

Early Civilisations

Learning Objective:

To explore trade in early civilisations.

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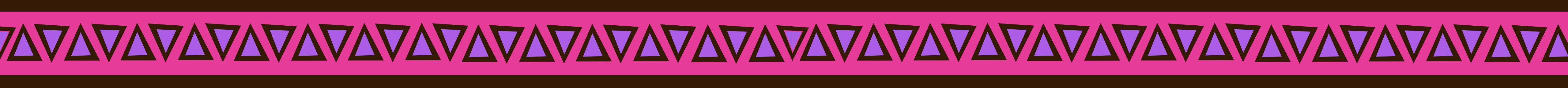
The hunter needs some grain to feed his family but he hasn't got anything to put it in. Shops and money haven't been invented yet. What can he do?

I am a hunter. I hunt animals for meat and keep their furs to make warm cloaks for the winter.

I am a farmer. I have lots of grain to make into food.



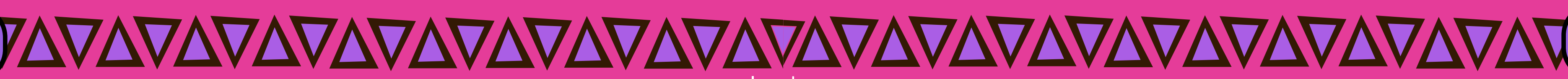
I make pots out of clay. I have more pots at home than I know what to do with!



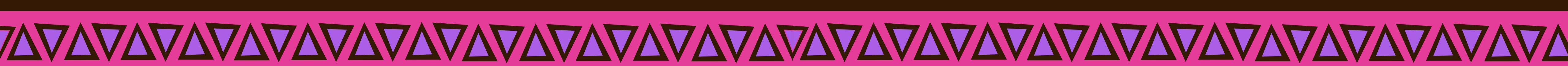
Once people settled into permanent settlements they began to grow more than they needed. They also began to make things such as baskets, pottery and jewellery. This meant that they were able to exchange these goods for goods of equal value from other communities. This is called trade.



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At first, trade would have taken place between nearby communities. They would have traded things like meat, wool, grain, pottery and anything else that one village was short of that another had in plentiful supply. Bartering would have been normal as people negotiated what was a fair swap.

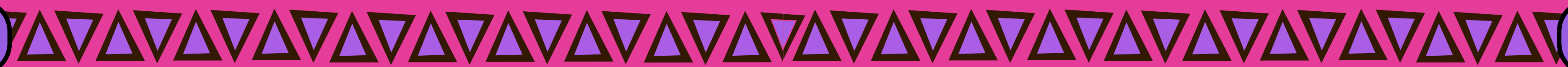
Soon, people started trading over larger distances. They also started trading things like oil, wine, silk, cloth and gold.

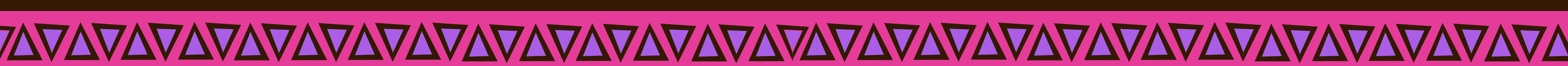
Writing was probably first invented to keep track of objects that were being bought and sold.



