

Unit 3: Lesson 2: The Early River Valley Civilizations

Directions: Use “Evidence from the Textbook” (taken from MI Open Book pages 52-61 on Weebly).

Characteristics of a Civilization – Mesopotamia (M)

Characteristics	Evidence from the Textbook
<p>Cities Describe ancient Mesopotamia as a city-state. How was it set up or organized?</p> <p>What did it look like?</p> <p>Names of cities:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">City-States</p> <p>When studying the ancient world, a city refers to an area of large population. These cities are also the center of commerce and government. In Ancient Mesopotamia, the cities were not only large urban centers but also had a very distinct pattern to their setup. Each was usually surrounded by a massive wall. In the center of the city would be a large temple or ziggurat. Due to their size and the way they were governed, many are often referred to as city-states. A city-state is a city that is like a small independent country, due to having its own laws and government.</p> <p>The Sumerian people were the first to begin building cities along the rivers of lower Mesopotamia. They specialized, cooperated, and made many advancements in technology, all prompted by the needs that were presented by living together. The wheel, plow, and system of writing are some examples of their achievements. Among the many Sumerian cities were Ur, Uruk, Nippur, and Kish. These cities established economic and political control over the surrounding countryside. These became the foundation for the development of civilization.</p>
<p>Government and Law Definition: the system or way people in a society provide and keep order</p> <p>Define theocracy.</p> <p>How was the government set up?</p> <p>Who ruled in the beginning and later?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Government and Law</p> <p>The Sumerian people believed that their cities were the possessions of the gods and goddesses. Politically, each city was independent from one another. The god or goddess of the city was thought to be present in all stages of life, from the planning and building of the city to the functioning of the government. This belief that the gods ruled the cities brought about the concept of theocracy, a government by divine authority.</p> <p>In the early history of the city-states, the temple was the center of life, both political and religious. Priests were in charge of the matters for both the belief system and the government. As part of the system, people brought what they grew to the temple and these resources would be redistributed by the priests. The government and religious systems operated hand in hand. As cities grew and developed, this system changed and often became more complex. There was too much work for a single person as priest and king. The work might be divided between religious and political responsibilities. Priests-rulers gave way to kings.</p>

<p>System of Writing Name and describe the writing.</p> <p>What was it used for?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">System of Writing</p> <p>Of course, laws or anything else could not be written down until the system of spoken language developed into a written one. Around 2500 BCE, early forms of script began to take shape and develop into a written language. Sumerian cuneiform, or wedge-shaped writing, was a major change in the technology of the time. The Sumerians used a wedge-shaped stylus (sharp, pointed tool) to etch the writing into soft clay tablets. It was used to record information about trade, create administrative documents, literature, letters, prayers and other religious works, as well as all forms of economic transactions.</p> <p>Cuneiform was based on an early form of writing known as pictograph. This simpler form of writing used symbols to stand for real objects, such as a house or water. As the language developed, these pictures became less detailed and eventually a series of lines and wedges remained. At the beginning, there may have been upwards of 2,000 symbols.</p>
<p>Specialization/Division of Labor Definition: when different people in society take on specific roles or jobs that require unique skill sets</p> <p>List five specific roles or jobs from the reading.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Social Systems</p> <p>At the top level were the priests, kings, landowners, and government officials. They would own the largest homes and live near the center of the city. The middle level consisted of the merchants and artisans, farmers and fishers. Artisans were skilled craftsman who made swords and arrows for the army as well as tools like plows for farmers. Many would craft jewelry and other luxury items for the upper class. Merchants bought and sold goods or offered services. In times of war, many people living in the middle levels were forced to serve in the army. The bottom level were slaves; they lived in the smallest homes and owned very little property.</p>
<p>Social System or Hierarchy What is it?</p> <p>Examples of how the levels worked. Tell which people were at each level.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Social Systems</p> <p>All civilizations have a complex organization known as a social structure (system). The social structure is made up of the different jobs and social levels found in a given civilization. Higher levels enjoy a greater status than those in the lower levels.</p> <p>At the top level were the priests, kings, landowners, and government officials. They would own the largest homes and live near the center of the city. The middle level consisted of the merchants and artisans, farmers and fishers. Artisans were skilled craftsman who made swords and arrows for the army as well as tools like plows for farmers. Many would craft jewelry and other luxury items for the upper class. Merchants bought and sold goods or offered services. In times of war, many people living in the middle levels were forced to serve in the army. The bottom level were slaves; they lived in the smallest homes and owned very little property.</p>

<p>Complex Technology and Achievements</p> <p>What advancements made Mesopotamia the “Cradle of Civilization”? List five examples from the reading.</p> <p>List examples of achievements from the reading.</p> <p>What is an aqueduct?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Cradle of Civilization</p> <p>Ancient Mesopotamia is considered by many to be the cradle of civilization. This is due to the development of many things that still impact our lives today. Agriculture, cities, religion, government, and written language are just a few of the things that were first developed in Mesopotamia. Unlike the many civilizations that would follow, Mesopotamia was unique in that the people who were in these various cities were bound together through culture.</p> <p>The Sumerian people were the first to begin building cities along the rivers of lower Mesopotamia. They specialized, cooperated, and made many advancements in technology, all prompted by the needs that were presented by living together. The wheel, plow, and system of writing are some examples of their achievements.</p> <p>The empire was ruled by a series of powerful kings. The Assyrians used many of the same techniques of irrigation and farming to keep the region fertile and producing food. They also were the first in the region to begin using aqueducts. An aqueduct is a system of pipes or channels used to carry water into cities.</p>
<p>Organized Religion</p> <p>Definition: shared set of beliefs and practices</p> <p>What did they believe?</p> <p>How did they show their faith?</p> <p>How did it support government?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organized Religion</p> <p>Religion is one of the defining factors of being a civilization. The religious system found in Mesopotamia had a very deep influence on everyday life. The people of Mesopotamia tried to please their gods, from tilling fields to serving in government. Religion bound the people together in a way that nothing else would.</p> <p>The center for all religious expressions was temples and religious towers, ziggurats, that were built in the center of all city-states. Ziggurats were the largest building; some could be seen for many miles away. The people believed that the god of their city-state lived in the ziggurat.</p> <p>The Mesopotamian culture believed in over 1,000 gods and goddesses in their faith. They believed that the beginning of the world was a victory of the gods over evil spirits. Through daily rituals, funeral practices, civic duty, and many other aspects of everyday life, people felt that they could help control the balance of good over evil. In conjunction with daily rituals, the people held great honor for elders and were to treat people with respect. Doing this and honoring the gods was the primary way to show and keep their faith.</p>