

# Mesopotamia

## Lesson 1 The Sumerians

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*How does geography influence the way people live?*

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *Why did people settle in Mesopotamia?*
2. *What was life like in Sumer?*
3. *What ideas and inventions did Sumerians pass on to other civilizations?*

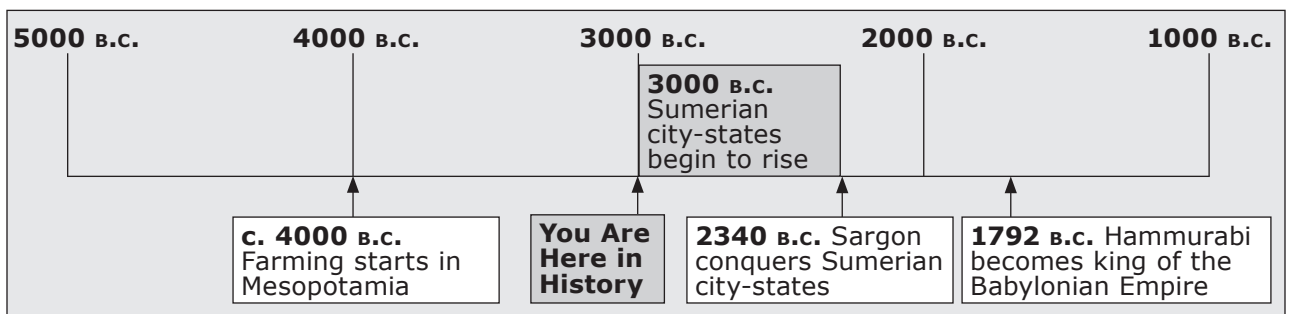
### Terms to Know

- silt** small particles of fertile soil
- irrigation** a way to supply dry land with water through ditches, pipes, or streams
- surplus** an amount that is left over after a need has been met
- city-state** an independent nation made up of a city and the land around it
- polytheism** a belief in more than one god
- ziggurat** a pyramid-shaped tower with a temple at the top
- cuneiform** a Sumerian writing system that used wedge-shaped marks made in soft clay
- scribe** a person who copies or writes out documents; often a record keeper
- epic** a long poem that tells the story of a hero

## Where in the world?



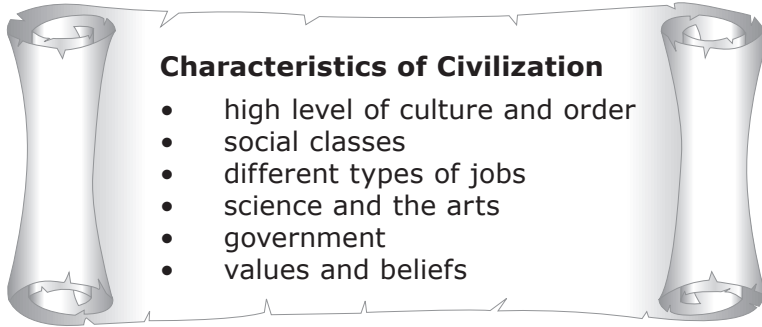
## When did it happen?



# Mesopotamia

## Lesson 1 The Sumerians, *Continued*

### The First Civilizations in Mesopotamia



Mesopotamia is the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. It is located in Southwest Asia. The first known civilization started there. A civilization is a group of people who have a high level of culture and order. People in a civilization belong to different social classes and do different types of jobs. A civilization has science and the arts. It also has a government, values, and beliefs.

People first stayed in Mesopotamia around 7000 B.C. These people hunted. They also raised animals for food. People started to farm around 4000 B.C. They did this in the valley between the two rivers.

To grow crops, farmers need water for the soil. Farmers in Mesopotamia got water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Sometimes, though, it rained too much. This caused the rivers to flood. A flood is when water overflows from a river onto land. Floods could destroy crops, but they also left the land covered with **silt**. Silt is a rich soil. It is good for farming.

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To control the floods, the people of Mesopotamia built dams. A dam is a wall that stops the flow of water. They also dug canals. A canal is a ditch that lets water flow to the fields. Watering crops using canals is called **irrigation**.

By using irrigation, farmers could grow large amounts of food. The people of Mesopotamia had extra food, or a **surplus**. As a result, not everyone needed to farm. Some people could become artisans. An artisan is a person who makes a good, such as cloth, tools, or weapons. Soon people began to live together in places that helped them trade goods. Before long, small villages grew into cities. By 3000 B.C., many cities had started and grown in Sumer. Sumer is the region in southern Mesopotamia.

