

**CITY STATES OF ANCIENT SUMER**  
WORLD HISTORY (TUESDAY, AUGUST 30<sup>TH</sup>, 2011)

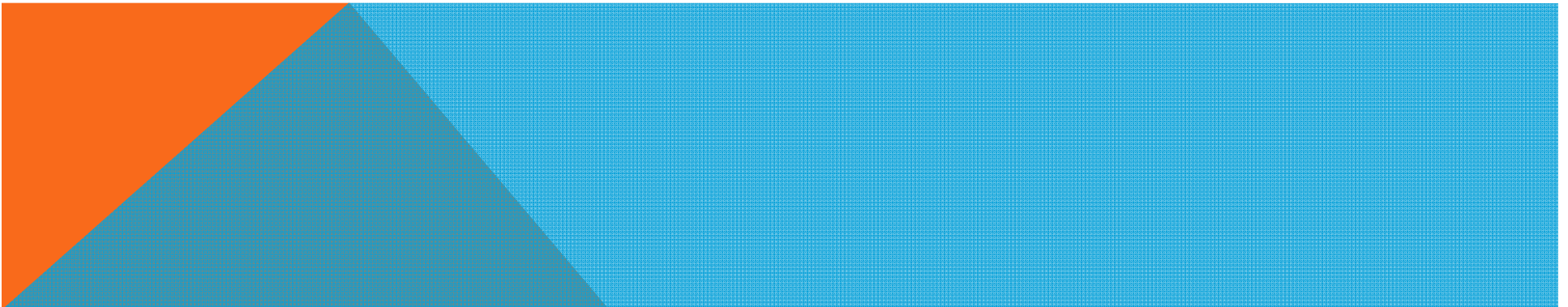
# GEOGRAPHY OF THE FERTILE CRESENT

## The Land Between the Rivers:

- The first civilization in the “fertile crescent” was Mesopotamia.
- It was located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
- In Sumer, as in Egypt, the fertile land of a river valley attracted Stone Age farmers from neighboring regions.
- Over time, these farmers began agriculture and grew enough food to support a huge population. Thus, a civilization was born.

## Floods and Irrigation:

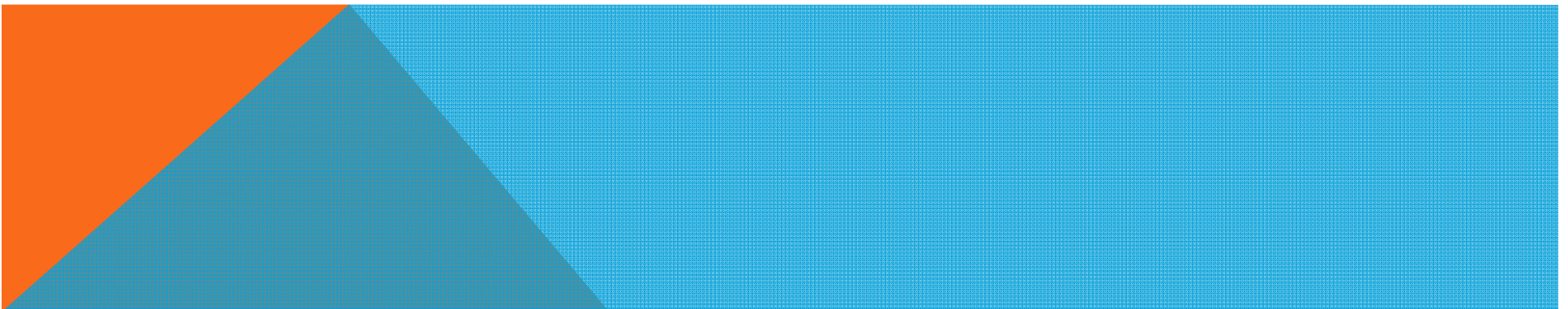
- The Tigris and Euphrates flooded violently and irregularly.
- The villagers had to work together under the command of their rulers to control the rivers’ movements.
- They built similar structures as the Egyptians to accomplish this task.





## The First Cities:

- Around 3,200 B.C., the first Sumerian cities emerged in the southern part of Mesopotamia.
- The Sumerians had few natural resources, but they made the most of what they had.
- They had little wood & stones, so they built mud houses. They made clay bricks and used these to build everything.
- The Sumerians were big traders, and they grew rich from their commerce system.
- The Sumerians traded via land and sea. They would sail by sea or they would use beasts of burden and walking to trade by land.
- The Sumerians did not invent the wheel, but they did invent the first wheeled vehicles. They used these tools to move goods far from home in the pursuit of good trade grounds.

