

Unit 1: Ancient Legacies, Modern World**Ancient Mesopotamia: Discovery Through Documents****Focus Questions:**

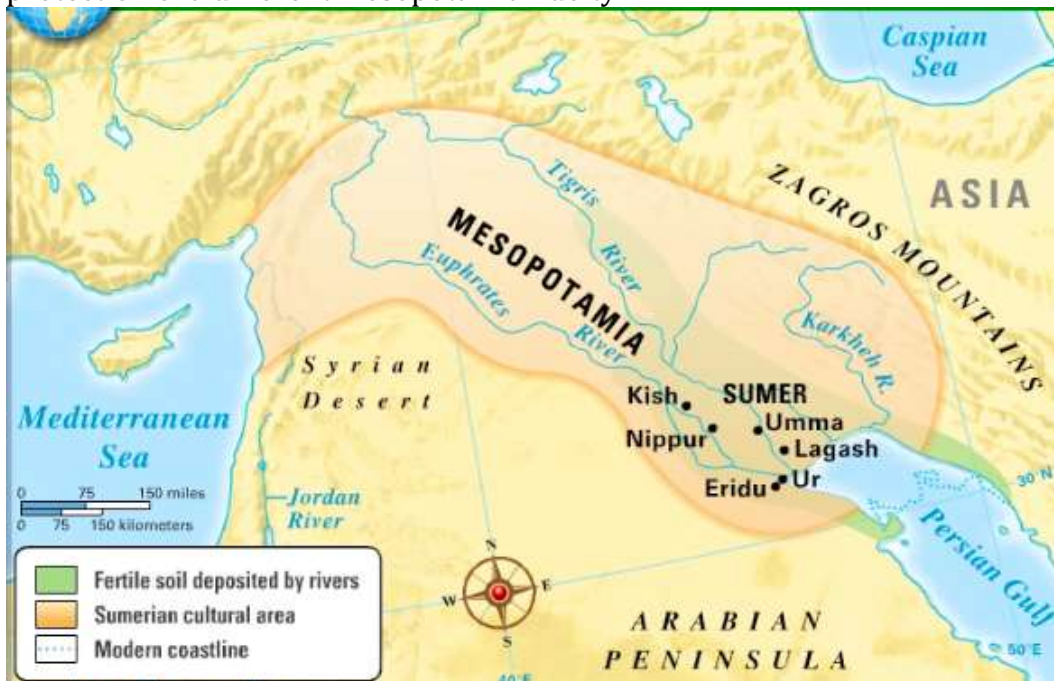
What are the cultural characteristics of the ancient Sumer?

1. Deconstruct question.
2. Brainstorm relevant outside information.

Was Sumer a civilization?

1. Deconstruct question.
2. Brainstorm relevant outside information.

Background Information: Below is a map of the fertile crescent region during the period of Sumerian influence in ancient Mesopotamia from 2400 to 1600 BCE. The Sumerians occupied the lower valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is now southern Iraq. Ancient Sumer was not a unified nation but was made up of a dozen or so independent city-states. Each was thought to be under the protection of a different Mesopotamian deity.



Beginning around 3200 BCE, the Sumerians constructed ziggurats as part of a city-state's religious complex. The ziggurat was probably not the place of public worship or ceremonies, but rather the house of God. Through the ziggurat, the gods could be close to mankind. The cults in the ziggurats were performed and witnessed only by the priests, and their assignments were to provide for all the needs of the gods. Therefore, it is believed that only priests were allowed in the temple part of the complex.

The process of building the ziggurat was in itself a religious act. Therefore, everyone participating had to be good, honest human beings. In addition, frequent offerings were made to the gods during the construction phase. Once the temple was completed, a great initiation celebration took place that often lasted for several days. During this celebration, a holy wedding between two of the gods was staged, and plenty of offerings were presented to the most important gods.

The Sumerian city plan reflected the central role of the local god in the daily life of the of he city-state's occupants. The temple was not only the focus of local religious practice, but also an administrative and economic center.



Category/topic

Summary

Document 2: The Perpetual Worshippers of Eshnunna (2750 BCE) from the Square Temple at Eshnunna (in modern Tell Asmar, Iraq) are made of gypsum and inlaid with shell and black limestone. The tallest figure is approximately 2' 6" high. These statues can be found today in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, Iraq.

Analysis

Beginning around 3200 BCE, the Sumerians produced small-scale sculptures and objects carved from alabaster, gypsum, lapis lazuli, limestone, marble, and wood. Details and decorative elements were often inlaid using shell, lapis lazuli, red limestone, black limestone, and gold. These statues perhaps dedicated to the god Abu, in order to pray perpetually on behalf of the person they represented.