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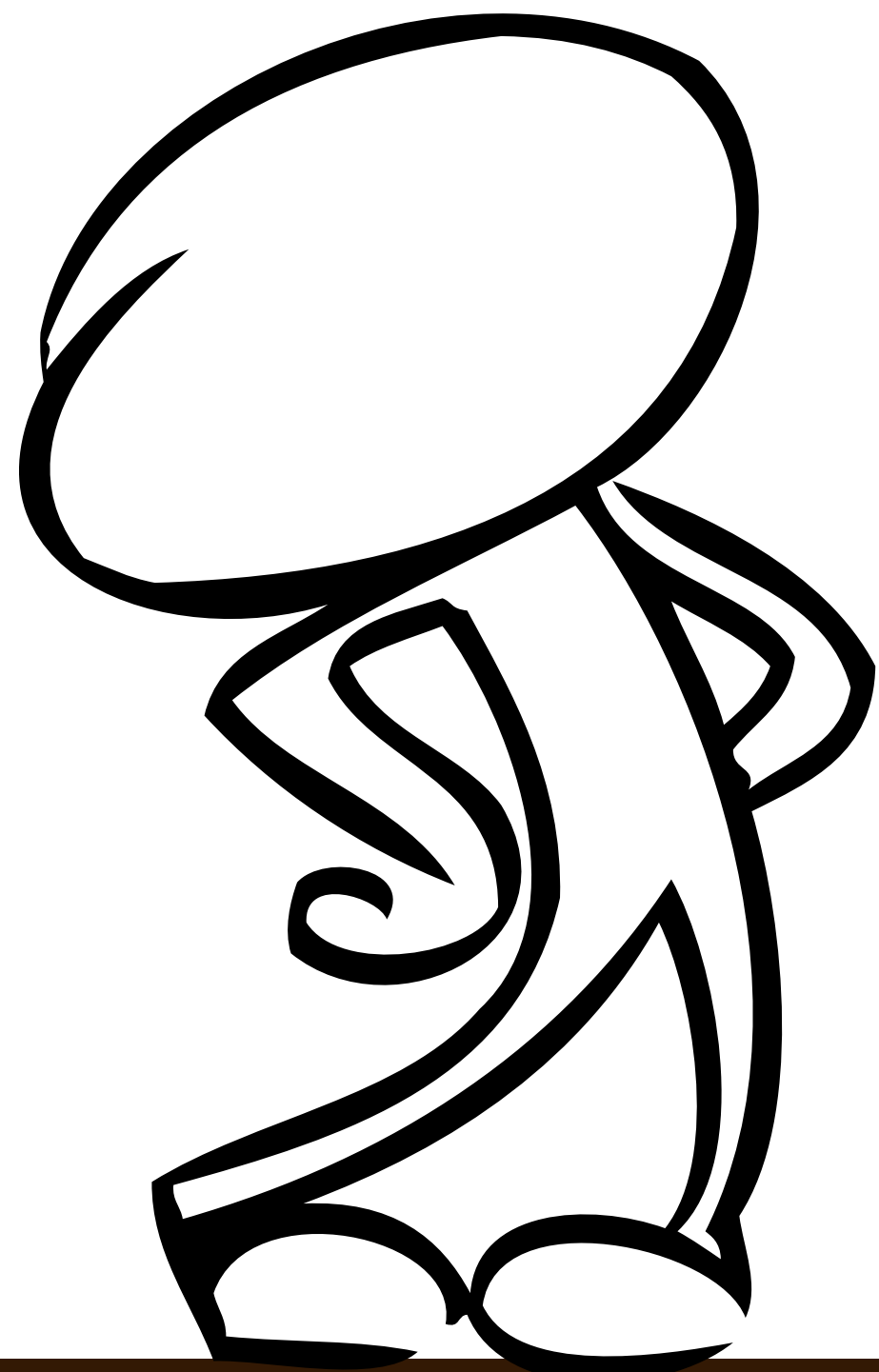
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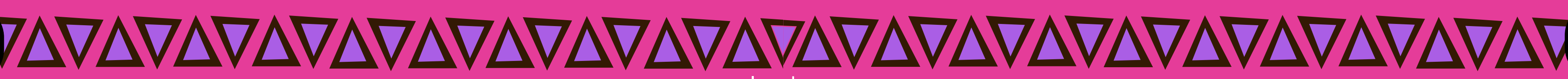


As trade grew, people had to find ways of keeping track of what was being traded. The ancient Sumerians started using clay tokens. Historians think that there was a different token for each object that was traded. For example, if you bought six jars of grain from a trader, six jar tokens would be placed in a sealed clay ball. The buyer could then check the tokens to make sure the correct number of jars had arrived.

These clay tokens date from between 4000 BC and 3000 BC. Later, tokens were used to represent groups of objects, such as five goats or ten jars of grain.



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The people of the Indus Valley civilisation used seals to help keep track of trade. These were small squares carved from soapstone that were pressed into clay. It is thought that these seals were used to help people identify the tradesman.

We know that the Indus Valley traded with the Sumerians because their seals have been found in the Sumer region. This means that they traded over very long distances.



These are examples of Indus Valley seals. No one has yet been able to translate the Indus writing.

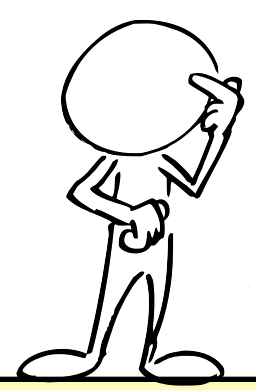
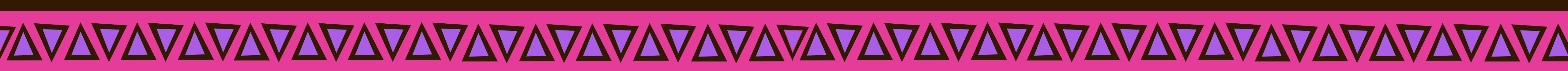
Trade was a big part of life for all of the major early civilisations. Not only did they trade within their own civilisations but they travelled long distances to trade with other places too. This often meant sailing and travelling long distances on foot or using carts.



