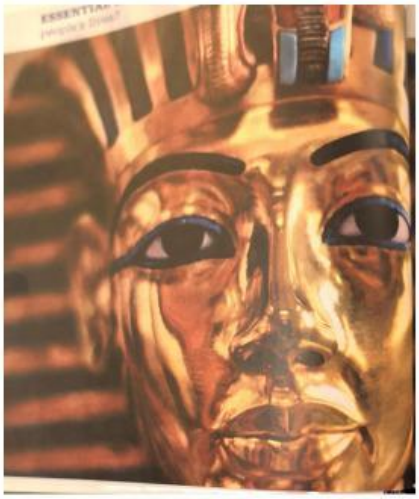

A civilization emerges in Sumer

A long time ago, people lived in a place called the Middle East. One of the first groups to build towns there was the Sumerians. The land had special features that made life different and sometimes hard. Many people, after the Sumerians, learned from them. The Sumerians made new ideas and tools that helped people in the Middle East and other places far away.

Civilizations Arise in the Fertile Crescent

Geography of the Fertile Crescent —

A long time ago, people lived near two big rivers called the Tigris and the Euphrates. These rivers are in a place we now call Iraq. The land around the rivers is very good for growing plants. This area is part of the Fertile Crescent. The Fertile Crescent is a curved strip of land that goes from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.

At first, farmers in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley grew food there a long time ago. The soil was good for crops. Because the soil made plants grow well, families had more food than they needed. That extra food helped towns grow bigger. A long time after that, people called the land Mesopotamia. **Mesopotamia** means “between the rivers.” Around 3300 B.C., the first big cities and civilizations began in a part of Mesopotamia called Sumer. Over many years, many different peoples lived in Mesopotamia.

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The Tigris and Euphrates rivers begin in the highlands of Turkey. They flow through Iraq and end in the Persian Gulf. In spring, snow on the mountains melts. The melting snow can make the rivers rise and flood. Sometimes floods were very strong and caused damage. Even with floods, farmers planted many kinds of crops. When floods went down, they left a fine soil called silt. This silt made the ground very good for growing food. Because of the good soil, people in Mesopotamia usually had enough to eat.

A World Crossroads

The Fertile Crescent —

The **Fertile Crescent** is a place where three big lands meet: Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is easy to travel there because there are not many mountains or big walls. People who raised animals, people who wanted to take land, and people who sold goods walked through the deserts and over the mountains into the Fertile Crescent. Because many people met there, they shared ideas and things. Each new group left something behind. Over time, the ideas and inventions from this place spread east toward India and west toward Europe.

Sumerians Overcome Environmental Challenges

Life by the Rivers —

People long ago lived by two big rivers called the Tigris and the Euphrates. These rivers sometimes flooded. Big floods could wash away soil and break small homes made of mud bricks.

Long ago, people told stories about a hero named **Gilgamesh**. Those stories were put together into a very long poem called The Epic of Gilgamesh. The poem tells about a huge flood that hurts many people.

Archaeologists — people who study old things — found signs that big floods happened a lot long ago. The land also had very hot summers and times with no rain. Hot winds and little water could make the soil dry, hurt crops, and cause people to not have enough food.

To stay safe, farmers who lived by the rivers worked together. They built dikes and dams to stop some flood water. They made small canals to carry water to their fields. As the canals got more complicated, people needed leaders to help plan and keep the canals working.

Temple leaders and later kings helped organize the work. They told villagers how to build dikes and irrigation ditches so water could reach the crops.

When farms worked well, more people lived nearby and towns grew. These towns became the Sumerian civilization. The Sumerians had good soil and water. They also had organized

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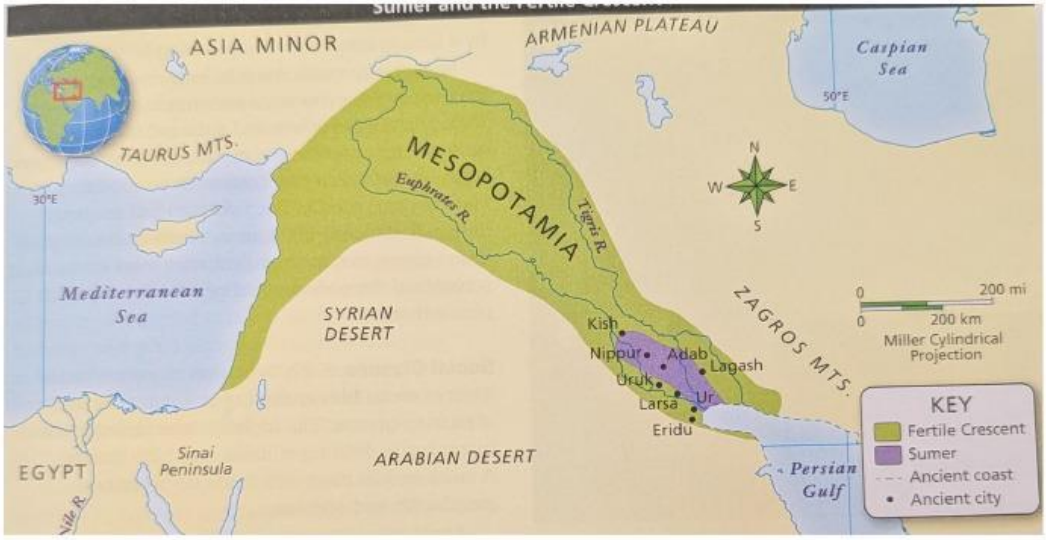
governments, temples, and people who did special jobs. These things helped their civilization grow.



