

Lesson 1: The Fertile Crescent



DIRECTIONS: Review the vocabulary terms in the box. Read the summary to reveal how one of the first civilizations developed in the Fertile Crescent. As you read, underline important details **in each section** that relate to that section's title. Think about what you already know, what you want to know, and what you have learned after reading the summary.

Vocabulary

civilization: a group of people who live in a complex, organized society within a culture

fertile: rich, as in soil; good for growing crops

plain: a flat area of land

plateau: an area of high, flat land

irrigation: a system for watering crops

city-state: a city with its own form of government, villages, and traditions

region: an area of land with common physical features

artisan: a craftsperson

Where Civilization Began (p. 35)

The earliest **civilizations** developed in southwestern Asia in about 3500 B.C. A civilization is a group of people who live in a complex, organized society within a culture. Civilizations developed in a part of southwest Asia that stretched from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. We call this area the Fertile Crescent because its land was very **fertile**, or rich, and shaped like a crescent, or curve. A flat area of land, or **plain**, stretched between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This plain became known as Mesopotamia, or “the land between the rivers.” One of the first civilizations appeared in Mesopotamia.

Climate and Rivers (p. 36)

The climate in parts of the Fertile Crescent was not good for farming. It was very hot and dry in the summer. It either rained too much or not enough. In about 5000 B.C., farmers began to look for better land and climate. They moved from a **plateau**, or area of high, flat land, in the northern part of the Fertile Crescent. They settled on the plain between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The rivers gave them a permanent source of water for farming. During seasons of low rainfall, farmers used the rivers to set up **irrigation** systems. Farmers dug trenches and ditches that brought water from the rivers to their fields.

The People (p. 37)

The people of southern Mesopotamia solved many problems. Mesopotamia did not have many resources. Yet the lack of trees and stones did not keep the people from building homes. They built huts out of reeds. Later they made bricks by mixing mud with straw. They used the bricks to build homes, temples, and palaces. They became expert farmers and developed better tools. They used the rivers to move goods. They were able to produce a surplus of food. The production of surplus food was a major step toward the rise of civilization in southern Mesopotamia.

Growth of City-States and Trade (p. 38-39)

The population in southern Mesopotamia grew as people became better farmers. New settlers arrived from different **regions** of the Fertile Crescent. By 3500 B.C., several villages became **city-states**. A city-state is a city that has become an independent state. A city-state has its own form of government, villages, and traditions. There was plenty of surplus food. People were able to work in other jobs besides farming. Some were **artisans**, or craftspeople, such as potters and weavers. Others were religious leaders, politicians, soldiers, or traders. Traders went on long journeys to trade with faraway peoples. They brought back goods that Mesopotamia lacked. Trade helped Mesopotamian culture spread to other parts of the world.

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DIRECTIONS: Read the passage below. Write the main idea and specific details to support it in the boxes.

<p>Around the year 3500 B.C., one of the first civilizations began in a region known today as the Fertile Crescent. The center part of the Fertile Crescent is a land known as Mesopotamia.</p> <p>Mesopotamia lies between two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. In fact, the word Mesopotamia means “the land between the rivers.” These rivers played an important role in the civilization that developed there.</p> <p>The people who lived in Mesopotamia had to overcome many obstacles in order to survive. The climate in this part of the world did not</p>	<p>make farming easy. During the extremely hot summers, the land was very dry. During the rainy season, the rivers flooded the land. Natural resources were limited to little more than water and soil. There were few trees to provide wood for construction and other uses.</p> <p>Fortunately, the people were good problem solvers. They designed an irrigation system that brought water from the rivers to their fields. This system allowed them to grow crops such as straw. By mixing the straw with mud, they were able to make bricks for building shelters.</p>
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