

Chapter 2

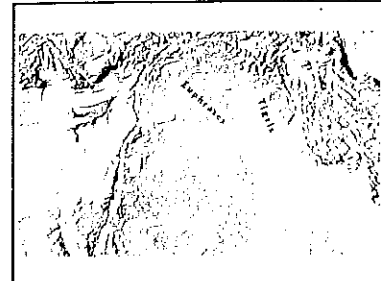
Mesopotamia

Study Guide

Mesopotamia

Geography

- ▶ Mesopotamia – "The land between the Rivers"
 - Tigris and Euphrates
- ▶ Little rain – very dry
- ▶ Mesopotamia is an open plain with few barriers
- ▶ The nearby rivers make soil very fertile
- ▶ Rivers often overflow
- ▶ At other times, there's not enough water – famine
- ▶ These geographical conditions mean that farming can only occur when people control the flow of rivers.
 - Result – Irrigation and drainage systems



How has the geography of Mesopotamia influenced its development?

- ▶ Creating an irrigation system requires cooperation
- ▶ Organized government emerges to supervise irrigation systems
- ▶ The result is an abundance of food, which results in division of labor

Sumerian Society

- ▶ Three main social groups
 - Nobles/Priests
 - ▶ Priests hold a privileged place in Mesopotamian society – they control a lot of wealth and are very powerful
 - Commoners
 - Slaves
 - 90% of the population are farmers
- ▶ Patriarchal
 - Women had few rights, their place was in the home. If she did not fulfill responsibilities, her husband could divorce her

Politics

- ▶ City-states
 - An independent, self-governing city that incorporates the surrounding territory, including smaller towns and villages
 - Eridu, Ur, Uruk
- ▶ Theocracy (A government or state ruled by or subject to religious authority)

To the north of the Sumerian city-states were the Akkadians.

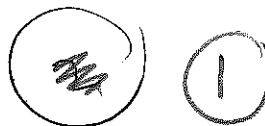
- ▶ Overran the Sumerian city-states around 2340 BC
 - empire
- ▶ The Akkadian Empire fell around 2100 BC.

The next major power to emerge: the Babylonians

- ▶ King Hammurabi gained control of Sumer and Akkad
- ▶ Built temples, defensive walls, and irrigation canals
- ▶ Encouraged trade, brought economic revival

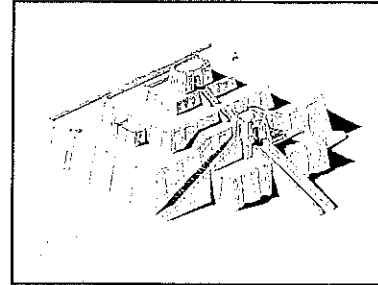
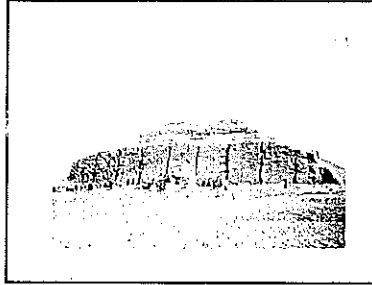
The Code of Hammurabi

- ▶ Penalties for criminal offenses were severe
- ▶ Penalties varied according to social class of the victim
- ▶ Took the duties of public officials seriously – officials were expected to catch burglars
 - If they failed to do so, the officials had to replace the lost property
- ▶ Encourages proper performance of work
 - If a house collapsed, the builder was responsible
- ▶ Largest category dealt with marriage and family



Sumerian Culture

- ▶ Religion
 - Polytheistic
 - ▶ Blame instability on the gods
- ▶ Ziggurat
 - Sumerians believed that gods and goddesses owned the cities, so they devoted a lot of wealth to building temples
 - Historians are not exactly sure what ziggurats were used for, but we can be fairly certain that they were connected with religion.

