Task 1)

The chart[1] below shows literacy rates in several different countries around the world.

Summarize[2] the information by selecting and reporting the main information and making comparisons

Write at least 150 words.

Adult Literacy Rates (age 15 and over)

Country	Total Population	Male	Female
Country A	47.8%	63.5%	32.7%
Country B	50%	70.5%	30%
Country C	90.3%	93.9%	86.9%
Country D	99%	99%	99%
World	82%	87%	77%

Speaking

Talk about the following topics.

Do you believe that it is better to have a teacher who specializes in the subject he or she teaches or a teacher who is highly skilled at teaching? Why?

What skills do you think are necessary to teach today's children to help them function in a society where technology is changing so rapidly?

[1]BrE: table
[2]BrE: summarise

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