

Mesopotamia – Birthplace of Civilization

9th grade acceleration

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Where is Mesopotamia?

- There is no country or area on a map today called “Mesopotamia.”
- Today, it includes southeastern Turkey, eastern Syria, and most of Iraq.
- Mesopotamia is Greek for “land between two rivers.”
- It refers to the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
- It is also known as the Fertile Crescent.
- **Coloring Time!! - ON YOUR MAP, TRACE THE TIGRIS AND EUPHRATES IN BLUE AND THE AREA SURROUNDING THEM IN GREEN.**

Map of Mesopotamia



Sumer – First Great Mesopotamian Civilization

- Mesopotamian culture began around 7,000 B.C.
- Life was able to thrive there because of the rich sediment deposited in the soil between the Tigris and Euphrates.
- The first great culture to live there resided in a region that became known as Sumer or the Sumerian civilization.
- Sumer was in the extreme southern part of Mesopotamia.

Life in Sumer – copy down these questions to answer during the video

1. Why did the ancient Sumerians look for new ways to get their food?
2. How did growing crops and domesticating animals allow the Sumerians to build cities?
3. Why did the soil of Mesopotamia grow such good crops?
4. What problem at first made farming difficult?
5. How did the Sumerians finally control the rivers?

Questions – cont.

6. What important farming tool did the Sumerians invent?
7. Name 3 other inventions of the Sumerians.
8. What system of writing did they invent?
9. What did the Sumerians put into writing before any other society?
10. What type of temples did the Sumerians build?
11. Of what material were Sumerian houses made?
12. What was the “burden” tax?

Sumerian Culture

- Government – Each city ruled itself – city-state. The king made the laws which were written down by scribes. The king had a set of advisors that helped him rule and interpret law. No 3 branches of gov't like we have today.
- Developments/Inventions – cuneiform, plow, wheel, 12-month calendar, levees and gated ditches to control rivers.

Sumerian Culture

- Religion – Polytheistic (many gods); each city-state built a ziggurat to its primary god
- Economy – There were a number of jobs and a number of social classes within Sumerian society.
 - Upper class - consisted of the king, his advisors as well as priests and scribes.
 - Middle class - shopkeepers and merchants.
 - Lowest working class - farmers and fishermen
 - Lowest class - slaves

Sumerian Culture

*Before
Common
Era*

- Sumerian culture lasted from 3500 – 2,000 BCE
- Was taken over by Assyrians in the north and Babylonians in the South.
- Many accomplishments from Sumerian culture were absorbed into these two cultures.
- After a number of years, the Babylonians ruled the area known originally as Mesopotamia.

First Babylonian Empire

- 1900 -1600 BCE
- Most well-known leader: Hammurabi
- He developed Hammurabi's Code – first written set of laws used for entire group of people; laws were applied equally to rich and poor, slave and free

Second Babylonian Empire

- 625-540 BCE
- Most well-known leader: Nebuchadnezzar
- While he was ruler, the empire expanded across the Middle East to include Jerusalem
- Built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of 7 wonders of ancient world

- Much of Babylonian culture was similar to that of the Sumerians.
- Economy – many types of jobs – shopkeepers, farmers, merchants, craftsmen, priests, scribes
- Religion – Had a polytheistic system but under Hammurabi, the city of Babylon was built to honor the god Marduk
- Government – Headed by a king who was the military, religious, and political leader of the empire.
- Inventions/Developments – Astronomy, Hammurabi's Code, Hanging Gardens of Babylon (one of 7 wonders of ancient world), variety of musical instruments, art and literature thrived