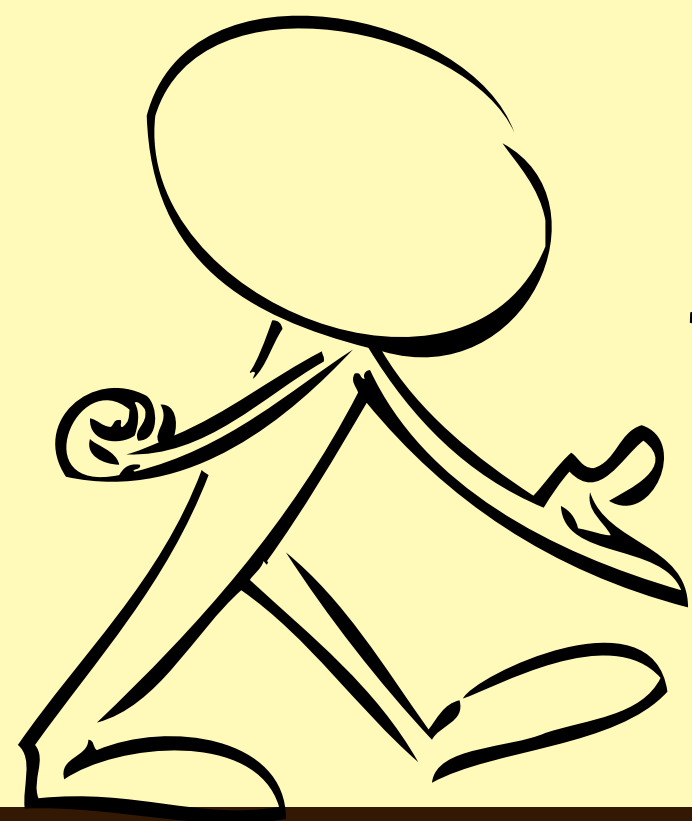
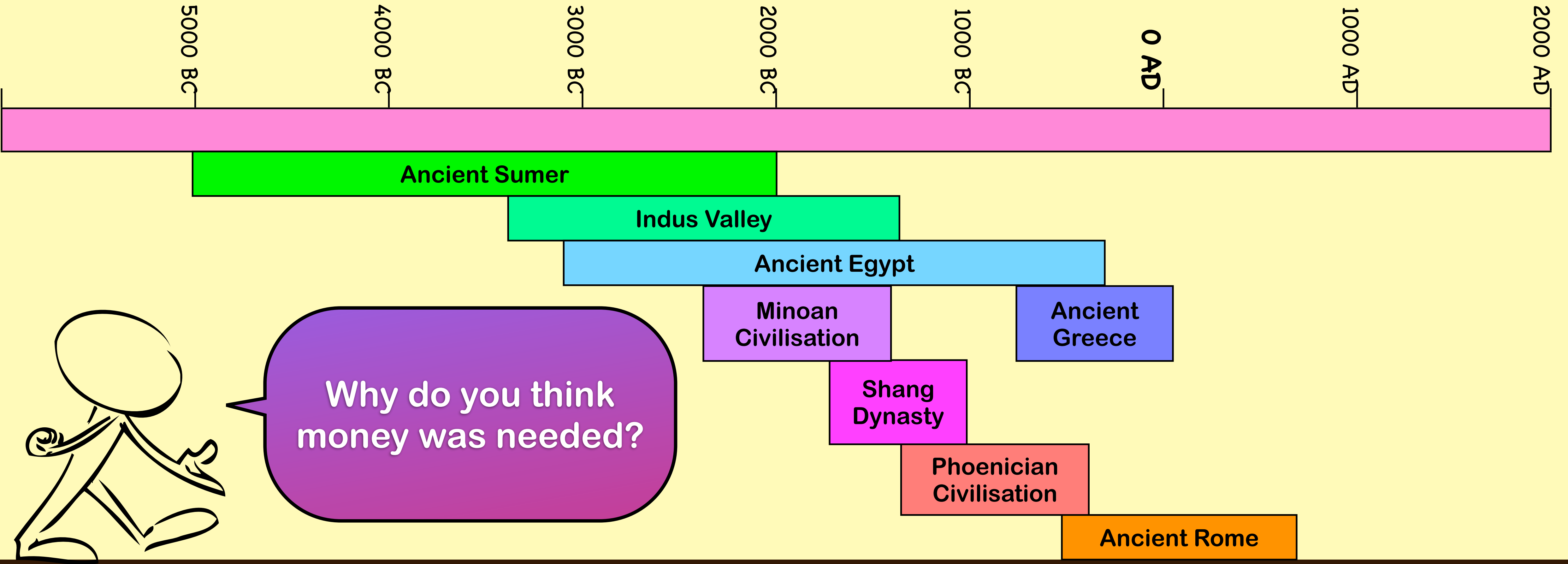
Some civilisations, like the Phoenicians, were famous for their merchant ships. The Phoenicians lived along the Mediterranean coast and used advanced ships to trade with other places. They were famous for trading brightly dyed clothes, wood and glass. Trade is what made the Phoenicians so prosperous.

