

Objectives

As you teach this section, keep students focused on the following objectives to help them answer the Section Focus Question and master core content.

- Understand how geography influenced the development of civilization in the Fertile Crescent.
- Outline the main features of Sumerian civilization.
- Explain how the advances in learning made by the Sumerians left a lasting legacy for later peoples to build on.


Prepare to Read

Build Background Knowledge L3

Remind students that many of the world's first civilizations arose in river valleys. Ask them to preview the map on the next page and name the river(s) that might have influenced the development of civilization in Sumer.

Set a Purpose L3

- **WITNESS HISTORY** Read the selection aloud or play the audio.

 **AUDIO** Witness History Audio CD, Ancient Times, Ancient Tunes

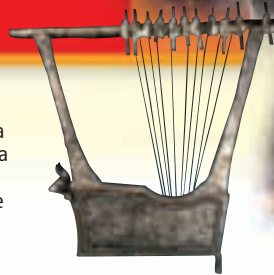
Ask **Which basic feature of civilization includes music?** (*the development of arts and architecture*) **What can we learn about early civilizations from musical instruments?** (*Sample: that people in the past had the skills to craft both musical instruments and music*)

- **Focus** Point out the Section Focus Question and write it on the board. Tell students to refer to this question as they read. (*Answer appears with Section 1 Assessment answers.*)
- **Preview** Have students preview the Section Objectives and the list of Terms, People, and Places.
- **Reading Skill** Have students use the *Reading Strategy: Main Ideas* worksheet.

 Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 26

1

Sumerian depiction of a man playing a lyre (above); Sumerian lyre (right)



WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Ancient Times, Ancient Tunes

Music may be one of the most difficult artistic forms of early civilizations for us to find evidence of because the songs themselves leave no physical trace. But in the ruins of Sumer, the world's first civilization, archaeologists have turned up both musical instruments and artwork showing musicians playing them. Although we may never know how Sumerian music sounded, we do know that even in the world's first cities, musicians filled the air with song.

Focus Question What were the characteristics of the world's first civilization?

City-States of Ancient Sumer

Objectives

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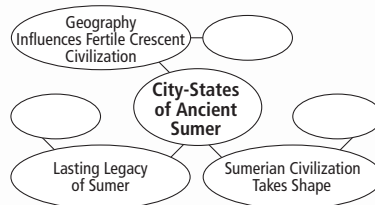
Terms, People, and Places

Fertile Crescent	hierarchy
Mesopotamia	ziggurat
Sumer	cuneiform

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas Use this concept web to record the main idea of each section of text that follows a red heading.



A number of early civilizations arose in the **Fertile Crescent**, a region of the Middle East named for its rich soils and golden wheat fields. Over time, nomadic herders, ambitious invaders, and traders easily overcame the region's few natural barriers. As a result, the region became a crossroads where people and ideas met and mingled. Each new group that arrived made its own contributions to the history of the region.


Geography Influences Fertile Crescent Civilization

The Fertile Crescent curves from the Persian Gulf to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Within the Fertile Crescent lies a region that the ancient Greeks later named **Mesopotamia**, which means “between the rivers.” Mesopotamia is the area of land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which flow from the highlands of modern-day Turkey through Iraq into the Persian Gulf. Around 3300 B.C., the world's first civilization developed in southeastern Mesopotamia, in a region called **Sumer**.

Organizing for Floods and Irrigation Control of the Tigris and Euphrates was key to developments in Mesopotamia. The rivers frequently rose in terrifying floods that washed away topsoil and destroyed mud-brick villages. The Mesopotamian narrative poem *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which was first told orally in Sumer, describes a great flood that destroys the world. Archaeologists have indeed found evidence that catastrophic floods occurred regularly in the ancient days of the Fertile Crescent.

Vocabulary Builder

Use the information below and the following resources to teach the high-use words from this section.

 Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 25; Teaching Resources, Skills Handbook, p. 3

High-Use Words

ensure, p. 31

evolve, p. 32

Definitions and Sample Sentences

v. to make sure that something will happen

Our coach has us run every day to **ensure** that we are in great shape before the championship game.

vt. to develop gradually into something

My sister hopes to **evolve** into a great math student during high school.