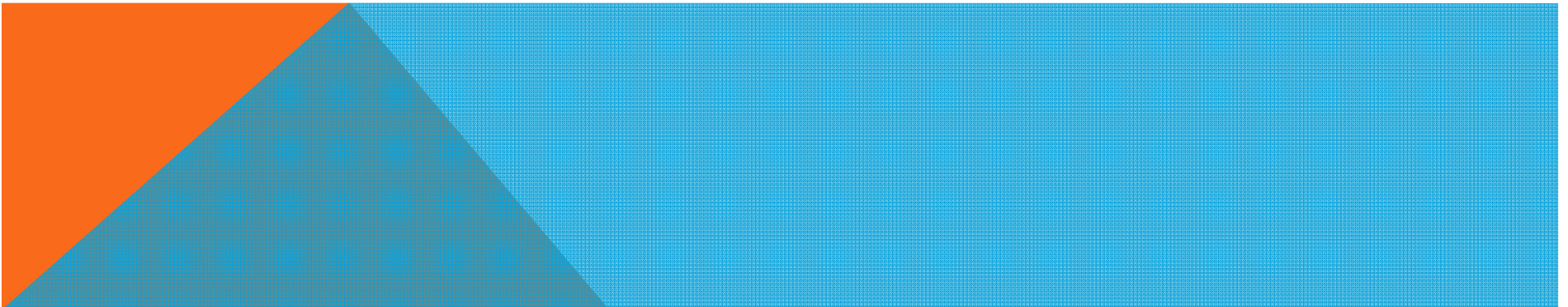


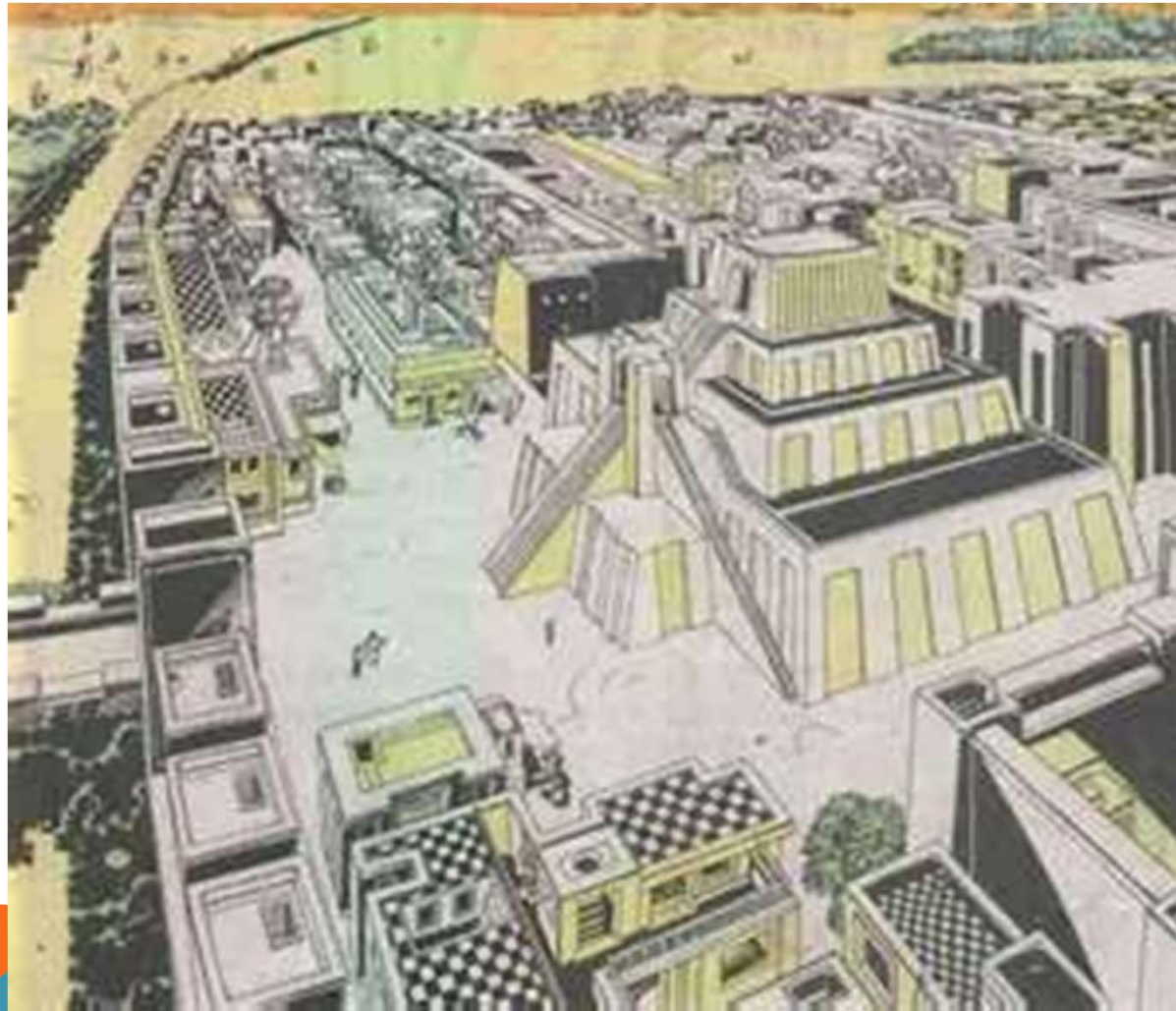


# SUMERIAN CIVILIZATION

## Government and Society:

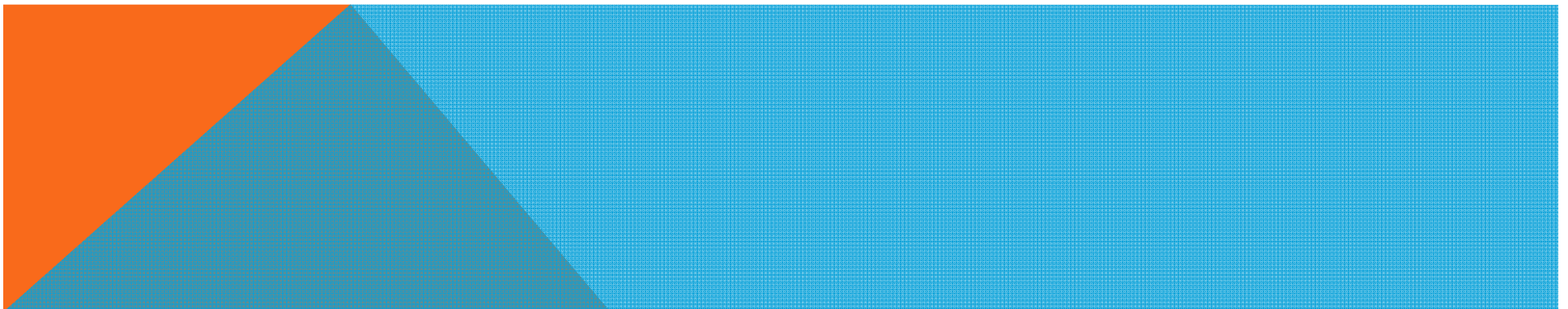
- Each city-state within Sumeria was ruled by one ruler who was responsible for maintaining the city walls and the irrigation systems.
- He also led the armies.
- Each Sumerian city-state had a distinct social hierarchy, or system of ranks.
- Most people in these city-states were peasant farmers.
- Women in Sumeria had rights. They had legal rights, and well-to-do women even engaged in trade and owned property!



