Knowsley Junior School

Ancient Egypt and the Early Civilisations

Subject	Word	Definition
H	**Civilisation**	An advanced human society with large cities, a central government, laws, and specialised jobs.
H	**Hieroglyphics**	The ancient Egyptian writing system that used picture signs and symbols instead of an alphabet.
H	**Rosetta Stone**	A carved stone discovered in 1799 with three written scripts, which allowed historians to decode hieroglyphics.
H	**Pharaoh**	The supreme ruler of Ancient Egypt, viewed as both the monarch and a leader chosen by the gods.
H	**Mummification**	The process of drying and wrapping a body in linen cloth to preserve it for the afterlife.
H	**Artefact**	An object made, shaped, or used by people in the past, such as tools, pottery, and jewellery.
G	**Silt**	Fine, nutrient-rich mud left behind by river floodwaters that makes valley soil fertile for farming.
G	**Irrigation**	Supplying dry farmland with river water using a man-made network of canals, dykes, and ditches.
G	**Latitude**	Imaginary coordinate lines around the Earth measuring distance north or south of the Equator in degrees.
G	**Delta**	A broad, triangular area of fertile land formed where a river divides into smaller channels before reaching the sea.

By the end of this topic I should be able to:

- Construct a comparative timeline placing Ancient Egypt, Sumer, the Indus Valley, and the Shang Dynasty alongside prehistoric Britain.
- Use an atlas index and lines of latitude to locate the four earliest river valley civilisations on a world map.
- Explain why early civilisations developed along river valleys, evaluating the importance of fresh water, irrigation, trade, and transport.
- Analyse artefacts from Tutankhamun's tomb to deduce evidence about Egyptian royal power, religion, and everyday life.
- Debate the ethics of early archaeology, discussing whether artefacts taken by Howard Carter should be returned to Egypt.
- Compare the major achievements of early civilisations, including their writing scripts, number systems, and city planning.

By the end of this topic I should know:

Geography:

- Around 5,000 years ago, the first major cities developed around the same time around the world, marking the beginning of the earliest complex civilisations.
- Early civilisations independently developed writing systems to keep records, laws, and trade accounts: Sumerians created cuneiform script, while Egyptians used hieroglyphics.
- Ancient Egyptian history lasted for thousands of years and is divided into three distinct periods: the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and New Kingdom.
- In 1922, British archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the undisturbed tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings, uncovering thousands of royal artefacts.
- Early civilisations produced transformative inventions: Sumer developed the wheel and base-60 mathematics, the Indus Valley built planned street grids and covered drains, and the Shang Dynasty pioneered bronze metalwork.

History:

- The world's four earliest civilisations developed along major river valleys located across similar lines of latitude: Egypt on the Nile, Sumer on the Tigris and Euphrates, the Indus Valley on the Indus, and the Shang on the Yellow River.
- The River Nile flows northward into the Mediterranean Sea, forming a fertile delta and dividing Egypt into the cultivable "Black Land" and the dry desert "Red Land".
- Early civilisations settled beside rivers because regular fresh water supported large populations with agriculture, drinking water, hygiene, and transport.
- Seasonal river flooding deposited fertile silt over the fields, while river channels served as trade highways for moving heavy stone and goods across long distances.

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