

# River Valley Civilizations



◀ Egyptian wood carving



Blue Nile hippopotamus ▼



5000 B.C.  
Groups of people  
begin migrating

3500 B.C.  
Sumeria  
established

2600 B.C.  
Old Kingdom  
begins in Egypt

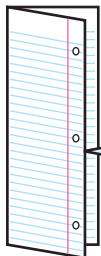
2300 B.C.  
Sargon I establishes  
world's first empire

# FOLDABLES™

## Study Organizer

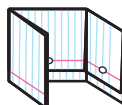
**Compare and Contrast Study Foldable** Make this foldable to help you compare and contrast the river valley civilizations that developed in the Middle East, South Asia, and China.

**Step 1** Fold a sheet of paper in half from side to side.

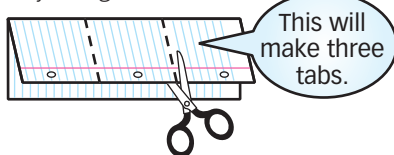


Fold it so the left edge is about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the right edge.

**Step 2** Turn the paper and fold it into thirds.

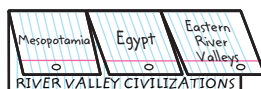


**Step 3** Unfold and cut the top layer only along both folds.



This will make three tabs.

**Step 4** Label as shown.



## Reading and Writing

As you read the unit, write notes under each appropriate tab of your foldable. Keep in mind that you are trying to compare these civilizations.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

### Library

See pages 676–677 for another primary source reading to accompany Unit 2.



Read “The Epic of Gilgamesh” from the **World History Primary Source Document Library CD-ROM**.

## Journal Notes

What was daily life like more than 5,000 years ago? Note details about it as you read.





# Mesopotamia

3500 B.C.–1700 B.C.

Sumerian man and woman ▼



▲ Gold Sumerian warrior's helmet



3500 B.C.  
Sumeria  
established

2300 B.C.  
Sargon I creates the  
world's first empire

1800 B.C.  
Hammurabi conquers  
Akkad and Sumer

1700 B.C.  
Tales of  
Gilgamesh started

## Chapter Focus



### Read to Discover

- How religion, family life, and government influenced the civilization of Sumer.
- Why Hammurabi and his reforms were important.
- How the developments of Mesopotamia contributed to other civilizations.



### Terms to Learn

city-state  
artisans  
ziggurat  
cuneiform  
scribe  
priest-kings  
empire  
culture  
reform  
reign



### People to Know

Gilgamesh  
Sargon I  
Hammurabi



### Places to Locate

Mesopotamia  
Sumer  
Ur  
Babylon



### Chapter Overview

Visit the *Human Heritage* Web site at [humanheritage.glencoe.com](http://humanheritage.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 3—Chapter Overviews** to preview this chapter.



**CLICK HERE**

**Why It's Important** The earliest known civilizations developed along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which begin in the mountains of eastern Turkey. The twin rivers each flow more than 1,000 miles, or 1,600 kilometers, southeast across a great plain in an area known as the Middle East. Then, the waters join and empty into the Persian Gulf. Today, the land between the two rivers is part of the country of Iraq. In ancient times, the area was called Mesopotamia (mes uh puh tay' me uh), "the land between the rivers."

Around 4000 B.C., groups of people began migrating, or moving, into Mesopotamia. They developed so many new ideas that the area has been called the "cradle of civilization." The influence of Mesopotamia left a lasting impact on the ancient world.

## SECTION 1 The Rise of Sumer

The people who settled in southern Mesopotamia about 3500 B.C. were a short, stocky, black-haired people called Sumerians (sū mer' ē uhnz). Their area of Mesopotamia was known as Sumer (sū' mühr).





## Student Web Activity

Visit the *Human Heritage* Web site at [humanheritage.glencoe.com](http://humanheritage.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 3—Student Web Activities** to find out more about the Sumerian civilization.



Sumerian civilization is the earliest known on Earth. For the first time, people began to control their physical environment. The Sumerians knew they had to control the twin rivers. The rivers flooded each spring. When the waters went down, natural *levees* (lev' ēz), or raised areas of soil, remained behind. The Sumerians built the levees even higher and used them to keep back the floodwaters. During summer when the land became dry, they poked holes in the levees. The river water that ran through the holes made channels in the soil. The Sumerians made the channels larger until they became canals. They used the water in the canals to irrigate their crops. The chief crop of the Sumerians was barley. The Sumerians also grew wheat, sesame, flax, fruit trees, date palms, and many different kinds of vegetables.