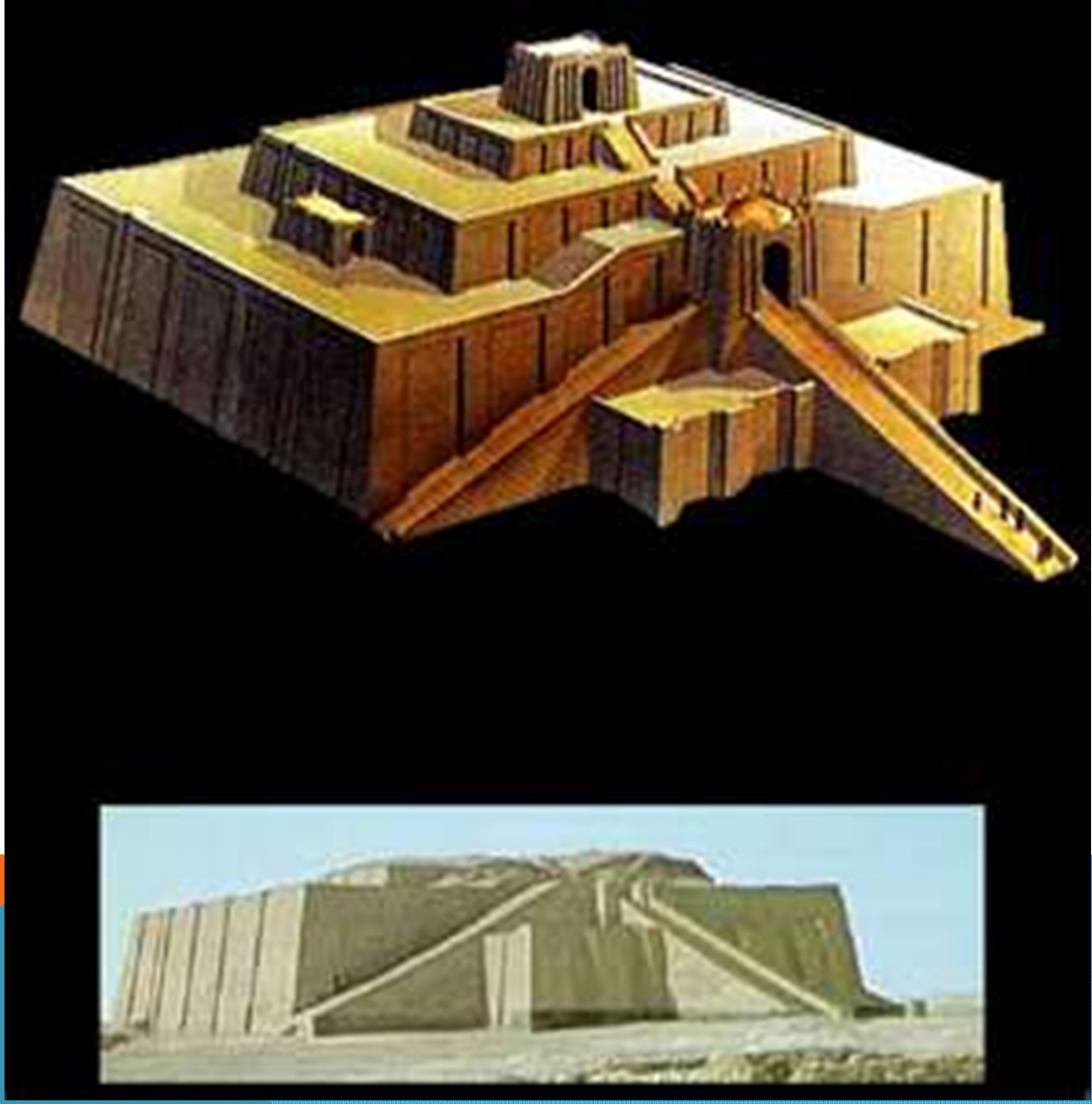


## Sumerian Religion:

- Like the Egyptians, the Sumerians were polytheistic (meaning they believed in multiple gods).
- These gods controlled every aspect of life, especially the forces of nature.
- The Sumerians believed that their most important duty in life was to keep their gods happy in order to ensure the safety of their civilization(s).
- Each city built a ziggurat, a pyramid-temple, to please their gods.
- The people of these Sumerian city-states even made sacrifices of animals, grain, and wine to please the gods.
- They even celebrated holy days with ceremonies and processions.
- Like the Egyptians, the Sumerians believed in an afterlife. However, the Sumerians believed that the afterlife was a bad place of suffering and torment for all.
- They thought this way most likely because of the fact that the annual floods of the Tigris and Euphrates were very irregular and devastating.
- The Sumerians must have developed a very pessimistic view of the world due to this flood pattern, whereas the Egyptians had a very manageable flood pattern. The Egyptians probably felt very optimistic about life since their floods were so good to them!