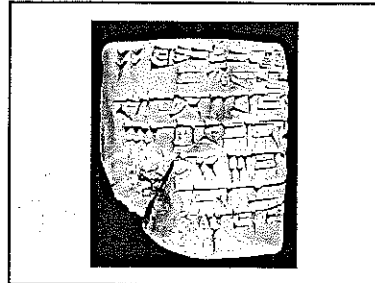


Literature

- ▶ The Epic of Gilgamesh
 - Tells the story of a legendary king named Gilgamesh
 - Gilgamesh is wise, strong, and perfect
 - He befriends a beast named Enkidu
 - When Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh begins to search for the secret of immortality
 - However, he remains mortal
 - Immortality is only for the gods

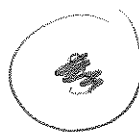
Intellectual Achievements of the Sumerians

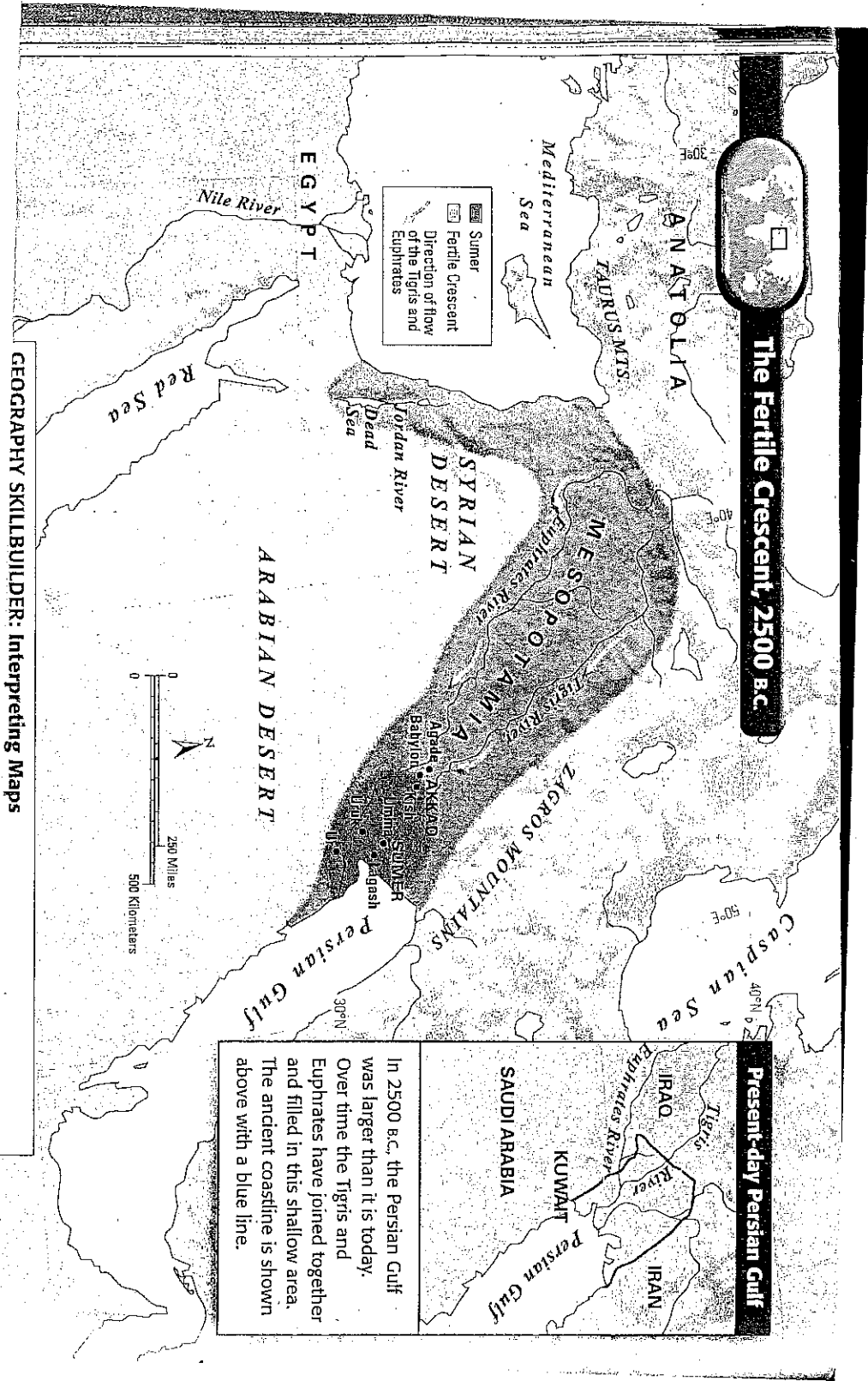
- ▶ Cuneiform
 - Made wedge-shaped impressions on clay tablets, which were then dried in the sun
 - Used primarily for record-keeping
- ▶ Math and Astronomy
 - Used geometry to create large buildings
 - Created a number system based on 60 (why is an hour divided into 60 minutes?)
 - Created a calendar of twelve months