To survive and to protect their farmland, villagers along the riverbanks had to work together. Even during the dry season, the rivers had to be controlled in order to channel water to the fields. Temple priests or royal officials provided the leadership that was necessary to ensure cooperation. They organized villagers to work together on projects such as building dikes to hold back floodwaters and irrigation ditches to carry water to their fields.

Sumerians Build Thriving Cities The Sumerians had few natural resources, but they made the most of what they did have. They lacked building materials such as timber or stone, so they built with clay and water. They used the clay to make bricks, which they shaped in wooden molds and dried in the sun. These bricks were the building blocks for some of the world's first great cities, such as Ur and Uruk.

Trade brought riches to Sumerian cities. Traders sailed along the rivers or risked the dangers of desert travel to carry goods to distant regions. Although it is unclear where and when the wheel was invented, the Sumerians may have made the first wheeled vehicles. Archaeologists have found goods from as far away as Egypt and India in the rubble of Sumerian cities.

Checkpoint What geographic characteristics made the Fertile Crescent a good place for civilization to develop?

Vocabulary Builder

ensure—(en SHOOR) *v.* to make sure that something will happen

Note Taking Have students read this section using the Guided Questioning strategy (TE, p. T20). As they read, have students fill in the concept web recording main ideas.

 **Reading and Note Taking**
Study Guide, p. 15

Teach

Fertile Crescent

L3

Instruct

Introduce: Vocabulary Builder
Have students read the Vocabulary Builder term and definition. Ask them if they think the existence of a geographically advantageous location such as a river valley **ensures** that a civilization will develop there. Why or why not?

Teach Direct students to the map on this page. Ask **Given the physical environment in which the Fertile Crescent lies, why would Mesopotamia be a reasonable place for civilization to arise?** (*Its rivers and its nearness to the Persian Gulf were probably more favorable to sustaining large populations than were the deserts or mountains in the surrounding areas.*) **Even so, what geographic challenges did early Sumerians face?** (*They had to learn to control the flooding waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; they had to build with clay, because they lacked timber or stone.*)

Independent Practice


Have students access **Web Code nap-0211** to take the **Geography Interactive Audio Guided Tour** and then answer the map skills questions in the text.

Monitor Progress

As students fill in their concept webs, circulate to make sure they understand how geographic factors influenced Sumer's development. For a completed version of the concept web, see

