Teacher Answer Key

Case Study

1. The discovery reveals that stories we often treat as uniquely biblical had older Mesopotamian versions, suggesting that ancient cultures shared narratives and that the Bible drew on earlier literary traditions. For historians, it demonstrates that written texts cannot be understood in isolation — they must be placed in the broader context of the ancient world.

2. The most important qualities would be pattern recognition, patience with detail, and the ability to work systematically across hundreds of different signs. The reading shows that cuneiform required mastering both pictographic and phonetic elements, so a decipherer would need to hold both visual memory and linguistic logic in mind simultaneously.

Multiple Choice

1. A

2. B

3. C

Matching

1-E, 2-D, 3-B, 4-C, 5-A

Fill-in-the-Blank

1) wedge, 2) Rawlinson, 3) administrative

Short Answer (Sample Responses)

Q1: Writing began with clay tokens representing goods, which were then sealed in clay envelopes with impressions on the outside. Scribes realized the impressions alone were sufficient, leading to marks on flat tablets. Early pictographs were simplified into wedge-shaped signs, and eventually the system added phonetic elements, allowing scribes to write sounds and abstract ideas, not just objects.

Q2: Administrative tablets reveal the economic structures of Mesopotamian society in precise detail — what goods were traded, how labor was organized, how debts worked, and what workers were paid. Literary tablets tell us about elite culture and belief, but accounting tablets tell us how the economy actually functioned for ordinary people.

Q3: It means that an entire civilization's written record was completely inaccessible to historians for nearly two millennia. When scripts are deciphered, it is like

unlocking a massive archive that was previously sealed: we gain access to firsthand accounts, literature, law, and science that no secondary source could fully replace. Every decipherment fundamentally expands the range of history we can know.