Trade was also a good way of spreading new ideas and technologies. The people of the Indus Valley civilisation, for example, were the first people to use cotton to make cloth. This cloth could then be traded and other civilisations would see how to make cloth too. Trade helped writing systems spread too, such as the cuneiform writing of the Sumerians or the very first alphabet of the Phoenicians.





Have a look at this timeline. When do you think money first started to be used?

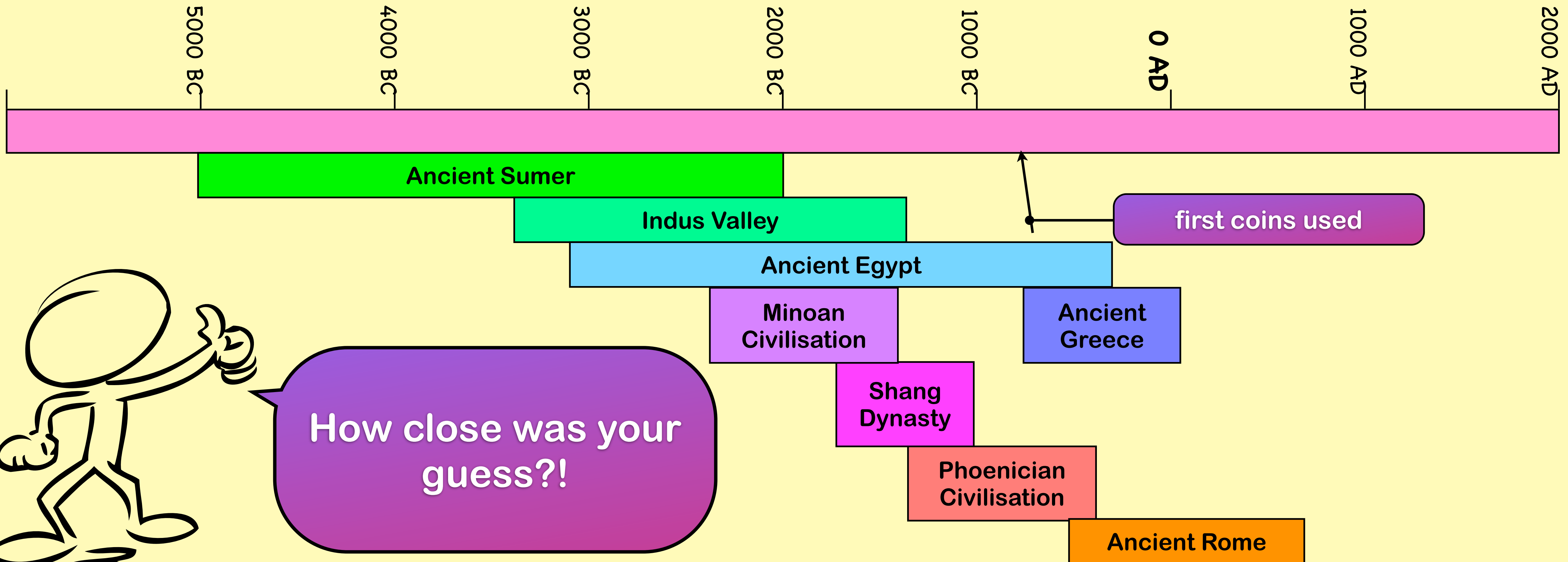


Why do you think money was needed?

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The first coins were not used until 700 BC. The very first coins were made in Lydia, Anatolia which is now where the modern country Turkey is.



How close was your guess?!

