

# Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent



7000-500 BC

# Lesson 1: Geography of the Fertile Crescent



## Rivers

- People settled near rivers because crops would grow here, floods kept the soil fertile
- The Land between the Tigris and the Euphrates was especially fertile

## The Fertile Crescent

- The Fertile Crescent was a very fertile area of farmland between and around the Tigris and Euphrates
- People began to farm in these areas using techniques such as irrigation and digging canals to improve their harvest

# Farming



- Successful farming allowed for their to be food surpluses (extra food)
- Now not everyone had to farm so people could develop other skills –division of labor –now they could do and create more as a society
- Cities began to grow and were supported by agriculture and other goods and natural resources
- Historical Significance –why is any of this important?:  
The geography of Mesopotamia allowed for the formation of cities and the beginnings of early civilization and culture
- Infer: Without these Mesopotamian cities where would we be today?

# MESOPOTAMIA



# Lesson 2: The Rise of Sumer



- People in Sumer were mostly farmers (living in rural areas –like us!), the center of their society was in the urban areas
- Historical Significance: Sumer was the world’s first civilization
- What is a city-state? –A city-state is “a political unit consisting of a city and its surrounding countryside
- City-states became powerful and fought each other for land and control
- Historical Significance: The city-state model would be seen again and again in other civilizations as a way to organize and protect a community.



## Religion

- Sumerians practiced polytheism –the worship of many gods
- What is monotheism?
- Priests were very important members of society and helped the people keep in contact with their gods
- HS: This is an example of early religious practice

## Society

- Sumer had a social hierarchy “the division of society by class or rank”
  - Ruler
  - Priests
  - Craftspeople, merchants, traders
  - Farmers, laborers, traders
  - Slaves
- HS: This kind of social structure

# Gender Roles



## Men

- Had political power and made laws
- Could be educated
- Could have many jobs ex. Priests, traders, merchants, craftsmen
- HS: These roles shaped how society was run

## Women

- Took care of the children and the home
- Usually weren't educated
- Some were priestesses

# Lesson 3: Sumerian Achievements



# Writing: Where would we be without it?



- The Sumerians invented cuneiform –the world’s first writing system
- They used styluses to write on wet clay
- Before, societies used pictographs to write
- Scribes were trained in how to write and keep records
- Sumerians used writing to records history, math, grammar, law, stories, songs, and epics (poems about heroes) –*The Epic of Gilgamesh* (a very important work of literature)
- HS: They invented writing! Enough said...



## A cuneiform tablet containing part of the Gilgamesh epic

photo British Museum Katherine Spaulding



## Another cuneiform tablet

photo British Museum Katherine Spaulding

# Advances and Inventions



## Technical Advances

- Invented the wheel
- Now they had carts and wagons, also created the potter's wheel
- HS: It's the wheel –pretty important
- Also invented the plow
- HS: The plow allowed for easier farming –we still use the plow today!
- They also invented a kind of clock, used bronze to make better weapons, made jewelry and makeup, and built sewers
- HS: They improved their quality of life

## Math and Science

- Created a math system based on the number 60, a circle into 360 degrees and a year into 12 months
- Studied the area of shapes
- HS: These developments have influenced math today
- They made records of observations of the natural world
- They made advances in medicine
- HS: These are skills we use to study science!

# The Arts



## Architecture

- Sumerians lived a variety of different kinds of houses
- Ziggurats were pyramid shaped temples –a very important part of the city
- HS: These architectural developments improved their lives and architectural developments for the future

## The Arts

- Artists and sculptors made objects out of wood, ivory, precious metals, and stone
- They made statues, jewelry, and stone cylinders to use to sign documents
- Instruments, music and dance were also very important to Sumerian culture
- HS: These developments improved culture and influenced the culture of future cities



## Stone cylinders

photo British Museum Katherine Spaulding

# Lesson 4: The Peoples of the Fertile Crescent



## Babylonians

- The Babylonians took control of Mesopotamia
- Hammurabi was a war leader who took over all of Mesopotamia
- He ruled for 42 years but eventually the Babylonian empire fell