Economy

- ▶ Based on farming
- ▶ Made woolen textiles, pottery, and metalwork
- ▶ Traded items they grew and made
- ▶ Invention of the wheel, 3000 BC
 - Makes transport of goods easier





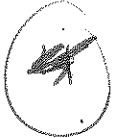
The Fertile Crescent, 2500 B.C.

Sumer
 Fertile Crescent
 Direction of flow of the Tigris and Euphrates

Present-day Persian Gulf

In 2500 B.C., the Persian Gulf was larger than it is today. Over time the Tigris and Euphrates have joined together and filled in this shallow area. The ancient coastline is shown above with a blue line.

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps



CHAPTER 1 Section 3 (pages 19–23)

Civilization Case Study: Ur in Sumer

BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about the development of agriculture and a settled way of life.

In this section, you will read about factors leading to the rise of civilizations.

AS YOU READ

Use the chart below to take notes on how civilizations develop.

TERMS AND NAMES

civilization Culture with advanced cities, specialized workers, complex institutions, record keeping, and improved technology

specialization Development of skills in a specific kind of work.

artisan Skilled worker that makes goods by hand

institution Long-lasting pattern of organization in a community

scribe Professional record keeper

cuneiform Wedge-shaped writing developed in Sumer

Bronze Age Time when people began using bronze

barter Trading goods and services without money

ziggurat Pyramid-shaped monument; part of a temple in Sumer

FEATURES OF CIVILIZATION	EXAMPLES FROM UR
1. <i>Advanced Cities</i>	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Villages Grow into Cities

 (pages 19–20)

What changed as villages grew into cities?

Over time, farmers developed new tools—hoes, sickles, and plow sticks. These helped them grow even more food. They decided to plant larger areas of land. The people in some villages began to irri-

gate the land, bringing water to new areas. People invented the wheel for carts and the sail for boats. These new inventions made it easier to travel between distant villages and to trade.

Life became more complex as the villages began to grow. People were divided into social classes. Some people had more wealth and power than others. People began to worship gods and

goddesses that they felt would protect their crops and make their harvests large.

1. How did life become more complex?

How Civilization Develops (pages 20–21)

What makes a civilization?

One of the first civilizations arose in Sumer. It was in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers of modern Iraq. A **civilization** has five features.

First, a civilization has advanced cities that contain many people and serve as centers for trade.

Second, civilizations have specialized workers. **Specialization** is the development of skills needed for one specific kind of work. Skilled workers who make goods by hand are called **artisans**.

Third, civilizations have complex institutions. Government, organized religion, and an economy are examples of complex **institutions**.

A fourth feature of civilizations is record keeping, which is needed to keep track of laws, debts, and payments. It also creates the need for writing. **Scribes** were people who used writing to keep records. **Cuneiform**, which means “wedge shaped,” was a form of writing invented in Sumer.

Fifth, civilizations have improved technology that can provide new tools and methods to solve problems.

Sumer had all the features of a civilization. One of the new technologies in Sumer was making a metal called bronze. The term **Bronze Age** refers to the time when people began using bronze to make tools and weapons.

Analyzing Key Concepts: Civilization
Civilization is defined as a complex culture with five characteristics—advanced cities, specialized workers, complex institutions, record keeping, and improved technology.

2. Name the five features of a civilization.

Civilization Emerges in Ur

(pages 22–23)

What was civilization like in Ur?

One of the early cities of Sumer was named Ur. The city was surrounded by walls built of mud dried into bricks. Ur held about 30,000 people. Social classes included rulers and priests, traders, craft workers, and artists.