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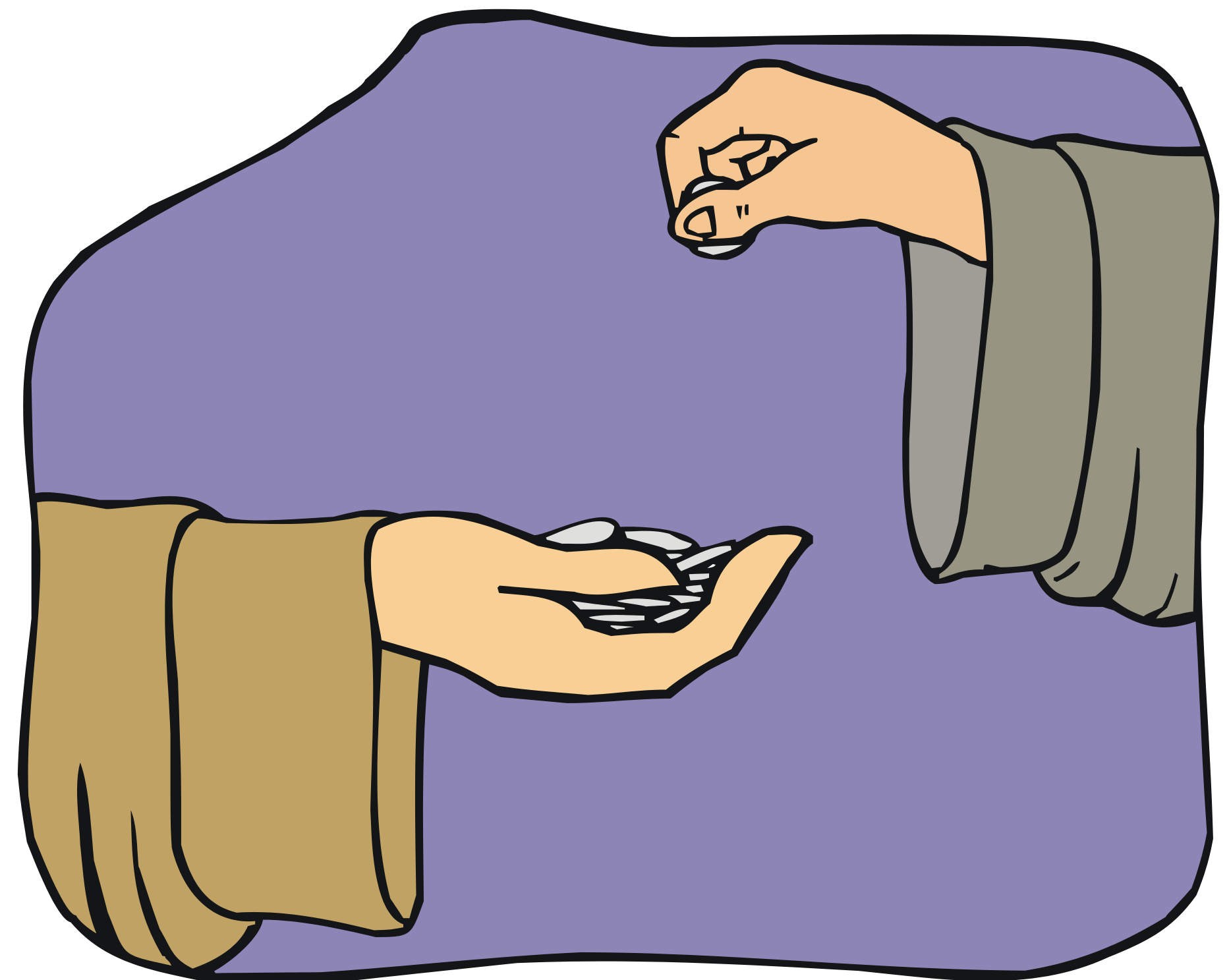
This is a coin from Lydia from the 6th century BC. How is it the same or different to our modern coins?

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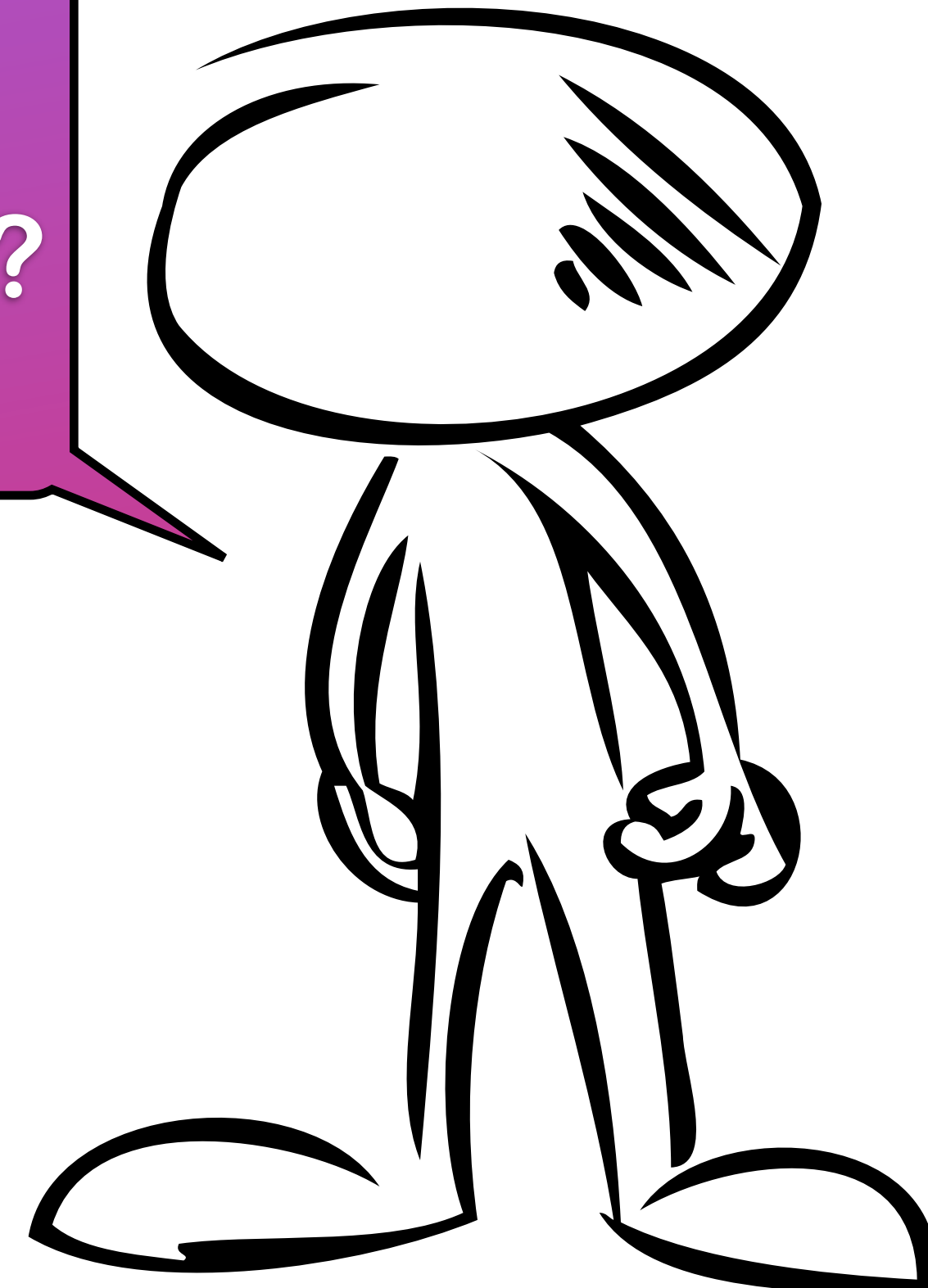
The first coins were made of a mixture of gold and silver called electrum. They were used for trade and the idea of coins quickly spread to the ancient Greeks and then the Romans. Coins didn't reach Britain until around 100 BC.