 **Note Taking Transparencies, 52**

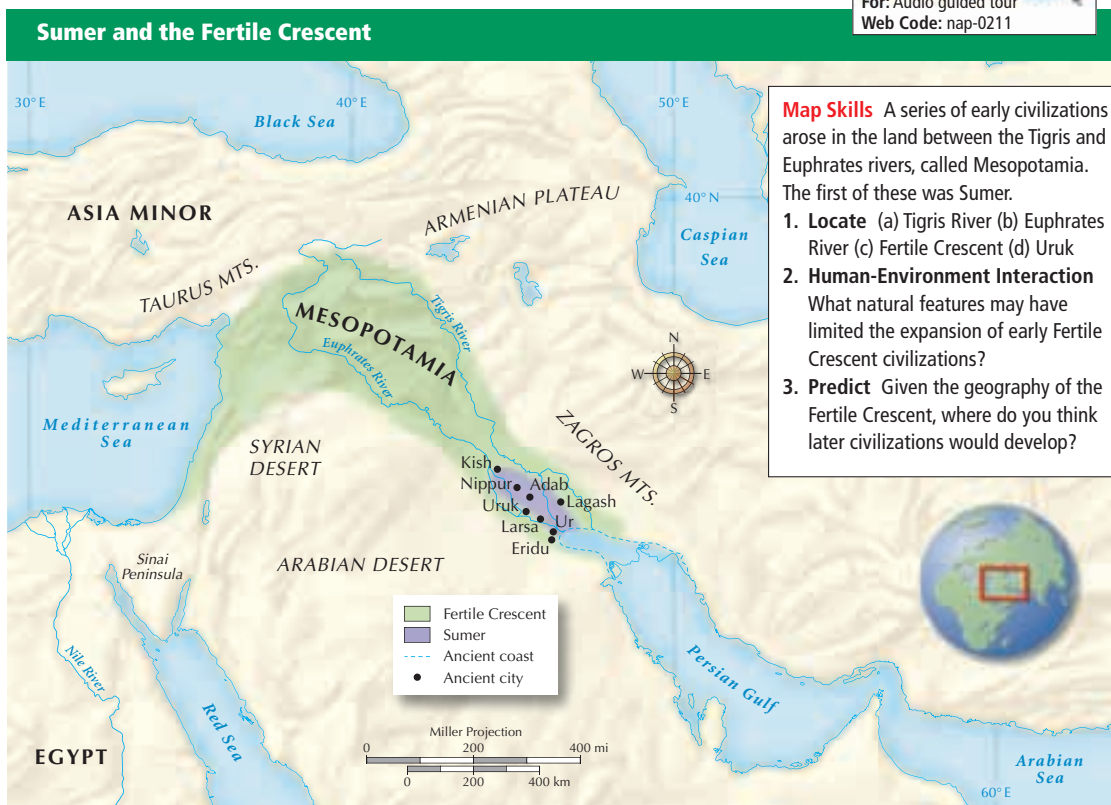
Answers

 rich soil, wheat fields, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and clay

Map Skills

- Review locations with students.
- desert and mountains
- Sample: to the north, close to where Mesopotamia is on the map because of its proximity to both the rivers and the Mediterranean Sea

Geography Interactive
For: Audio guided tour
Web Code: nap-0211



History Background

Riches from a Tomb In the late 1920s, the world's imagination was captured by news accounts of discoveries being made in Iraq by British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley, at the site of the ancient city of Ur. Large, two-story homes were unearthed, some of which included a chapel for worship. The remains of the original ziggurat revealed that the ancient Sumerians were knowledgeable about such architectural forms as the column, the arch, the vault, and the

dome. The most breathtaking discoveries, however, were unearthed in a royal cemetery, which contained artifacts of gold, silver, bronze, and semiprecious stones; musical instruments; mosaics, and other works of art. It was apparent from the evidence that Sumerian kings were buried with their court officials and servants—who, it was presumed, were expected to continue their service in the afterlife.

Sumerian Civilization Takes Shape

L3

Instruct

■ Introduce: Vocabulary Builder

Have students read the Vocabulary Builder term and definition. Ask them to preview the black headings in this section and predict some features of civilization that *evolved* in Sumer.

- **Teach** Discuss Sumerian developments: complex government, a social hierarchy, religion, and a system of writing. Ask **In Sumer, which group was larger—artisans or peasant farmers?** (*peasant farmers*) **What does this indicate about how the society supported itself?** (*that the society was largely dependent on agriculture*) **How did religion shape the daily activities of Sumerians?** (*Sumerians focused on pleasing the gods, so they built large ziggurats, prayed, made sacrifices, and performed rituals to honor the gods.*)

- **Quick Activity** Display **Color Transparency 7: Cuneiform Evolves Over Time**. Use the transparency together with the Infographic and text on the next page to guide a discussion about the evolution of Sumerian writing. Divide students into groups and ask them to focus on the changes that took place both in the form of the writing and in its use. Use the Numbered Heads Strategy (TE, p. T23) and have each group present a short summary of the changes.

 Color Transparencies, 7

Independent Practice

Have students make a brief chart summarizing the important aspects of Sumerian civilization. Their charts should include a column for each of the black headings in this section. In each column, have students list at least two important details about that aspect of Sumerian civilization.

Monitor Progress

Read each black heading aloud and have three students share the details they listed in their charts.

Vocabulary Builder

evolved—(ee VAHLVD) *vt.* developed gradually into something

Sumerian Civilization Takes Shape

Within a few hundred years of its beginning, Sumer included at least 12 separate city-states. Rival city-states often battled for control of land and water. For protection, people turned to war leaders. Over time, the practice of rule by war leaders *evolved* into hereditary rule.

