

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Kingdoms, Kings and an Early Republic

Q1. Write a short note on 'ashvamedha'.

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

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Q2. Explain the four Varnas of the Later Vedic Period.

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Kingdoms, Kings and an Early Republic

Q1. Write a short note on 'ashvamedha'.

Ans. Ashvamedha

- i. Some men now became recognized as rajas by performing very big sacrifices.
- ii. The ashvamedha or horse sacrifice was one such ritual.
- iii. A horse was let loose to wander freely and it was guarded by the raja's men. If the horse wandered into the kingdoms of other rajas and they stopped it, they had to fight.
- iv. If they allowed the horse to pass, it meant that they accepted that the raja who wanted to perform the sacrifice was stronger than them.
- v. These rajas were then invited to the sacrifice, which was performed by specially trained priests, who were rewarded with gifts.
- vi. The raja who organised the sacrifice was recognised as being very powerful, and all those who came brought gifts for him.

Q2. Explain the four Varnas of the Later Vedic Period.

Ans. The priests divided people into four groups, called varnas. According to them, each varna had a different set of functions.

- i. The first varna was that of the brahmin. Brahmins were expected to study (and teach) the Vedas, perform sacrifices and receive gifts.
- ii. In the second place were the rulers, also known as kshatriyas. They were expected to fight battles and protect people.
- iii. Third were the vish or the vaishyas. They were expected to be farmers, herders, and traders. Both the kshatriyas and the vaishyas could perform sacrifices.
- iv. Last were the shudras, who had to serve the other three groups and could not perform any rituals. Often, women were also grouped with the shudras. Both women and shudras were not allowed to study the Vedas.