#### Identifying

1. Why is 4000 B.C. an important date?

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#### Reading Check

2. How did floods sometimes help farmers?

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#### **FOLDABLES**<sup>®</sup>

#### Describing

3. Use a one-tab Foldable and place it along the dotted line. Label the anchor tab *Mesopotamia*. Write *Tigris River* on the right edge of the tab and write *Euphrates River* on the left. Draw or color the surface of the land across the bottom of the Foldable. On the reverse side, describe some of the benefits and challenges of living between the rivers in Mesopotamia.

# Mesopotamia

## Lesson 1 The Sumerians, *Continued*

### ? Making Connections

4. Are cities in the United States considered city-states? Why or why not?

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### A B C Defining

5. What is *polytheism*?

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### Marking the Text

6. Using a different colored marker for each social class, highlight the people who belonged to the upper class, the middle class, and the lowest class.

### ✓ Reading Check

7. Why did the Sumerians build cities with walls around them?

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\_\_\_\_\_

## Sumer's Civilization

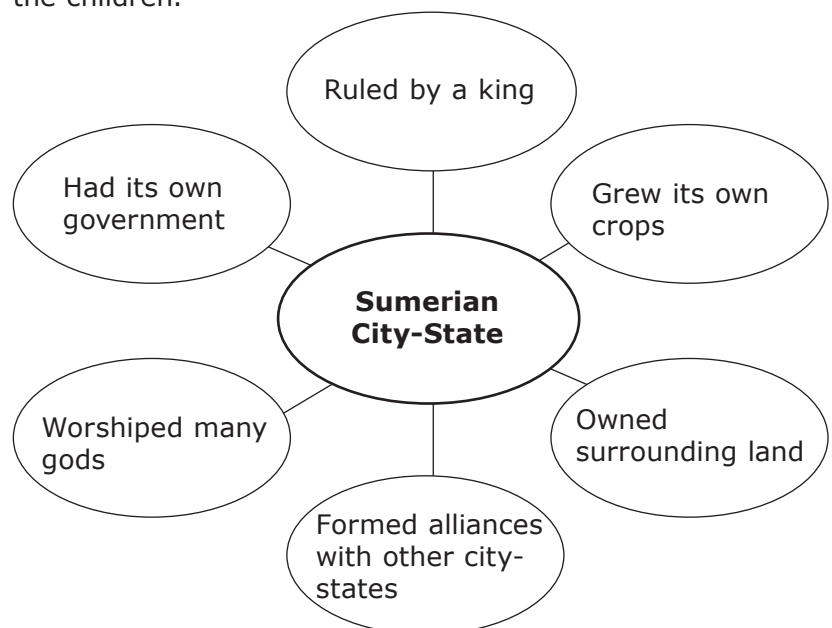
The people of Sumer were called Sumerians. They built many cities. The cities of Sumer had deserts around them. Deserts were hard to travel across. As a result, each city stood alone.

As cities grew, they gained control of the land around them. In this way, they formed city-states. Each **city-state** had its own government. It was not part of a larger nation. Historians believe that each city-state was surrounded by a large wall. Sometimes Sumerian city-states fought each other. During times of peace, they traded with each other.

The Sumerian people worshiped many gods. This type of belief is called **polytheism**. Each city-state, though, claimed one god as its own. To honor this god, the city-state built a large temple called a **ziggurat**. A temple is a building used to worship a god or many gods.

People in Sumer were divided into social classes. The upper class included kings, priests, warriors, and government workers. People in this class were powerful and wealthy. The middle class had farmers, fishers, and artisans. It was the largest group. Enslaved people made up the lowest class. They had no money and no power.

The basic unit of Sumerian life was the family. Men were the head of the family. Women ran the home and cared for the children.



# Mesopotamia

## Lesson 1 The Sumerians, *Continued*

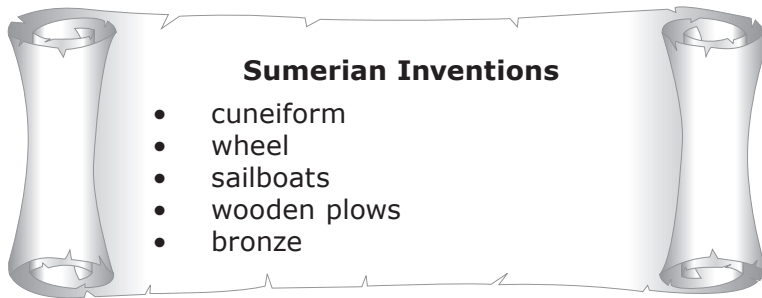
### Sumerian Contributions

Sumerians created a way of writing called **cuneiform**. Cuneiform was written by using wedge-shaped marks cut into damp clay. Only a few people learned to read and write cuneiform. Some of these people became **scribes**. A scribe is a person who records business dealings and important events.

