

Mesopotamia

Brief #2

Focus

The Fertile Crescent is located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

The first civilizations developed in an area called the Fertile Crescent. **The Fertile Crescent is an area of rich land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in the Middle East.** The present day countries of Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Kuwait are the countries that are there now. In 3500 B.C. this region was called Mesopotamia. **Mesopotamia means *the land between the two rivers*.**

Ancient civilizations, as well as more modern ones like the United States, often developed along the banks of rivers. Rivers provide food and water. Often, when rivers flood their banks, the surrounding soil becomes very fertile and good for growing crops.

Thousands of years ago, when civilizations first began, there were no countries or nations. But there were city-states. **A city-state is an area that has its own government and culture.** Some of the earliest city-states in the Fertile Crescent were Ur, Kish, and Nippur.



Sumer

Sumer was an early and influential Mesopotamian city-state. The Sumerians made houses out of mud bricks. They also built structures called ziggurats. **A ziggurat is a pyramid-shaped building that was used for religious ceremonies.** The ziggurat of Ur, located in present-day Iraq, still stands.

The Sumerians are credited with inventing the wheel and cuneiform. **Cuneiform is the first form of writing that people used.** The Sumerian civilization lasted until about 2000 B.C.



Akkad

Akkad was another powerful city-state in Mesopotamia. In about 2334 B.C., the Akkadians expanded their influence by conquering other city-states in the region. Eventually, the Akkadian Empire controlled a large area. An empire is different from a city-state. **An empire is a large area full of city-states that is controlled by one ruler.** The Akkadian Empire is considered to be the first empire in the world.

Vocabulary

1. Fertile Crescent
2. Mesopotamia
3. city-state
4. Sumer
5. ziggurat
6. cuneiform
7. Akkad
8. empire

Mesopotamia

Brief #2 (cont.)

Fast Fact

From the Hammurabi

Code:

*If a son strike his
father, his hands shall
be hewn off.*



Babylon

In about 1894 B.C., the city-state of Babylon began to emerge as a major force in the Fertile Crescent. It encompassed many city-states and spread over the whole of Mesopotamia. One of Babylon's most powerful kings was Hammurabi. **Hammurabi is famous for developing the Hammurabi Code, which consists of 282 laws.**

The Babylonians made many contributions to mathematics and astronomy. The Babylonian Empire lasted until 539 B.C.



Assyria

In around 1900 B.C. the Assyrian Empire, which was located in the northern part of Mesopotamia, gained power and influence. Even though Assyria and Babylon were separate civilizations, they influenced each others culture and progress.

Each civilization that emerges makes contributions that advance human knowledge. Even in the ancient world, people traveled, talked, and traded. As they did, different ideas, inventions, and religions were spread from person to person and eventually from culture to culture.

In the 19th century, archeologists found what has come to be called the Library of Ashurbanipal. This was the library of an Assyrian king of the same name. The library comprises thousands of clay tables that contain the writings of many civilizations that existed in Mesopotamia. **One of the writings that was found was of a Babylonian poem called Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh is thought to have been an ancient Mesopotamian king.**

Vocabulary (cont.)

9. Babylon
10. Hammurabi Code
11. Assyrian Empire
12. Gilgamesh
13. Mesopotamia



Cradle of Civilization

Mesopotamia is often called the cradle of civilization because it is the area in which the first civilizations were established. The civilizations discussed here, along with many others, made important early contributions that helped to shape the development of all civilizations to follow.