Complex Government Unfolds In each city-state, the ruler was responsible for maintaining the city walls and the irrigation systems. He led its armies in war, enforced the laws, and employed scribes to carry out functions such as collecting taxes and keeping records. The ruler was seen as the chief servant of the gods and led ceremonies meant to please them.

Sumerians Structure Their Society Each Sumerian city-state had a distinct social **hierarchy** (HY ur ahr kee), or system of ranking groups. The highest class included the ruling family, leading officials, and high priests. A small middle class was made up of lesser priests, scribes, merchants, and artisans. Artisans who practiced the same trade, such as weavers or carpenters, often lived and worked on the same street.

The majority of people were peasant farmers, and they formed the lowest level of society. Some had their own land, but most worked land belonging to the king or to temples. Sumerians also owned slaves. Most slaves had been captured in war. Some, though, had sold themselves into slavery to pay their debts.

The role of women in Mesopotamian society changed over time. In Sumer, goddesses were highly honored in religious practice. Perhaps because of the importance of female deities, women held a higher social standing in Sumer than in later civilizations of the region. However, Sumerian women never held legal rights equal to those of men. But some rulers' wives had supervisory powers, and a number wrote songs about their husbands, revealing to later scholars that they had learned writing and music. On rare occasion, a woman may have inherited property.

Sumerians Practice Religion Like most ancient peoples, the Sumerians were polytheistic, worshiping many gods. These gods were thought to control every aspect of life, especially the forces of nature. Sumerians believed that gods and goddesses behaved like ordinary people—they ate, drank, married, and raised families. Although the gods favored truth and justice, they were also responsible for causing violence and suffering.

Sumerians believed their highest duty was to keep these divine beings happy and, by doing so, ensure the safety of their city-state. Each city built a **ziggurat** (ZIG oo rat), a large, stepped platform thought to have been topped by a temple dedicated to the city's chief god or goddess. As well, Sumerians celebrated holy days with ceremonies and processions. In one ritual, the king went through a symbolic wedding to Inanna, the life-giving goddess of love. This rite was meant to ensure a prosperous new year.

The Sumerians believed in an afterlife. In their view, all people lived after death in a grim underworld from which there was no release. One character in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* describes the underworld as “the place where they live on dust, their food is mud, / . . . and they see no light, living in blackness / on the door and door-bolt, deeply settled dust.”

Temple to the Gods

Priests and priestesses could climb stairs to the top of the ziggurat to perform rituals and prayers. The people watched from below. They also prayed and offered sacrifices of animals, grain, and wine to win the favor of the gods.



Differentiated


Instruction Solutions for All Learners

L1 Special Needs L2 Less Proficient Readers

Ask students to use the information in the previous chapter to explain why civilization developed in Mesopotamia. Remind students that food surpluses led to permanent settlements, which in turn led to civilization. Point out that the Fertile Crescent is so named because the fertile farmland curved in the shape of a crescent.

L2 English Language Learners

Use the following resources to help students acquire basic skills:

 **Reading and Note Taking Study Guide**

- Adapted Note Taking Study Guide, p. 15
- Adapted Section Summary, p. 16



1 The Sumerians sometimes pressed tokens into the surface of a clay envelope before placing them within it, perhaps to indicate its contents.