Sumerian Civilization Develops

The ancient people called Sumerians lived a long time ago in a place with a lot of mud but not many trees or stones. Because they were very smart, they used that mud to make bricks and build some of the first big cities in the world!

Here is what life was like for them:

Building with Mud

Since they didn't have wood, they made bricks out of clay and dried them in the sun. They built huge temples called **Ziggurats** that looked like tall squares stacked on top of each other. These were built to honor their gods.

Working and Trading

The Wheel: They were some of the first people to use wheels on carts. This helped them carry heavy things to far-away places to trade.

Farmers and Makers: Most people were farmers who grew food. Other people were "artisans" who made things like clothes or tools in little shops along the streets.

Kings and Leaders

At first, the people chose strong leaders to help them during wars. After a while, these leaders became Kings. The King's job was to keep the city safe, fix the water pipes for the farms, and make sure everyone followed the rules.

Different Groups of People

In their cities, people were put into groups:

Top Group: Kings and priests (the leaders).

Middle Group: People who wrote things down or sold items.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Bottom Group: Farmers (the biggest group) and workers.

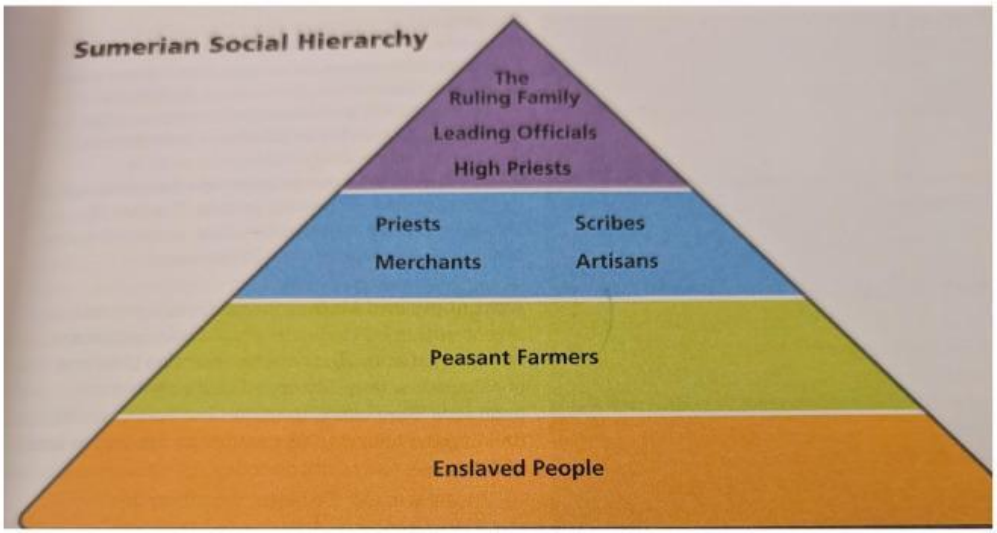
Long ago, in a place called Sumer, people lived in groups. Some groups were more powerful than others. This is called a hierarchy. It looks like a triangle or a pyramid!

The Sumerian People
The Top (Purple): This was the king, his family, and the leaders. They were the bosses and made the rules.

The Middle (Blue): These were people with special jobs, like writers (scribes) and people who made things with their hands (artisans).

The Bottom (Green): This was the biggest group. Most people were farmers. They grew all the food for everyone else.

The Very Bottom (Orange): These were enslaved people. They had to work very hard and did not have many choices.



Fun Facts
Writing: They invented a cool way to write by making marks in clay. It was called cuneiform.

Beliefs: They believed in many different gods and goddesses. They thought the gods controlled the rain and the sun.

Women: Women in Sumer had more power than women in other old places. Some could even own their own land!

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Quick Quiz!
1. Which group was the biggest and lived at the bottom of the pyramid?
A) The King and his family
B) Farmers
C) Scribes

2. True or False: The people of Sumer believed in many gods.

True

False

3. What did Sumerians use to write on?
A) Paper
B) Computers
C) Clay tablets

4. True or False: Everyone in Sumer had the same amount of power.

True

False

The Story of Sumer

Long ago, there was a place called **Sumer**. People there lived in a special way.

