Teacher Answer Key

Case Study

1. Recording outcomes alongside predictions suggests that Shang diviners were not simply inventing answers — they cared enough about accuracy to document when predictions failed. This could reflect a desire to improve divination methods, to maintain the court's trust, or to preserve honest records of the spirit world's responses.

2. Because diviners consistently recorded the question, the prediction, and the actual result, the bones preserved factual historical events — floods, military outcomes, royal illnesses — even though the original purpose was religious. Divination records became history because they documented reality alongside interpretation.

Multiple Choice

1. C

2. C

3. B

Matching

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

Fill-in-the-Blank

1) medicine, 2) Chinese, 3) 100,000

Short Answer (Sample Responses)

Q1: The phrase means that the oracle bone questions reveal a powerful king who was constantly worried about the future — weather, enemies, illness, omens. This shows that even the most powerful rulers were deeply anxious about forces beyond their control, suggesting that power in the ancient world felt fragile and uncertain.

Q2: Unknown numbers of oracle bones were destroyed by being ground into medicine before scholars realized their historical value. Every lost bone potentially contained irreplaceable information about Shang history, royal genealogy, or early Chinese writing — an unrecoverable loss for our understanding of ancient China.

Q3: Unlike Egyptian hieroglyphics or Mesopotamian cuneiform, which died out completely and required modern decipherment from scratch, Chinese writing evolved continuously within a living culture. This means modern Chinese speakers can potentially read 3,000-year-old texts with training, creating an unbroken link between the ancient and modern worlds