Category/topic

The Standard of Ur, also referred to as the "Battle Standard of Ur" or the "Royal Standard of Ur," is a Sumerian artifact excavated from the Royal Cemetery in the ancient city of Ur. Originally found in fragments, the artifact has been reconstructed as a hollow wooden box (8.50 inches in width and 19.50 inches in length). It is inlaid with a mosaic made of shell, red limestone and lapis lazuli.

Each of the two broad panels presents a series of scenes displayed in three horizontal sections. The two mosaics are often referred to as "War" and "Peace" because each side illustrates the representation of a military campaign and scenes from a banquet, respectively.

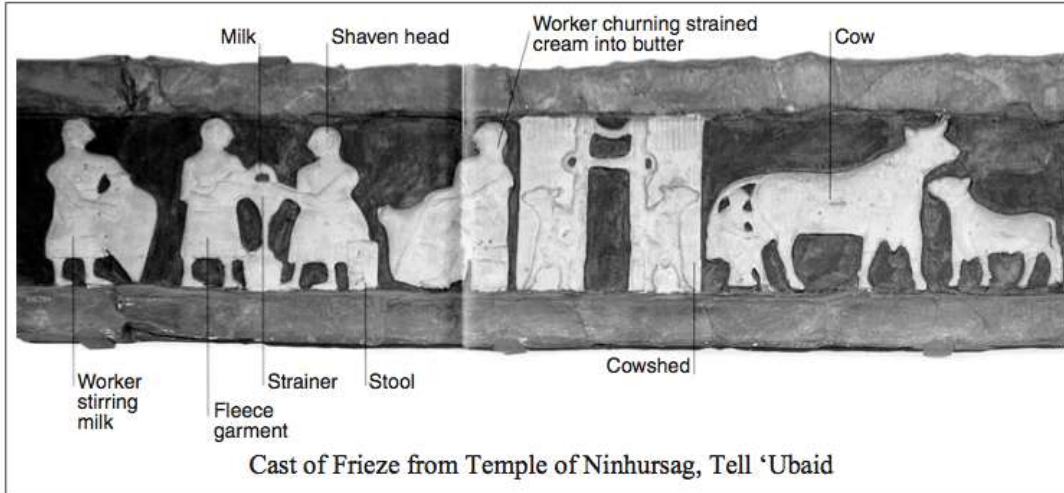
The city-states of ancient Sumer were often at war with one another, and warfare is the theme of many found artifacts. The spoils of war, as well as farming and trade, brought considerable wealth to some of the city-states of ancient Sumer.



Document 4:

Summary

Mesopotamia: Everyday Life



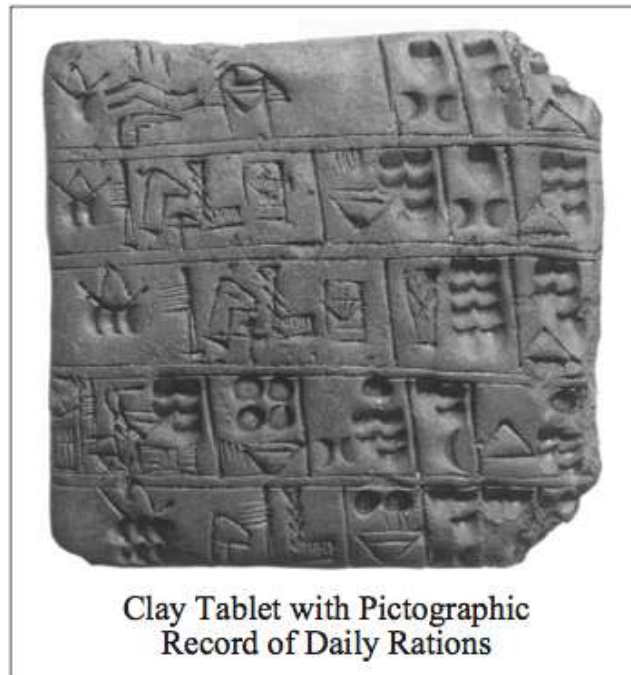
Source: *The Visual Dictionary of Ancient Civilizations*, Dorling Kindersley (adapted)

Analysis

Category/topic

Document 5:

Summary



Source: *The Visual Dictionary of Ancient Civilizations*,
Dorling Kindersley (adapted)

Analysis

Category/topic