The introduction of money meant objects could have a set value for the first time. Before this, people had to agree fair swaps between themselves. It also meant people could transport their wealth easily instead of having it tied up in livestock or other objects that were difficult to transport.



Can you imagine a world without money?

If money had never been invented, what do you think would be a fair trade for a pair of shoes?



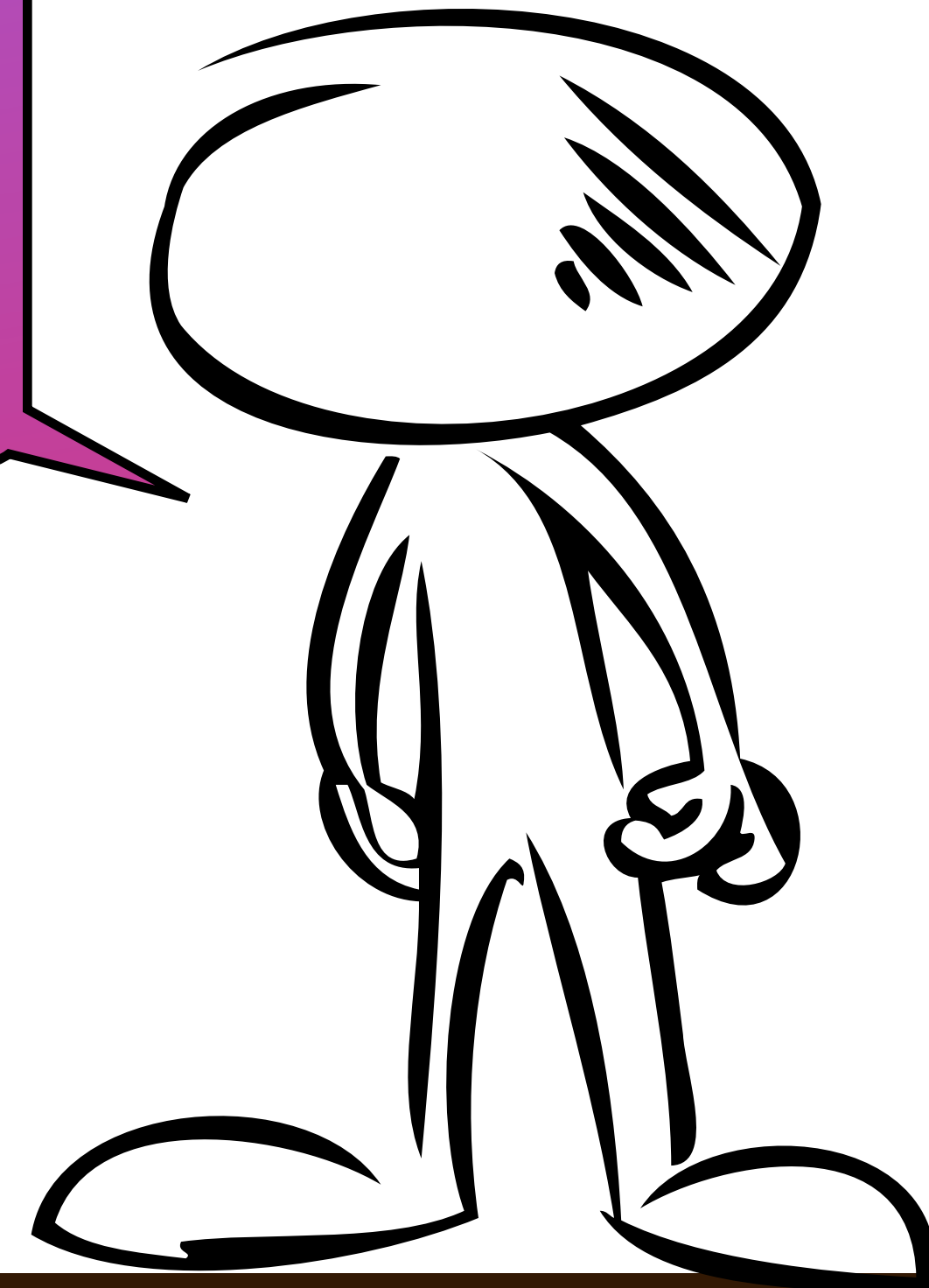
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Can you imagine a world without money?