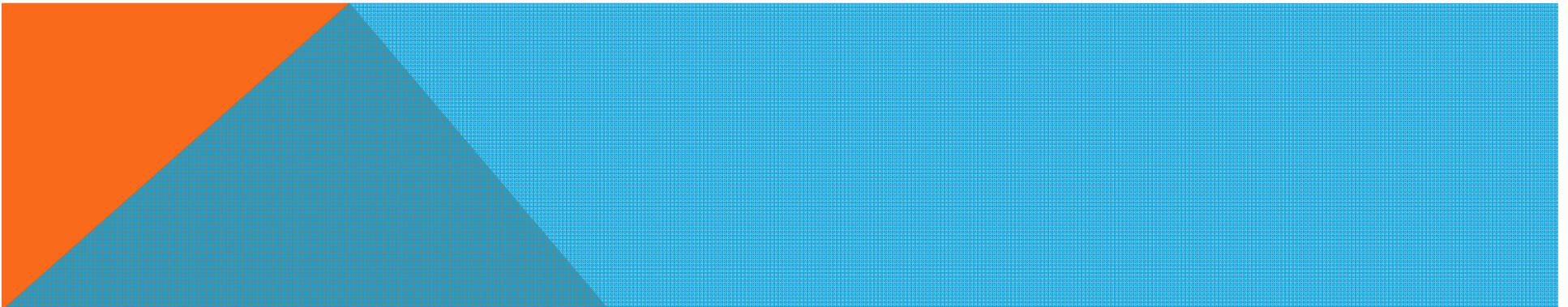


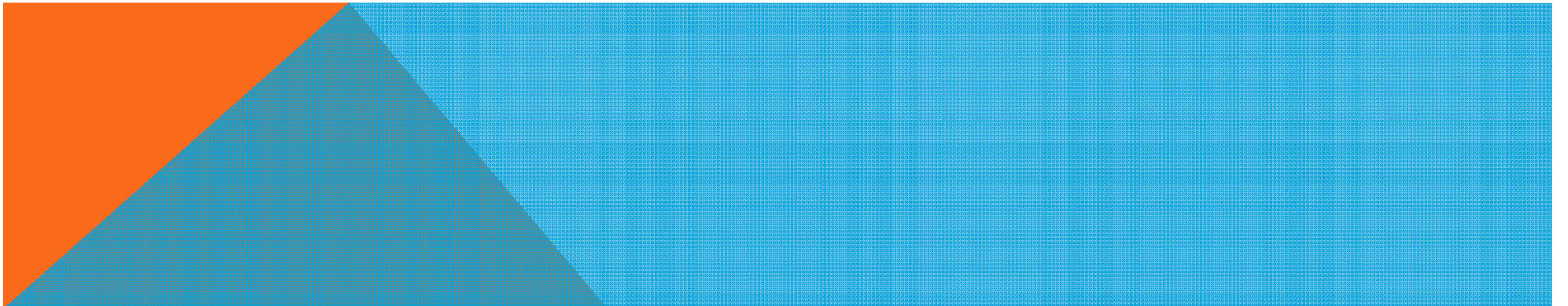




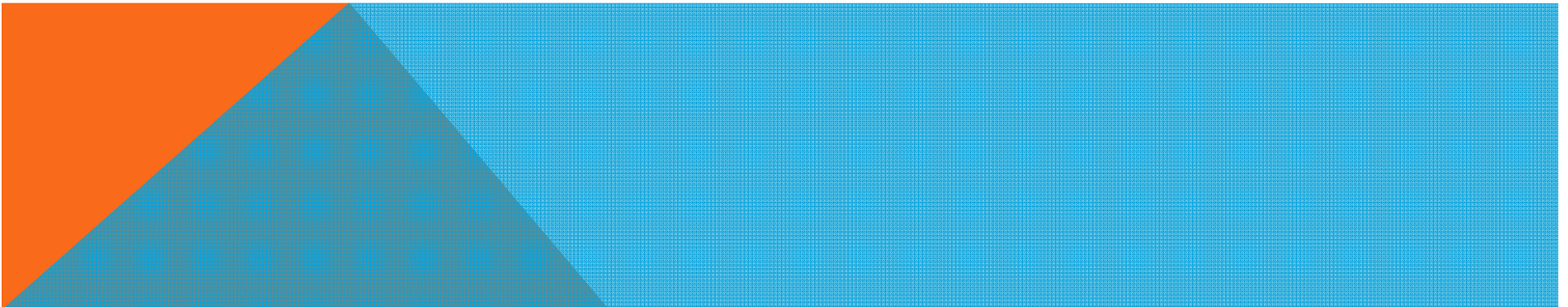
# ADVANCES IN LEARNING

- The Sumerians and Egyptians both invented their own unique forms of a written language. However, it is speculated that the Sumerians were the first to have done this.
- Their written symbols were known as cuneiform. This word is based on the latin word “*cuneus*”, which means wedge. This is known because of the wedge shaped markings in clay tablets that were made when cuneiform was written.
- Just like the Egyptians, this written language was created out of necessity. It was first used by priests who wanted to keep records of goods brought to temple storehouses.
- Later, more complex pictographic characters were added to this written language in order for people to express thoughts and feelings in writing.
- People had to go through very extensive training in school to learn this written language.
- The Sumerians were the first to develop a complex system of mathematics, geography, medicine, religion, astronomy, and literature due to this idea of “school”.





- This advancement in learning eventually led to the study of the heavenly bodies in an attempt at creating a more accurate calander.
- The Sumerian calander was so accurate that farmers could use it to reliably predict weather conditions.
- *Why do you think that this would be good for a farmer to know?*



# KEY QUESTIONS

1. How did geographic features influence the civilizations of the Fertile Crescent?
2. What were the main features of Sumerian civilization?
3. What advances in learning did Sumerians make?
4. What is a hierarchy?
5. What is a ziggurat?
6. What is cuneiform?
7. What was different about the flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates than that of the Nile?