Farmers outside the city walls raised the food for them all. Some workers dug ditches to carry water to the fields. Officials of the city government planned all this activity.

Inside the city, metalworkers made bronze points for spears. Potters made clay pots. Traders met people from other areas. They traded the spear points and pots for goods that Ur could not produce. This way of trading goods and services without money is called **barter**. Sometimes their deals were written down by scribes.

Ur's most important building was the temple. Part of the temple was a **ziggurat**, a pyramid-shaped structure. Priests there led the city's religious life.

3. What social classes existed in Ur?

5

CHAPTER 2 Section 1 (pages 29–34)

City-States in Mesopotamia

BEFORE YOU READ

In the last chapter, you read about the earliest humans and the first civilization.

In this section, you will learn more about early civilization in a part of Mesopotamia called Sumer.

AS YOU READ

Use the chart below to take notes on Sumer.

TERMS AND NAMES

Fertile Crescent Arc of rich farmland in southwest Asia between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea

Mesopotamia The land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers

city-state Political unit much like an independent country

dynasty Series of rulers from a single family

cultural diffusion New ideas spreading from one culture to another

polytheism Belief in many gods

empire Peoples, nations, or independent states under control of one ruler

Hammurabi Babylonian ruler famous for his code of laws

SUMER	NOTES
Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • part of Fertile Crescent • rich soil from flooding of rivers • problems: needed irrigate, defend, find materials they did not have

Geography of the Fertile Crescent (pages 29–30)

What problems did the Sumerians face?

There is an *arc* of rich land in Southwest Asia that is called the **Fertile Crescent**. Two of its rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, flood in the spring. This flooding leaves rich mud, called *silt*, in the plain between the rivers. Because of this, many thousands of years ago humans began to settle in

that plain, known as **Mesopotamia**. They grew wheat and barley. It was here that the first civilization began.

About 3300 B.C., the Sumerians moved into this region and settled. They faced three problems. First, the floods were not regular, and once they passed, the hot sun quickly baked the land into clay. Second, the small farming villages had no protection against enemies. Third, the area lacked stone, wood, and metal to use for tools.

The Sumerians solved these problems. They dug irrigation ditches from the river to their fields



so they could bring water to their crops. They built walls of baked mud around their villages for *defense*. Because they could grow more food than they needed, they traded the extra for stone, wood, and metal from other lands.

1. How did the Sumerians solve the problems they faced?

Sumerians Create City-States

(page 30)

How did the Sumerians govern?

Several large city-states were at the center of the Sumerian world. These **city-states** had control over a surrounding area. They could act independently, much like a country does today. Slowly, some people rose to power in a number of the city-states. They became rulers, as did their children after them. Rule of an area by the same family is called a **dynasty**.

As population and trade grew, Sumerians came into contact with other peoples. Their own ideas affected others. The Sumerians also got ideas from other cultures. This process of spreading ideas or products is called **cultural diffusion**.

2. Who governed the city-states?

Sumerian Culture (pages 31–32)

What did the Sumerians believe and accomplish?

The Sumerians believed in **polytheism**, or many gods. Each god had power over different forces of nature or parts of their lives. Sumerians believed that people were just the servants of the gods. Souls of the dead went to a joyless place under the earth's crust. These views spread to other areas and shaped the ideas of other peoples.

Society was divided into social classes. At the top were the priests and kings, after whom came wealthy merchants. Next were workers in fields and workshops. Slaves made up the lowest level. Women could enter most careers and could own property. But there were some limits on them.

The people of Sumer invented the sail, the wheel, and the plow. They were the first to use bronze. They also developed the first writing system—on clay tablets. They invented arithmetic and geometry, which they used to help build large structures.