If money had never been invented, what do you think would be a fair trade for a loaf of bread?



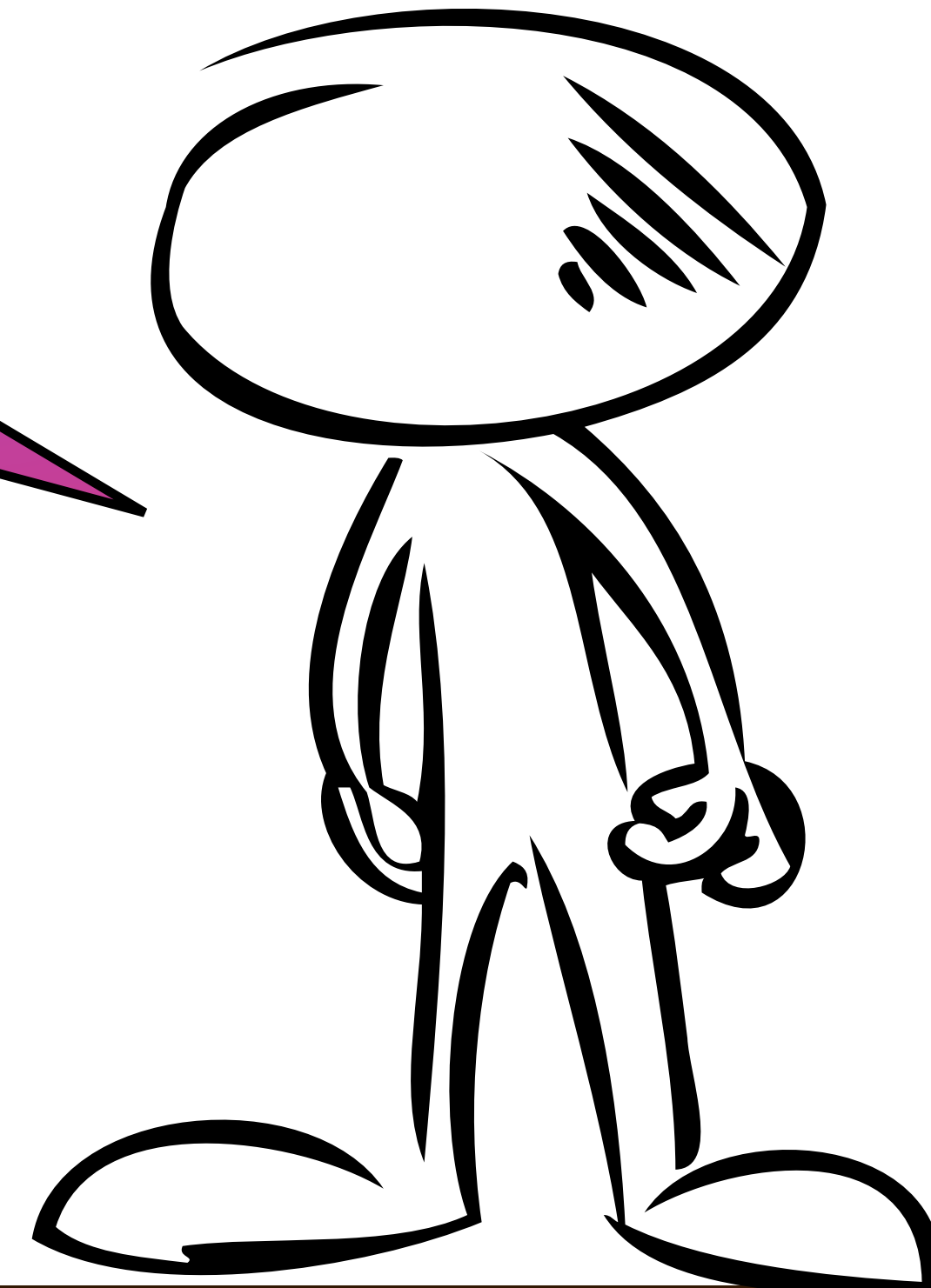
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Can you imagine a world without money?



