Chapter 3
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 there to be food surpluses (extra food).
- **Division of Labor**: Not everyone had to farm so people were able to develop other skills. 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

Euphrates River

Mediterranean Sea

Caspian Sea

Tigris River

FERTILE CRESCENT

Dead Sea

Ur.

Cradle of Civilization
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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Society</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sumerians practiced polytheism – the worship of many gods.</td>
<td>Sumer had a social hierarchy (the division of society by class or rank):</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What is monotheism?</td>
<td>• Kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Priests were very important members of society and helped the people keep in contact with their gods.</td>
<td>• Priests</td>
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<tr>
<td>• HS: This is an example of early religious practice.</td>
<td>• Craftspeople, merchants, and traders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Farmers, and laborers</td>
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<td>• Slaves</td>
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## Gender Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tr>
<td>• had political power and made laws</td>
<td>• took care of the children and the home</td>
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<td>• could be educated</td>
<td>• usually weren’t educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• could have many jobs ex. Priests, traders, merchants, craftsmen</td>
<td>• some were priestesses</td>
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- HS: These roles shaped how society was run.
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 how to write and keep records.
- Sumerians used writing to record 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!
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
- they had carts and wagons, and also created the potter’s wheel
- **HS:** 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 in 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 used 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
### 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

- 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

The Babylonian Empire
606-536 BC

Daily Bible Study
www.keyway.ca
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
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.
The Mesopotamian cultures developed the first civilizations. Their cultural and technological advances made future achievements and development possible.