A system of irrigation canals took much planning. People had to learn to work together. In time, they became more organized. They set up governments to make laws so they would know what was expected of them. As the population grew, they began to build cities.

There was no building stone and little timber in Sumer. The Sumerians had to find other materials to use for their houses and public buildings. They mixed mud from the river with crushed reeds to make bricks. They left the bricks out in the sun to bake and then used them to build their cities. One of the great cities of

## Linking Across Time

**Official Seals** Around 3500 to 3400 B.C., officials in Mesopotamia started using cylinder seals (below) to mark goods and verify documents written in cuneiform on clay. Today governments around the world continue to use seals to mark documents such as the passports carried by United States citizens (right). **Why do you think governments stamp important documents with seals?**



Sumer was Ur (uhr). The Sumerians were the first city-builders in this area of the world.

**City-States** Each Sumerian city was considered a state in itself, with its own god and government. Each **city-state** was made up of the city and the farmland around it. Each city was surrounded by a wall of sun-dried brick. The wall had bronze gates that were opened during the day and closed at night to keep out lions and bandits.

Narrow, winding streets led from the gates to the center of the city. Near the center were the houses of the upper class—priests and merchants. These houses were two stories high with wooden balconies. The balconies looked out over courtyards around which the living quarters were built. The courtyards provided light and air for rooms. Outside walls were windowless to keep out heat from the sun and smells of the streets.

Behind the houses of the rich were the houses of the middle class—government officials, shopkeepers, and **artisans** (art' uh zuhnz), or skilled workers. These houses also were built around open courtyards but were only one story high. Farther out were the houses of the lower class—farmers, unskilled workers, and people who made their living by fishing.

The Sumerians were very proud of their cities. Often, one city-state would go to war with another city-state. They fought over boundary lines and to prove which city-state was stronger.

**Religious and Family Life** At the center of each Sumerian city was a temple, called a **ziggurat** (zig' uh rat). The word “ziggurat” means “mountain of god” or “hill of heaven.” Each ziggurat was made up of a series of square levels. Each level was smaller than the one below it. Great stairways led to the top of a ziggurat, which was believed to be the home of the city's chief god. Only priests could enter the home of the god.

Around the ziggurat were courts. The courts and the ziggurat were the center of Sumerian life. Artisans worked there. Children went to school there. Farmers, artisans, and traders stored their goods there. The poor were fed there. All great events were celebrated in this area.

The Sumerians believed that all the forces of nature, such as wind, rain, and flood, were alive. Because they could not control these forces, they viewed them as gods. In all, there were more than 3,000 Sumerian gods.

The Sumerians believed that at first there were only male gods. Then female gods appeared. The male gods found they had to work very hard to please the female gods. The male gods decided that they needed servants to do their work. So, from the mud of the rivers, they made humans who would be their servants. The Sumerians believed that they were on Earth only to



### Reading Check

What areas made up each Sumerian city-state?



### Reading Check

What are artisans?



### Reading Check

What was the purpose of a ziggurat?



### SUMERIAN PRAYING STATUES

To honor their gods, Sumerians left statues of themselves within their temple. These statues, standing with their hands clasped, were meant to offer prayers when the people were not present. **In how many gods did the Sumerians believe?**

serve the gods. If the gods were unhappy with them, their crops would not grow and they would not live happy lives. Therefore, the goal of each Sumerian was to please the gods.

Only priests, however, could know the will of the gods. This made Sumerian priests very powerful. For example, all land was owned by a city's god. But priests controlled and administered the land in the god's name. The priests also ran schools.

Schools were only for the sons of the rich. Poorer boys worked in the fields or learned a trade. Schools were made up of rooms off the temple courtyards. They were known as tablet houses because their main purpose was to teach students how to write. Students sat in rows on brick benches. They wrote with sharp-ended reeds on clay tablets about the size of a postcard. Sumerian writing was called **cuneiform** (kyū nē' uh form). It was made up of hundreds of markings shaped like wedges.

Writing developed because people had to keep track of business deals. When people lived in villages, they knew everyone and could remember what goods they exchanged with whom. When cities arose, there were too many people and goods to remember. At first, the Sumerians used pictures to represent objects. Later, they used pictures to represent ideas. Still later, they used pictures to represent syllables.

When a student graduated from school, he became a **scribe**, or writer. He worked for the temple, the palace, the government, or the army. Some scribes went to work for a merchant or set up their own businesses as public writers.