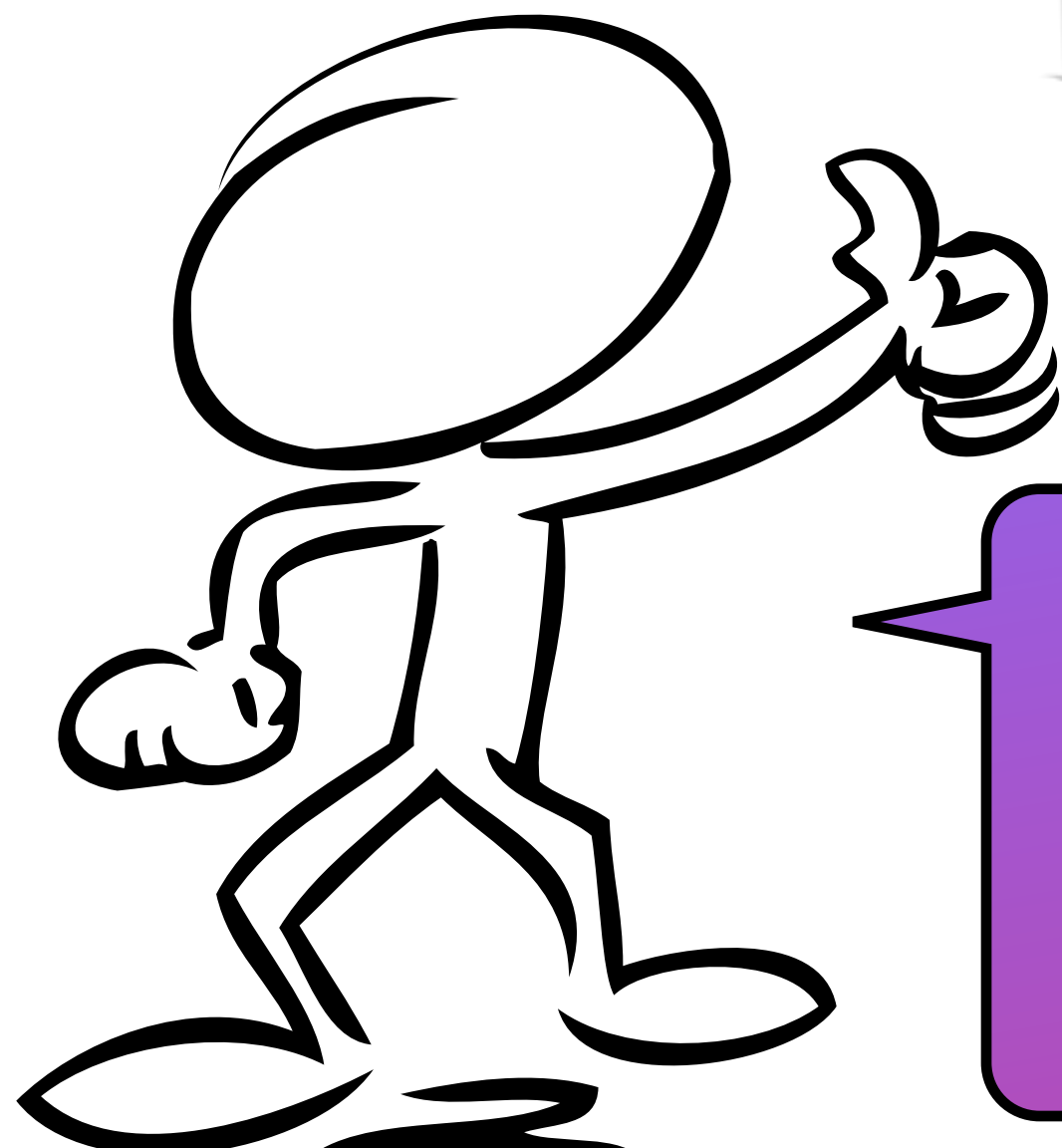
If money had never been invented, what do you think would be a fair trade for a laptop?



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Plenary:



Can you put these coins in order from earliest to latest?
What clues can you use to help you?

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480 BC



350 BC



220 BC



284 AD



Did you get them right? What has changed as the coins have developed?