The People Pyramid

The people were like a big triangle.

- **The Top:** The King and his family were the bosses.
- **The Middle:** Some people were writers or made pretty things.
- **The Bottom:** Most people were **farmers**. They grew all the food!

Special Writing

The people of Sumer invented a way to talk on paper—but they used **clay**! They used a stick to

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make marks. This was called **cuneiform**. They used it to count their sheep and write stories.

Fun Facts

- **Gods:** They believed in many gods who lived in the sky and the water.
- **Stars:** They looked at the stars to make a calendar.
- **Wheels:** They built the first carts with wheels to move things!

Fun Quiz Time!

1. Who was at the very top of the people pyramid?

- A) The Farmers
- B) The King and his family
- C) The Cats

2. True or False: Sumerians wrote on tablets made of clay.

- True
- False

3. What did most people in Sumer do for work?

- A) They were farmers.
- B) They flew airplanes.
- C) They played video games.

4. True or False: The Sumerians built carts with wheels.

- True
- False

Empires of Mesopotamia: Guided Notes

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Empires of Mesopotamia: King Sargon and the First Empire

Before Sargon, cities were like small _____ that did not always get along.

Sargon's Big Idea: Bring all the cities together to make one giant _____.

What is an Empire?

_____ rules over many different cities and groups of people.

Sargon's Special Story

- Found by a _____ who raised him
- Started the first _____ system

King Hammurabi: The King of Rules

Hammurabi ruled a place called _____.

Hammurabi's Code

- Carved rules on a giant _____ pillar
- Famous rule: "_____ for an Eye"

Other Important Empires

The Hittites

- Made stronger tools and _____

The Assyrians

- Built one of the first _____ in the world

The Persians

- Built a long _____ road
- Started using _____ for trade

Fun Facts

- Sumerians invented _____ writing
- They believed in many _____
- Women had more _____ than in other ancient places

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Answer Key

1. teams
2. team
3. king
4. basket
5. gardener
6. postal
7. Babylon
8. 282
9. stone
10. Eye
11. iron
12. weapons
13. warriors
14. libraries
15. mail
16. royal
17. coins
18. cuneiform
19. gods
20. power

Empires of Mesopotamia: Guided Notes

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

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Empires in Mesopotamia

King Sargon and the First Empire
A long, long time ago, there was a man named Sargon. He lived in a place called Mesopotamia.

Back then, there were many small cities. Each city had its own king. The cities were like little teams that did not always get along. Sargon had a big idea. He wanted to bring all the cities together to make one giant team.

What is an Empire?
When one king rules over many different cities and groups of people, it is called an empire. Sargon built the very first empire in the world! It was called the Akkadian Empire.

Why was Sargon special?

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The Basket in the River: There is a famous story that when Sargon was a baby, his mother put him in a basket on a river to keep him safe. A gardener found him and raised him.

Strong Leader: He was very good at leading soldiers. He won many battles to bring the cities together.

New Ideas: He started the first postal system. This means people could send letters to each other in clay envelopes!

Sargon was a powerful king who changed history by showing how people from different places could live under one rule.

Two Big Kings of Long Ago
A very long time ago, in a place called Mesopotamia, there were two famous kings.

1. King Sargon: The First Big Team
Before Sargon, every city was like a tiny team. They did not always get along. Sargon wanted everyone to be on the same team.

He was the first king to bring many cities together.

This is called an Empire.

Sargon's empire was called Akkad.

2. King Hammurabi: The King of Rules
Later, there was another king named Hammurabi. He ruled a place called Babylon. He knew that for everyone to get along, they needed rules.

He wrote down 282 rules (laws).

He didn't put them in a book. He carved them onto a giant stone pillar so everyone could see them!

These rules helped people know what was fair. For example, if someone was mean, the rules said what should happen next.

Why does it matter?
These kings were some of the first people to show the world how to lead a big group of people and how to use rules to keep things fair.

In the old days, there were no books or computers. People told stories to remember their kings. Here is the story of how Sargon became a leader, written just for you!

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The Baby in the Basket
A long, long time ago, a baby was born. His mother was a priestess. She wanted to keep the baby safe, so she made a special basket. She put the baby inside and let the basket float down the big Euphrates River.

A kind man named Akki found the basket. He was a gardener. He took the baby home and raised him as his own son. The baby grew up to be Sargon.

Sargon worked hard. He became a helper to a king. Later, he became a king himself! Because he started with nothing and became a great leader, people thought he was very special.

Why is Sargon Famous?
The First Empire: He brought many different groups of people together to live as one big family.

The Capital City: He built a beautiful city called Akkad.