### Reading Check

What was cuneiform?



### Reading Check

What were some of the places a scribe might work?



Although only Sumerian males went to school, women did have rights. They could buy and sell property. They could run businesses and own and sell enslaved persons.

Although a woman handled her husband's affairs when he was away, the husband was the head of a household. He could divorce his wife by saying, "You're not my wife." If he needed money, he had the right to sell or rent his wife and children as enslaved persons for up to three years. He also arranged the marriages of his children.

Children were expected to support their parents when the parents became old and were also expected to obey older family members. All family members were to obey the gods and the priests.

**Priests and Kings** At first, Sumerian priests were also kings of city-states. One of the most famous **priest-kings** was Gilgamesh (gil' ga mesh) of Uruk (ū' rūk). Tales told about Gilgamesh made him seem more like a god than a person. One tale, written about 1700 B.C., is the oldest known story in the world.

In the story, Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu (en' ki dū) travel the world performing great acts of courage. When Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh searches for a way to live forever. He learns that only the gods can live forever. Part of the Gilgamesh story tells of a great flood that covered the whole world. The account of the flood is very much like the biblical story of Noah and the ark.

The Sumerian priest-kings received advice from an assembly made up of free men. When war broke out with another city-state, the assembly would choose one of its members to serve as military leader until the war was over. As time went on, these leaders stayed in charge even after peace returned. By about 3000 B.C., they took the place of priests as permanent kings. At the same time, kingship became *hereditary* (huh red' uh ter ē), or passed down from parent to child.

## Then... & Now

**Cuneiform** Today only about 250 people know how to read the more than 1 million cuneiform signs that make up the written Sumerian language. To change this, a team of language experts at the University of Pennsylvania is working on an 18-volume Sumerian dictionary. The team expects the work to be done sometime in the 2000s.



### Reading Check

Who was one of the most famous Sumerian **priest-kings**?

## Section 1 Assessment

- 1. Define:** city-state, artisans, ziggurat, cuneiform, scribe, priest-kings.
- 2.** How did the Sumerians gain control of the twin rivers?
- 3.** What was the center of Sumerian life?

### Critical Thinking

- 4. Making Comparisons** How would you compare the lives of women in the

time of Sumer to the lives of women in the modern world?

### Graphic Organizer Activity

- 5.** Draw a diagram like this one, and use it to show accomplishments of the Sumerians.







# Distinguishing Fact From Opinion

Suppose a friend says, "Our school's basketball team is awesome. That's a fact." Actually, it is not a fact; it is an opinion. Are you able to tell the difference?

**Learning the Skill** A **fact** answers a specific question such as: What happened? Who did it? When and where did it happen? Why did it happen? Statements of fact can be checked for accuracy and proven. If your friend had said, "We have the highest-ranking team in the state," that could be a fact. We can look up the rankings of state teams and determine whether the statement is a fact.

An **opinion**, on the other hand, expresses beliefs, feelings, and judgments. Although it may reflect someone's thoughts, we cannot prove or disprove it.

An **opinion** often begins with phrases such as *I believe*, *I think*, *probably*, *it seems to me*, or *in my opinion*. It often contains words such as *might*, *could*, *should*, and *ought*, and superlatives such as *best*, *worst*, and *greatest*. Judgment words that express approval or disapproval—such as *good*, *bad*, *poor*, and *satisfactory*—also usually indicate an opinion.

To distinguish between facts and opinions, ask yourself these questions:

- Does this statement give specific information about an event?
- Can I check the accuracy of this statement?
- Does this statement express someone's feelings, beliefs, or judgment?
- Does it include phrases such as *I believe*, superlatives, or judgment words?

## Skill Practice

Read each numbered statement. Then tell whether each is a fact or an opinion, and explain how you arrived at your answer.

1. Sumerian civilization is the earliest known on Earth.
2. The greatest accomplishment of the Sumerians was their system of irrigation.
3. A temple called a ziggurat formed the center of Sumerian life.
4. Women in Sumeria had terrible lives.
5. The priest-kings were better rulers than the military leaders who came into power.



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## SECTION 2 Later Mesopotamian Empires

About 2400 B.C., the power of Sumer started to fade. New civilizations began to develop in Mesopotamia as conquerors moved in from nearby areas.