The oldest known story in the world comes from Sumer. This story is called the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. An **epic** is a long poem that tells the story of a hero.

The Sumerians made many useful inventions. An invention is something new that is made. The Sumerians were the first people to use the wheel. They were also the first to use sailboats and wooden plows. In addition, they were the first to make bronze out of copper and tin.

The Sumerians studied mathematics and astronomy. Astronomy is the study of planets, stars, and other objects in space. By watching the position of the stars they learned the best times to plant crops.



### Sumerian Inventions

- cuneiform
- wheel
- sailboats
- wooden plows
- bronze

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### Check for Understanding

List three inventions or ideas that Sumerians passed on to other civilizations.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

List one characteristic of a Sumerian city-state.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**? Analyzing**

8. Do you think people had to go to school to become scribes? Explain.

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**✓ Reading Check**

9. Why did the Sumerians invent a writing system?

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**FOLDABLES®**

10. Place a one-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover the Check for Understanding. Label the anchor tab *Sumer's Civilization*. In the middle of the tab write *Sumerian Life*.

Make a memory map by drawing five arrows around the title and writing words or phrases that you remember about life in Sumer. Use your notes to help you complete the lists.

# Mesopotamia

## Lesson 2 Mesopotamian Empires

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*Why does conflict develop?*

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *How did Mesopotamia's first empires develop?*
2. *How did the Assyrians influence Southwest Asia?*
3. *Why was Babylon an important city in the ancient world?*

### Terms to Know

**empire** a group of many different lands under one ruler

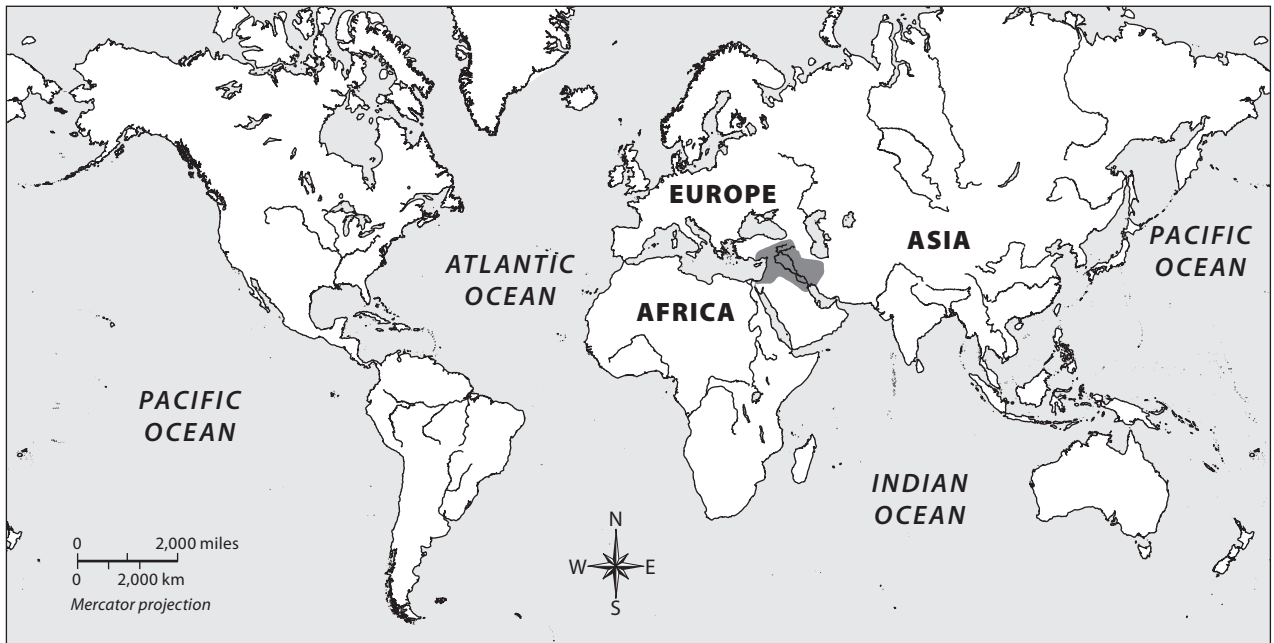
**tribute** a payment made to a ruler or state as a sign of surrender