2 A scribe listed quantities of various commodities on this clay tablet using both token impressions and a stylus.



3 Scribes wrote cuneiform on both sides of a tablet, which was small enough to hold in one hand.

● INFOGRAPHIC

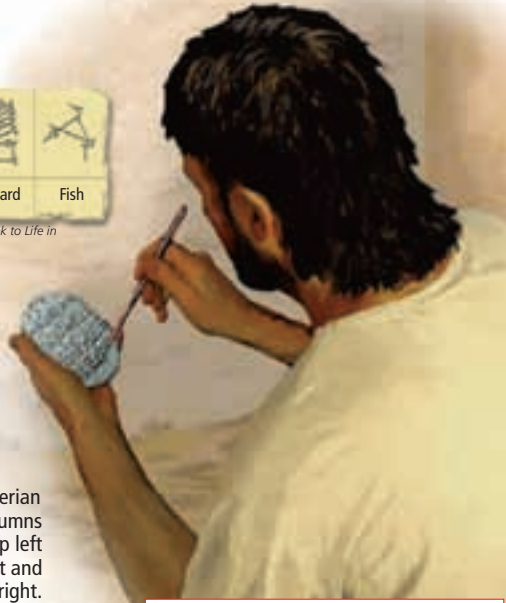
Cuneiform Develops in Stages

Around 8000 B.C., Sumerians began using differently shaped clay tokens to represent various items of exchange, such as sheep, bread, or oil. To record economic transactions, they placed the tokens inside clay envelopes often shaped like balls. Around 3500 B.C., Sumerians began to press the tokens into clay tablets to make signs. They also started marking the clay using a sharp tool called a stylus. Around 3200 B.C., they created a true writing system that included symbols that represented words or syllables.

Cuneiform Symbol			
Meaning	Mountain	Orchard	Fish

SOURCE: Stephen Bertman, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*

Using a stylus, a Sumerian scribe wrote in columns beginning at the top left corner of the tablet and working to the right.



Thinking Critically

- 1. Draw Inferences** How do you think the use of clay shaped the writing system the Sumerians developed?
- 2. Make Comparisons** How did cuneiform writing allow Sumerians to communicate more effectively than they could using tokens and clay envelopes?

Sumerians Invent Writing By 3200 B.C., Sumerians had invented the earliest known writing. It was later called **cuneiform** (kyoo NEE uh fawrm), from the Latin word *cuneus* for “wedge,” because scribes wrote by making wedge-shaped marks on clay tablets. Cuneiform grew out of a system of pictographs used to record goods brought to temple storehouses. Later, the Sumerians developed symbols to represent more complicated thoughts. As their writing evolved, the Sumerians used it to record not only economic exchanges but also myths, prayers, laws, and business contracts.

Sumerian scribes had to go through years of difficult schooling to acquire their skills. Discipline was strict. Untidy copying or talking in class could be punished by caning. Students who did well often learned about religion, mathematics, and literature as well.

✓ Checkpoint How was Sumerian society structured?

Differentiated

Instruction Solutions for All Learners

L1 Special Needs **L2** Less Proficient Readers

Ask students to list all the uses for writing that they’ve encountered on this day. For each item, ask them to also list its purpose. (*Sample: street signs to show where one is, receipt to prove something was purchased, homework or test to show understanding*) Ask students how the tool of writing makes their life easier. Then reinforce that the

L2 English Language Learners

Sumerians were the first to develop this tool. Then ask, **According to the images above, what size was a cuneiform tablet?** (big enough to fit in one’s hand) **Why do you think it was this size?** (*If it were bigger, it’d be difficult to carry around, and it wouldn’t be as useful.*)

Lasting Legacy of Sumer

L3

Instruct

- Introduce** Ask students to recall the names of some constellations. (*Sample: the Big Dipper, Orion, Leo*) Ask them to speculate where these names came from. Then point out the images of the constellations on the next page. Explain that the names we use today for a number of constellations come from the Sumerian descriptions of these star groups. Tell students this is an example of a lasting legacy. In this case, the Sumerian legacy has lasted at least 4,000 years.
- Teach** Create a two-column chart on the board, labeling one column **People Affected by the Sumerian Legacy**, and the other **Fields Affected by the Sumerian Legacy**. Ask students to use what they have read in the text to fill in the columns. For each field in which the Sumerians left a legacy, discuss whether their legacy is still felt today.
- Quick Activity** Organize a quick debate over what students consider the most important legacy of the Sumerians. Which accomplishment was most important to the people of the time? Which has the most influence on people today? Take a class vote and discuss the outcome.

Independent Practice

Ask students to write a paragraph explaining how the conquest of the Sumerians by other peoples ended their civilization, but did not end their influence on other people.

Monitor Progress

Check Reading and Note Taking Study Guide entries for student understanding.