**Sargon I** Sargon I (sar' gon) was a ruler from an area in northern Mesopotamia known as Akkad (ak' ad). About 2300 B.C., he moved his armies south and began to conquer the city-states of Sumer one by one. He united the conquered city-states with Akkad and became known as king of Sumer and Akkad. Thus, Sargon I created the world's first **empire** (em' pīr), or group of states under one ruler. He extended this empire to include all of Mesopotamia.


Under Sargon I, Akkadian became the language of the people. Sumerian was used only for religious purposes. The Akkadians, however, worshiped the Sumerian gods. They also wrote their language in Sumerian cuneiform. Sargon I ruled his empire for more than 50 years. Shortly after his death, the empire fell.

**Hammurabi of Babylon** Following the death of Sargon I, the separate city-states again rose to power. Then, about 1800 B.C., a new group of people called Amorites (am' uh rīts) entered the Tigris-Euphrates valley and built cities of their own. One of these cities was Babylon (bab' uh luhn). The king of Babylon, Hammurabi (ham uh rob' ē), conquered Akkad and Sumer and became ruler of a great new empire.

The people of Babylon took as their own many parts of the **culture**, or way of life, of the people they had conquered. For example, they took over the language of the city-states. They also worshiped the same Sumerian gods that the Akkadians had worshiped, but they gave those gods Babylonian names.

Hammurabi was a great conqueror. He extended his rule to the Mediterranean Sea. As ruler, he brought about many changes. He improved irrigation systems by building and repairing canals. He changed religion by raising the god of Babylon above all other gods. When the people began to worship this god as well as their own local god, they became more united. Hammurabi also reorganized the tax system and began a government housing program.

The **reform**, or improvement, for which Hammurabi became best known was a code of law. Each city-state had its own code. Hammurabi took what he believed were the best laws from each code. He put these together and then issued one code by which everyone in the empire was to live. Hammurabi wanted to make sure that his code was carried out fairly and justly. To do this, he

 **Reading Check**  
How did Sargon I build his **empire**?  
From what **culture** did the people of Babylon borrow?  
For what **reform** is Hammurabi best known?

### People in History



**Hammurabi**  
c.1750 B.C.

#### Babylonian King

Hammurabi built an empire that stretched north from the Persian Gulf through the Tigris and Euphrates valleys and west to the Mediterranean Sea. He turned Babylon into one of the most powerful capitals of the ancient world.



# Identifying Physical Features

Different physical features making up Earth's surface are often shown on maps. They include landforms, such as mountains, hills, plateaus, and plains. Physical features also include bodies of water, such as oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers.

Most maps use black boundary lines and color to point out water and land areas. Blue is generally used to show the size and shape of large bodies of water. For example, notice the Mediterranean Sea located west of Syria on the map below. Rivers, such as the Nile River in Egypt, are often shown by black lines. To distinguish rivers from boundaries, which are also shown by black lines, rivers are usually labeled.

Maps in this textbook use earth tone colors to point out land areas. Mountains are shown by shades of black. For example, there are mountains located where the Euphrates River begins but not where the river empties into the Persian Gulf.

Look at the map below, and answer the following questions.

## Map Practice

1. In addition to the Mediterranean, what seas are shown?
2. Besides the Nile, what rivers are shown?
3. How can you tell that the Persian Gulf coastline has changed over the years?

## Mesopotamia



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appointed royal judges. Judges who were not honest and witnesses who did not tell the truth were punished.


Hammurabi's code covered almost everything in daily life. A person was believed innocent until proven guilty. Once proven guilty, a person was punished. Punishments ranged from fines to death. There were no prison sentences. Members of the upper class generally were punished more severely than members of the middle or lower classes.

During Hammurabi's rule, Babylon became an important trade center. Babylonians exchanged their *surplus*, or extra, products for money or for goods. People from other parts of the world came to trade, some from as far away as India and China. These traders paid gold and silver for the goods made by Babylonians.

Hammurabi ruled for more than 40 years. His **reign** (rān), or period of power, is known as the Golden Age of Babylon. After his death, however, the Babylonian Empire declined, and Mesopotamia was again divided into a number of small city-states.



Sculpture of a Sumerian Chariot

 **Reading Check**  
What did people call the **reign** of Hammurabi?

## Section 2 Assessment

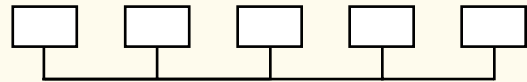
1. **Define:** empire, culture, reform, reign.
2. What happened to Sumer under Sargon I's rule?
3. How did Hammurabi come to power?