**province** a district within a larger country or empire

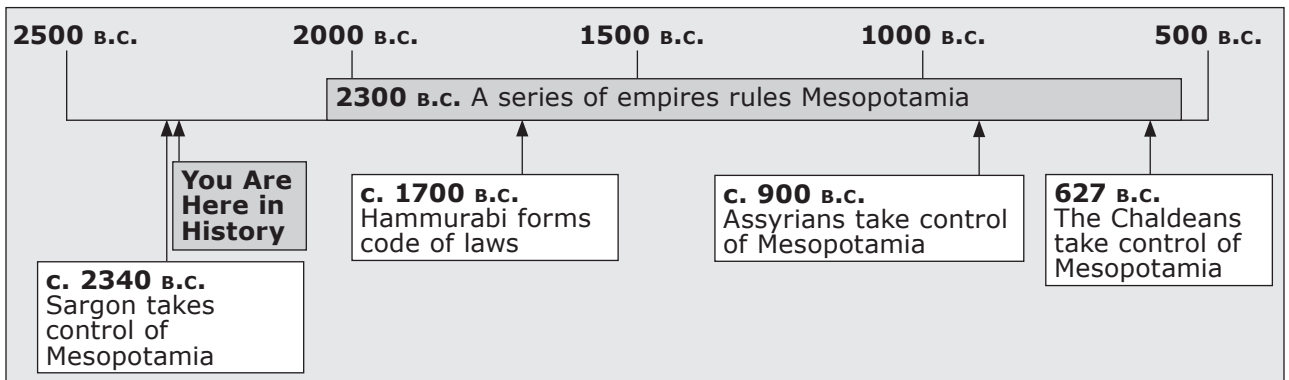
**caravan** a group of merchants traveling together for safety, usually with a large number of camels

**astronomer** a person who studies stars, planets, and the moon

### Where in the world?



### When did it happen?



# Mesopotamia

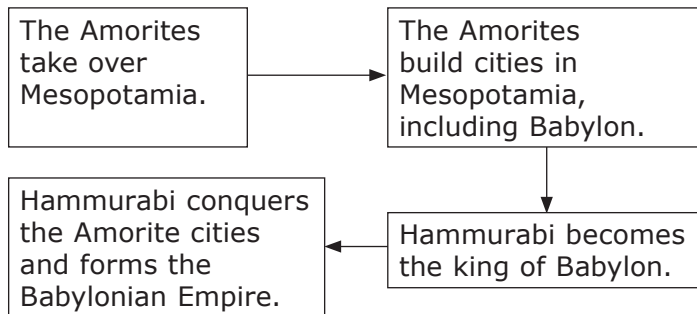
## Lesson 2 Mesopotamian Empires, *Continued*

### The First Empires

The city-states of Sumer often fought each other. By 2400 B.C., the fighting weakened these city-states. The kingdom of Akkad was in northern Mesopotamia. Akkad's leader, Sargon, and his armies fought the city-states of Sumer. One at a time, Sargon defeated them all. He then united Akkad and Sumer to form an **empire**. An empire is a group of different lands under one ruler. The empire of Sargon was the first known empire ever formed. In time, the empire grew to include all of Mesopotamia. It lasted for more than 200 years.

A people called the Amorites lived in a region west of Mesopotamia. They took over Mesopotamia in the 1800s B.C. These people built their own cities. The biggest of these cities was Babylon. Hammurabi was a king of Babylon. He began to take over many of the Amorite cities. By doing this, he formed the Babylonian Empire.

#### How the Babylonian Empire Formed



Hammurabi was a fair ruler. He made a law code for his empire. A code is a system or set of laws. The Code of Hammurabi had laws for many different things. For example, it had laws for crimes, farming, and marriage. The code had a punishment for each crime.

The code called for "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." What does this mean? If a man knocked out the teeth of someone, then the man would have his own teeth knocked out as punishment. The Code of Hammurabi shaped later law codes. These later codes included those of Greece and Rome.

### The Assyrian Empire

The Assyrians lived in northern Mesopotamia. They built a large, powerful army. Around 900 B.C., this army started to take over Mesopotamia. The Assyrians destroyed towns.

**FOLDABLES®**

**Listing**

- Place a three-tab Venn diagram Foldable along the dotted line. Label the top tab *Akkad*, the middle tab *Empire of Sargon*, and the bottom tab *Sumer*. On the reverse sides of the tabs, list facts about each to compare how the empires were formed.