Answers

Thinking Critically


1. It was a pliable material and useful for making impressions upon.
 2. It expanded their possibilities for more complex communication because it gave them options for not only economic transactions but also ideas.
- ✓** In the Sumerian social hierarchy, the highest class included rulers, officials, and priests; the middle class included lesser priests, scribes, merchants, and artisans; and the lowest class was made up of peasant farmers.

Assess and Reteach

Assess Progress


- Have students complete the Section Assessment.
- Administer the Section Quiz.

All in One Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 20

- To further assess student understanding, use
 Progress Monitoring Transparencies, 4

Reteach

If students need more instruction, have them read the section summary.

 Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 16

 Adapted Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 16

 Spanish Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 16

Extend

Ask students to choose an invention from this section (*sample: alphabet, coins*) and do research on how differing societies have adapted the invention for their own uses.

Answers

Caption Sample: by recording information using writing systems such as cuneiform and transmitting information orally from generation to generation

- ✓ The Sumerians recorded the movements of planets and stars and established a number system based on six.

The Story of the Stars

Mesopotamian astronomers were the first to associate many constellations with the shapes we know them for today. It was they who saw the lion in the stars we now call Leo and the scorpion in those we call Scorpio. *How do you think ancient notions of the night sky were passed on over so much time?*



▲ Leo



▲ Scorpio

Lasting Legacy of Sumer

Beginning around 2500 B.C., armies of conquering peoples swept across Mesopotamia and overwhelmed the Sumerian city-states. By 1900 B.C., the Sumerian civilization had been replaced by other civilizations and empires that you will read about in the next section.

However, Sumer left behind a lasting legacy. Newcomers to the region adopted many ideas and innovations from the Sumerians. For example, the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians adapted cuneiform so it could be used with their own languages. These peoples then helped spread Sumerian learning across the Middle East.

Over the centuries, Sumerian scholars had begun to develop astronomy and mathematics. They studied the skies and recorded the movements of planets and stars. They also established a number system based on six, dividing the hour into 60 minutes and the circle into 360 degrees, as we still do today. The Babylonians later built on this Sumerian learning to develop basic algebra and geometry, to create accurate calendars, and to predict eclipses of the sun and moon. Later peoples also elaborated on Sumerian oral narratives, such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which was written down in cuneiform by both the Akkadians and the Babylonians.

In addition, by means of the various peoples who conquered the Middle East, Sumerian knowledge passed on to the Greeks and Romans. As you will read in later chapters, they, in turn, had a powerful impact on the development of the Western world.

- ✓ **Checkpoint** What advances did the Sumerians make in mathematics and astronomy?

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-0211

1 Assessment

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas**
Use your completed concept web to answer the Focus Question: What were the characteristics of the world's first civilization?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Draw Inferences** Sumerians faced significant geographic challenges, such as floods. How do you think facing these challenges played a role in the formation of a strong government?
4. **Determine Relevance** How might the invention of cuneiform writing have strengthened Sumerian government and religious practices?
5. **Analyze Information** Describe ways in which later peoples built on Sumerian learning. Would this have been possible without the invention of writing?

Writing About History

Quick Write: Determine the Purpose
When you write a biographical essay, start by determining its purpose. For example, your purpose might be to bring attention to someone who is not well known. Another purpose might be to describe the achievements that made someone very famous. Make a list of people about whom you could write an essay for either of these purposes, or for another purpose you may want to explore.

Section 1 Assessment

1. Sentences should reflect an understanding of each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section.
2. The world's first civilization, Sumer, included 12 separate city-states led by complex governments that oversaw large-scale projects such as the building of city walls; had a social hierarchy and a polytheistic religion; had cuneiform writing; and began to develop astronomy and mathematics.

3. Organizing people to face these challenges would have required strong leadership, which could have led to the establishment of a strong government.
4. government: by allowing it to preserve its records, laws, and achievements; religious practices: by allowing priests to preserve prayers, rituals, and beliefs about gods, goddesses, and the afterlife
5. Responses should recognize that it may have been difficult for later peoples to

know about so much of Sumerian learning if it had not been written down.

Writing About History

Responses should show an understanding of the different purposes of a biographical essay.

For additional assessment, have students access **Progress Monitoring Online** at **Web Code naa-0211**.