### Critical Thinking

4. **Using Reasoned Judgment** What do you think Hammurabi would say about the court system in the United States today?

## Graphic Organizer Activity

5. Draw a diagram like this one, and use it to show key events in the life of Hammurabi.



## SECTION 3 Contributions

From the beginnings of Sumer until the death of Hammurabi, the influence of Mesopotamia on other civilizations was felt in many ways. Inventions, customs, and ideas of the Sumerian and Babylonian cultures were copied and improved upon by other peoples.

The Sumerians developed the earliest known civilization in the world. Mesopotamia has been called "the cradle of civilization." The oldest written records known are Sumerian. The Sumerians were the first people to write down their laws. Sumerian cuneiform became the model for other people's writing.

The Sumerians also invented many things such as the wheel, which helped transportation. Another was the plow, which made

it possible for farmers to grow more food with less effort. Still another was the sailboat, which replaced muscle power with wind power.

The people of Mesopotamia developed a 12-month calendar based on the cycles of the moon. The calendar marked the times for religious festivals and planting.

From Mesopotamia also came contributions in the field of mathematics. The people developed a number system based on 60. From that came the 60-minute hour, 60-second minute, and 360-degree circle. The people of Mesopotamia also used a clock that was operated by controlled drops of water.

## Section 3 Assessment

1. Why was Mesopotamia called “the cradle of civilization”?
2. What did the people of Mesopotamia contribute to the field of mathematics?

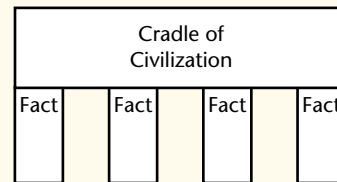
### Critical Thinking

#### 3. Determining Cause and Effect

How have inventions by the people of Mesopotamia helped shape present-day life?

## Graphic Organizer Activity

4. Draw a diagram like this one, and use it to show facts that support this statement: Mesopotamia was “the cradle of civilization.”



# Chapter Summary & Study Guide

1. Civilization began in an area known as Mesopotamia, located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
2. Sumer was the first known civilization in the world.
3. Sumerian civilization consisted of a series of city-states, the most important of which was Ur.
4. Each Sumerian city-state had its own chief god and government.
5. Sargon I of Akkad created the world's first empire in 2300 B.C.
6. About 1800 B.C., Hammurabi conquered Akkad and Sumer and established the Babylonian Empire.
7. Hammurabi unified the Babylonian Empire by setting up a single code of law and by raising the god of Babylon above all others.
8. Major contributions of the Mesopotamian civilizations include writing, the wheel, the plow, the sailboat, and a number system based on 60.



### Self-Check Quiz

Visit the *Human Heritage* Web site at [humanheritage.glencoe.com](http://humanheritage.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter 3—Self-Check Quiz** to assess your understanding of this chapter.

# CHAPTER 3

# Assessment

## Using Key Terms

Imagine that you are a visitor to ancient Mesopotamia. Use the following words in a letter home in which you describe what you have seen and experienced during your visit.

artisans      culture      empire  
ziggurat      priest-kings      scribe  
reform      cuneiform      city-state  
reign

## Understanding Main Ideas

1. Why were the twin rivers important to Sumerian life?
2. Why was the ziggurat important to the Sumerians?
3. Who was Gilgamesh, and why was he important?
4. What did Sargon I accomplish?
5. What trading system did the people of Babylonia use?
6. What changes did Hammurabi bring to Mesopotamia?
7. What happened to people who broke Hammurabi's laws?
8. Why was the sailboat an important invention?

## Critical Thinking

1. In what ways do you think your school is similar to or different from the schools in Sumeria?
2. What do you think would have happened to Sumer if it had suffered ten years of drought? How would the kingdom be affected?
3. Why do you think religion played such an important part in Sumerian life?

## Graphic Organizer Activity

**History** Create a chart like this one, and use it to write newspaper headlines that tell the importance of each date to the history of Mesopotamia.

Date	Headline
3500 B.C.	
2300 B.C.	
1800 B.C.	
1700 B.C.	



## Geography in History

**Human Systems** Babylon became a major trading center. Refer to the map on page 62 and imagine that you are King Hammurabi. You must select the location for another settlement that you hope will also become a trading center. Where would you locate this settlement? Explain.

## Using Your Journal

Compare any details you may have noted about life in early Sumeria with details of your daily life. Write a paragraph explaining things that are similar and different as if you were explaining them to someone who lived in 2000 B.C.