**Identifying**

- Who were the people living west of Mesopotamia?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Marking the Text**

- Underline the name of the person who took over the Amorite cities.  
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**Reading Check**

- Why was Hammurabi's Code important?  
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# Mesopotamia

## Lesson 2 Mesopotamian Empires, *Continued*

**Defining**

5. What is *tribute*?

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**Identifying**

6. Who ruled the Assyrian empire?

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**Reading Check**

7. Why was Assyria's army so strong?

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**Comparing**

8. How were the Assyrians similar to the Babylonians?

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**Marking the Text**

9. Circle the length of time that the Assyrian Empire lasted.

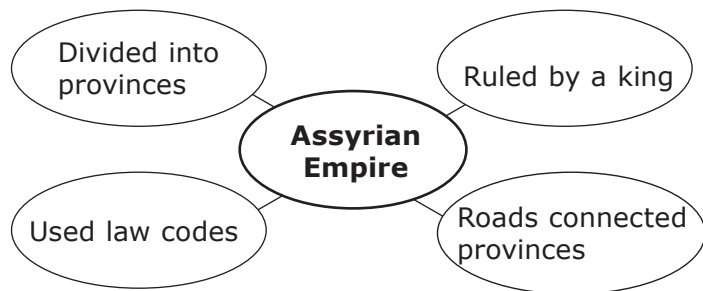
They robbed people and set crops on fire. The Assyrians forced the people they defeated to pay them money. This forced payment is called a **tribute**.

Why was the Assyrian army so strong? One reason was their weapons. They made their weapons out of iron. Before this, people made weapons out of tin or copper. Iron is much stronger than tin or copper.

Nineveh was the major city of the Assyrian Empire. This city was located along the Tigris River. The empire was ruled by a king. It was divided into regions called **provinces**. Roads connected the provinces. The king chose a person to rule each province. These people were under the control of the king.

The Assyrians used law codes. These codes had harsh punishments. The Assyrians worshiped the same gods as the Babylonians. The Assyrians built large temples and palaces. They also wrote stories. They put these works in a large library in Nineveh. It was one of the first libraries in the world.

The Assyrians did a large amount of trading. They brought in wood and metal from far away. They used these materials to make buildings, tools, and weapons.



## The Chaldean Empire

The Assyrian Empire lasted for about 300 years. Around 650 B.C., the Assyrians began to argue about who would be the next ruler. Their arguments turned into fights. This weakened the empire. While the Assyrians were divided, a group of people called the Chaldeans fought the Assyrians and defeated them.

The Chaldeans took over the lands held by the Assyrians. They moved the capital to Babylon. The empire of the Chaldeans is sometimes called the New Babylonian Empire. King Nabopolassar was the first ruler. After he died, his son took control. His son was named Nebuchadnezzar.

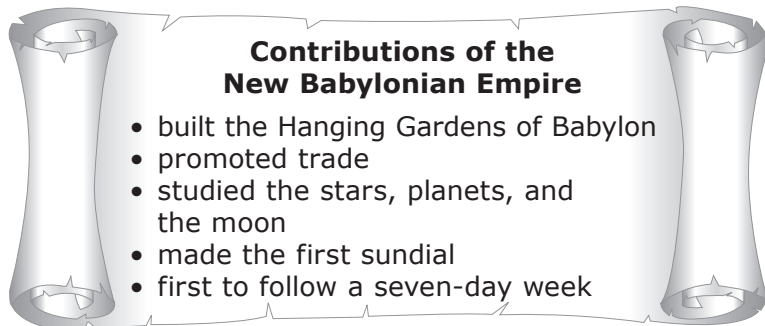
## Mesopotamia

### Lesson 2 Mesopotamian Empires, *Continued*

King Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt Babylon. He made it the largest and richest city in the world. Large walls surrounded the city. The city had many temples and palaces. The king also built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. These gardens had many levels. The plants were watered by an irrigation system.

A major trade route went through Babylon. As a result, many caravans passed through the city. A **caravan** is a group of traveling merchants. The merchants bought goods in Babylon. These goods included cloth, baskets, and jewelry. Babylon grew rich from this trade.

The people of Babylon also made advances in science. Chaldean **astronomers** studied the stars, planets, and the moon. The Chaldeans made the first sundial to measure time. They also were the first to use a seven-day week.



### Contributions of the New Babylonian Empire

- built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon
- promoted trade
- studied the stars, planets, and the moon
- made the first sundial
- first to follow a seven-day week

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### Check for Understanding

List two inventions or ideas introduced by the Chaldeans.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Who was Nebuchadnezzar? What contributions did he make to the city of Babylon?

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Explaining

**10.** What effect did caravans have on Babylon? Explain.

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### Reading Check

**11.** Which wonder of the ancient world was located in Babylon?

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**12.** Place a one-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover the Check for Understanding. Label the anchor tab *The First Empires*. Draw a large circle and write *Chaldean Empire* along the edge of the circle. Draw a smaller circle inside the large circle and label it *Babylon*. Inside each circle, write two or more words and phrases that you remember about each title.