3. How was Sumerian society organized?

The First Empire Builders (pages 32–34)

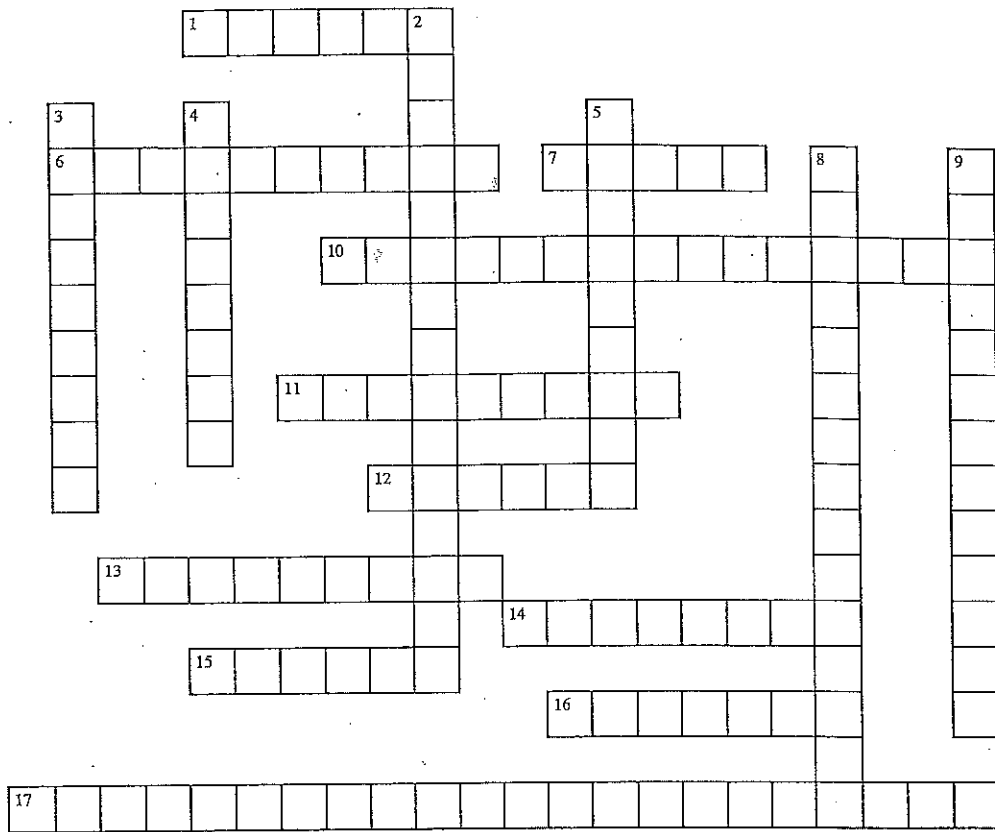
Who built the world's first empire?

Centuries of fighting between the city-states made the Sumerians weak. In 2350 B.C., the conqueror Sargon defeated Sumer and captured other cities to the north. He built the world's first **empire**. An empire brings together several peoples, nations, or previously independent states. It puts them under the control of one ruler.

A few hundred years later, a different group of people conquered the Sumerians. These people built a capital at Babylon, establishing the Babylonian Empire. They were led by a king named **Hammurabi**. He is famous for his code of laws. It was a harsh code that punished people for wrongdoing. However, it also made it clear that the government had some responsibility for taking care of its people.

4. Why was Hammurabi's Code important?

MESOPOTAMIA CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 One of two Mesopotamia rivers providing the region with fertile soil and a means of trade.
- 6 A method of watering an area by digging ditches, channels, etc.
- 7 The first ancient civilization in southern Mesopotamia.
- 10 Set of 282 laws declared by Babylonian ruler. They were chiseled into a black pillar for all people to see.
- 11 An independent city and its surrounding areas.
- 12 People who wander from place to place, with no permanent home.
- 13 Early form of wedged pictographs.

DOWN

- 2 Something written after a historical event by people who did not witness the event (books, paintings, articles, encyclopedias, etc).
- 3 A system of ranks.
- 4 Pyramid-temple built by the Sumerians.
- 5 One of two Mesopotamia rivers providing the region with fertile soil and a means of trade.
- 8 A nickname of Mesopotamia referring to the uniquely-shaped area of rich soil and plentiful harvests.
- 9 Something written or created by a person who witnessed a historical event (letters, diaries, photos, speeches, videos, etc).

- 14 Skilled craftworkers.
- 15 A person who can read and write.
- 16 The entire way of life of a people.
- 17 The development of farming that allowed nomadic peoples to settle into permanent villages and cities.