A Long Rule: He was the king for 56 years!

The King of Laws
After Sargon's time, another king named Hammurabi wanted to make sure things were fair.

He wrote down rules so that big, strong people could not hurt smaller or weaker people. He called these rules his "Code." He had them carved into a giant black stone so everyone would know the rules.
King Hammurabi had a lot of rules—282 of them! He wanted to make sure that if someone did something mean, they got a fair punishment.

Here is his most famous rule:

"An Eye for an Eye"
This rule sounds a little silly, but it was very serious. It meant that if a person hurt someone else, the same thing would happen to them.

The Rule: If a man knocks out another man's tooth, then his own tooth will be knocked out.

Why? Hammurabi thought this was the best way to be fair. He didn't want people to just be mean for no reason.

Was Hammurabi Always Mean?
No! He also had rules to help people.

He had rules to protect kids.

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He had rules to make sure builders built strong houses. If a house fell down, the builder got in big trouble!

He wanted the "strong" people to be kind to the "weak" people.

Fun Fact:

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Hammurabi's rules were carved into a giant black stone that was taller than a grown-up! It was over 7 feet tall. He put it in the middle of the city so no one could say, "I didn't know the rules!" This is the giant stone called a stele.

If you look at the very top, you can see a carving of King Hammurabi standing in front of a god. Below that, the stone is covered in tiny writing

Those tiny marks are the 282 rules. It was like a giant outdoor book that everyone could see!

Let's see if you can be a fair king like Hammurabi! In his time, the rules were all about making things "even."

Try to match the Action to the Hammurabi Rule:

If someone does this... (The Action)	What should happen? (The Rule)
1. A builder builds a house that falls down and hurts someone.	A. The person must give a new sheep back.
2. A person steals a sheep from a neighbor.	B. The builder must fix the house for free (or get in big trouble!).
3. A person breaks a neighbor's bone.	C. The person's own bone must be broken.

More Empires and New Ideas

1. The Hittites: The Iron Masters

The Hittites were a group of people who learned a secret. They figured out how to use iron!

Before this, people used soft metals like bronze.

Iron was much harder and stronger.

The Hittites made better tools and weapons, which helped them win many battles.

2. The Assyrians: The Library Kings

The Assyrians were very tough warriors, but they also loved to learn!

A king named Assurbanipal built one of the very first libraries in the whole world.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

He didn't have paper books. He collected thousands of clay tablets with writing on them.

The Assyrians were also the first to make a lock and key to keep doors safe!

3. Nebuchadnezzar: The Garden King
Later, a king named Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon. He wanted to make his city the most beautiful place on Earth.

He built the Hanging Gardens.

These were giant hills made of bricks with trees and flowers growing all over them.

Legend says he built them for his wife because she missed the green hills where she grew up. It was like a giant park in the middle of a city!

Rise of the Persian Empire

The Great Persian Empire
After all the other kings, the Persians built an empire that was even bigger! They had some very smart ways to keep everyone happy and connected.

1. King Darius: The Great Organizer
King Darius was like a super-boss. To run such a big place, he did three big things:

The Mail System: He started a mail service with fast horses. If the King had a message, a rider would jump on a horse and zoom down the road to deliver it.

The Royal Road: He built a giant road hundreds of miles long so people could travel easily.

The "Eyes and Ears": He sent special helpers to every part of the empire to make sure everyone was being fair. They were called the "Eyes and Ears of the King."

2. Money and Trade
Before the Persians, people mostly swapped things (like "I'll give you my chicken for your bag of apples").

The Persians started using coins made of gold and silver.

This made it much easier to buy and sell things in the market!

3. A New Way to Think

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A thinker named Zoroaster taught the Persians about Good and Bad.

He said that people should choose to be kind and do good things.

He taught that if you choose to be good, the world becomes a better place.

The Big Kings
King Sargon: He was the very first king to bring many cities together to make one big group called an Empire.

King Hammurabi: He made 282 rules so everyone would be safe and act fairly. He carved his rules onto a giant stone pillar.

King Nebuchadnezzar: He loved beautiful things! He built "Hanging Gardens" with flowers and trees that looked like they were floating in the air.

Other Smart People
The Hittites: They learned how to use iron. Iron is a very strong metal, which made their tools and weapons much better.

The Assyrians: They were tough warriors, but they also built one of the world's first libraries to keep old stories on clay tablets.

The Phoenicians: They were great sailors! They also made a special list of symbols to stand for sounds, which became the alphabet we use to read today.

The Persian Empire
The Persians were very smart at running a big place.

King Darius: He built long, smooth roads and started a mail system so people could send messages quickly. He even used coins to make buying things easier.

Good vs. Bad: A thinker named Zoroaster taught people that they should choose to be kind and good, and that if they did, the world would be a better place.

LIVEWORKSHEETS