## Code of Hammurabi

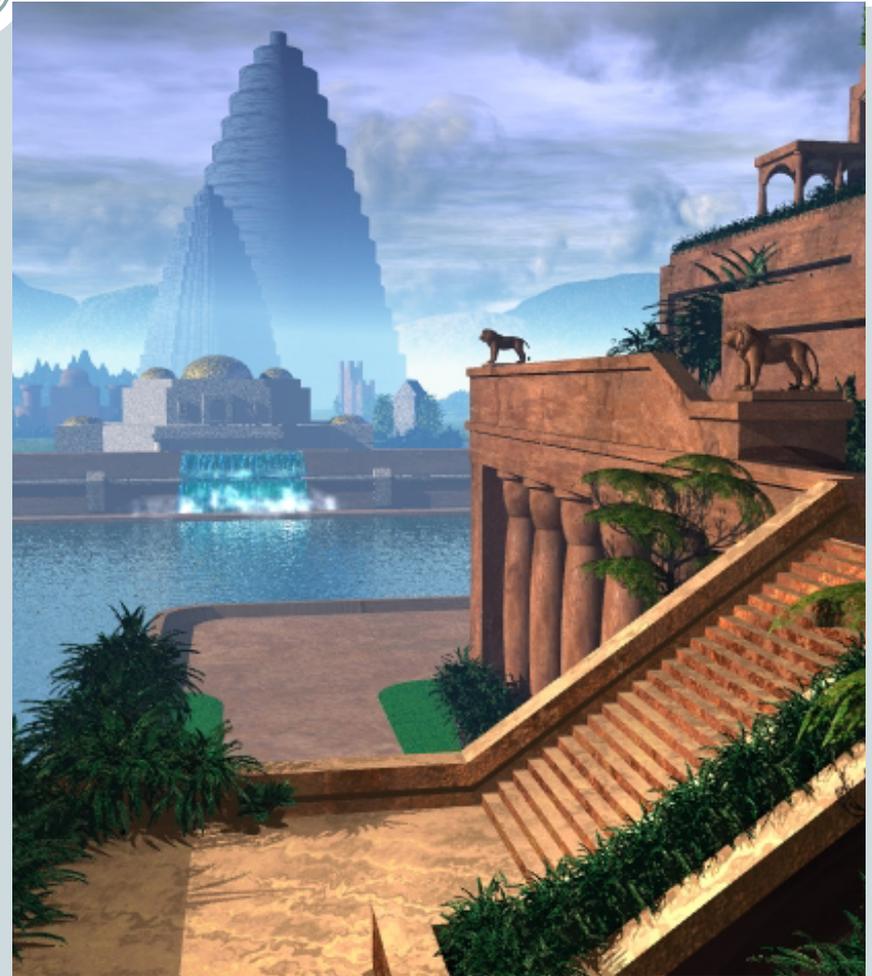
- It was 282 laws about daily life
- It was written down so everyone all over the empire could read it
- HS: Some of Hammurabi's laws are still found in laws today

# Babylon

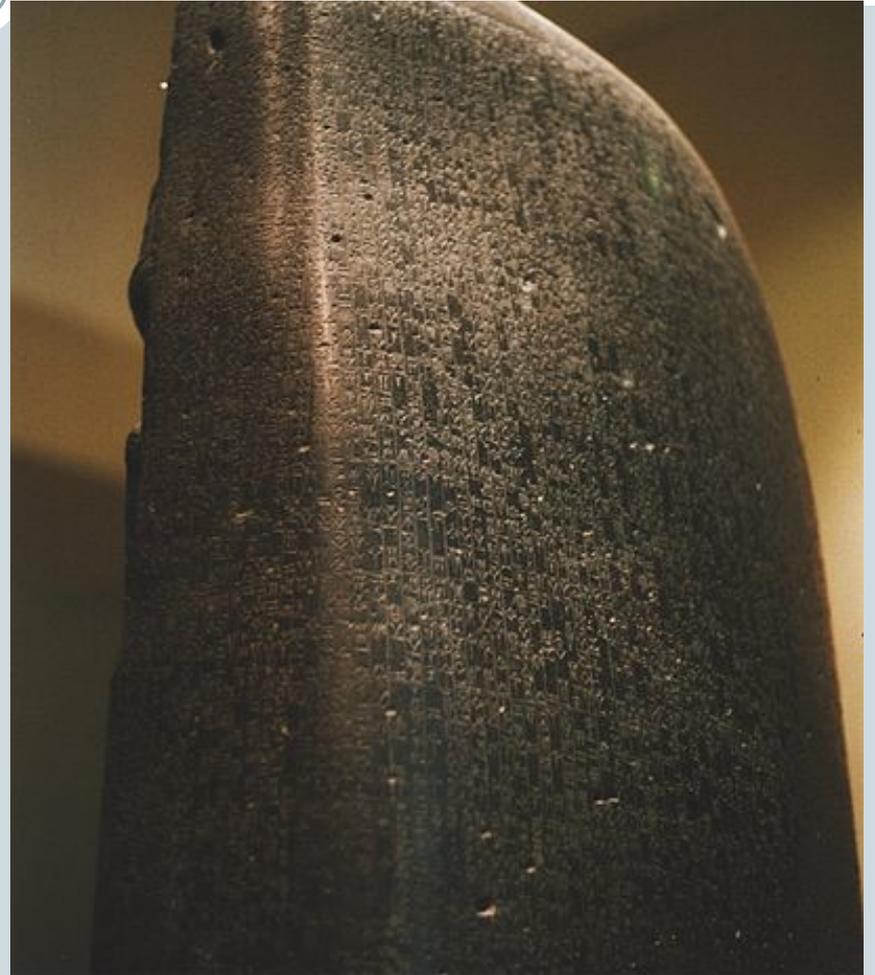


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# Hammurabi and his Code





- The Hittites and Kassites
- The Assyrians –had a very powerful and large empire
- The Chaldeans –Took over after the Assyrian Empire  
–king Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt Babylon into a center of culture
- So many groups! You need to know that these groups all fought to gain control of Mesopotamia
- HS: All these groups fighting for control meant that the Mesopotamian city states were constantly at war which meant that much of the cities' efforts and resources were put towards defense

# The Assyrian Empire



# The Phoenicians



- Had a natural resource of cedar trees –very valuable
- Used the sea for trade –built a harbor that attracted trades from all over
- They formed colonies
- The Phoenicians were very wealthy, they traded silverwork, ivory, and slaves –they invented glassblowing and made purple dye from shellfish
- They developed one of the world’s first alphabets
- HS: The developed one of the world’s first alphabet and made other cultural advances

# Historical Significance!



The Mesopotamian cultures developed the first civilizations. Their cultural and technological advances made future achievements and development possible.