



- The **Fertile Crescent** is a region of the Middle East that stretches in a large, crescent-shaped curve from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.
 - The Fertile Crescent includes **Mesopotamia**, a wide, flat plain in present-day Iraq.
 - This plain lies between two great rivers, the **Tigris** and the **Euphrates**.
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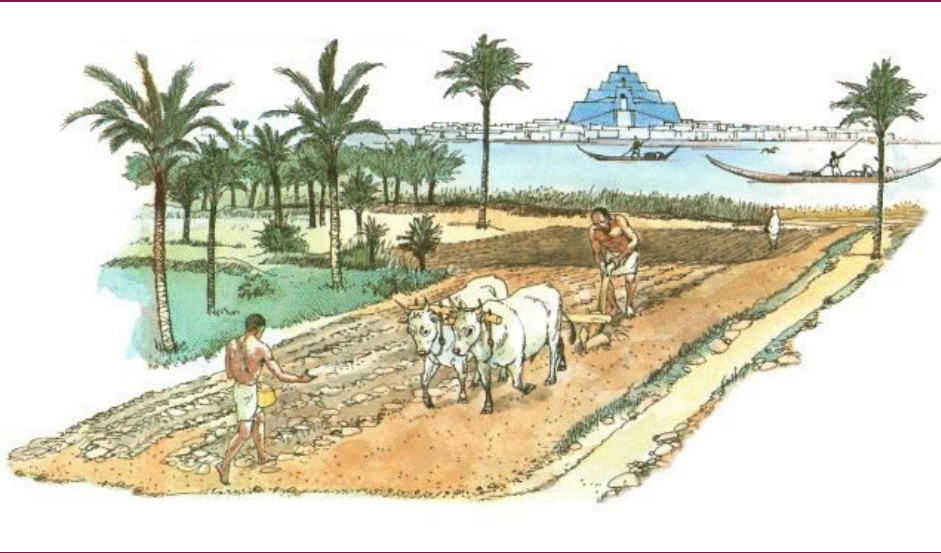
- Mesopotamia means “land between rivers” in Greek.
 - Thousands of years ago, the world’s first civilization began in Mesopotamia. It was called **Sumer**.
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What does “fertile” mean?

(of soil or land) producing or capable of
producing abundant vegetation or
crops.

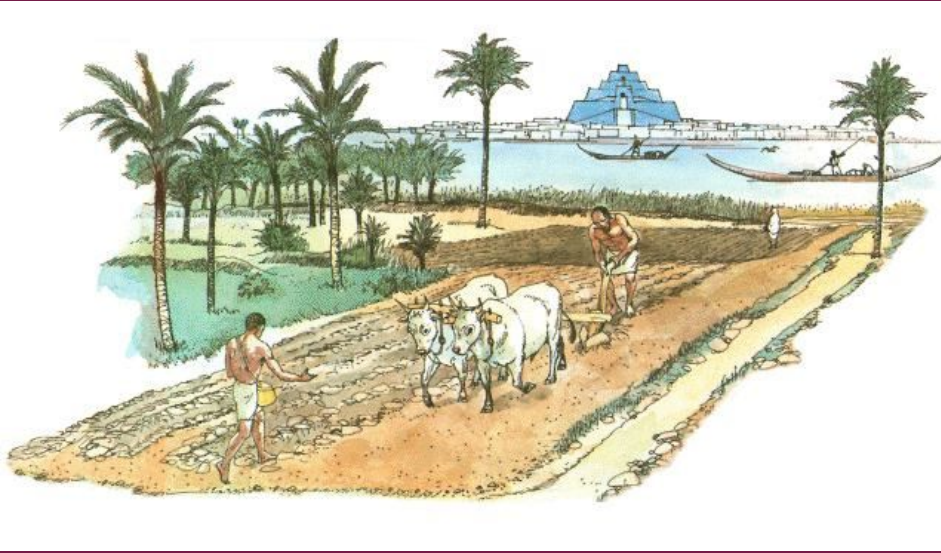


- The Fertile Crescent has rich and fertile soil.
 - Sumerian farmers grew grains and vegetables, and raised sheep, goats, and cattle.
 - The good soil comes from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
 - Each spring, the rivers flood their banks and leave fine, fertile soil called silt across the plain.
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Challenges of geography for Sumer

- Heavy spring floods could wash away crops and even villages.
- The hot summer sun baked the ground rock hard, and plants died after months without rain.



Technology for Farming

- Sumerians used technology to turn Mesopotamia into productive farmland.
- They dug miles of canals to irrigate (supply water to) their crops.
 - This means that plants got water even during the summer!
- Plow and seed funnel: farmers used these to cut a trench into the soil and drop the seeds inside.
 - ○ This made planting faster and easier.

**How were floods
in Mesopotamia
both positive and
negative?**



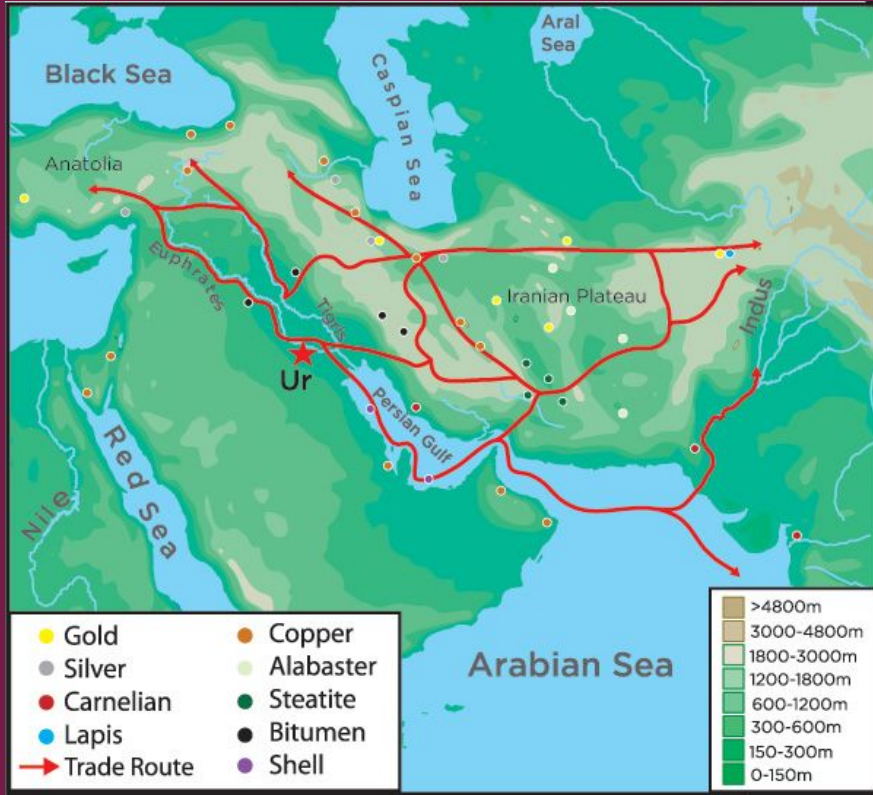
City-States of Sumer

- Around 3400 BCE, cities started to form in southern Mesopotamia.
- The first city was Uruk. It had a population of more than 40,000.
- Some cities grew large and powerful, and became the first city states.



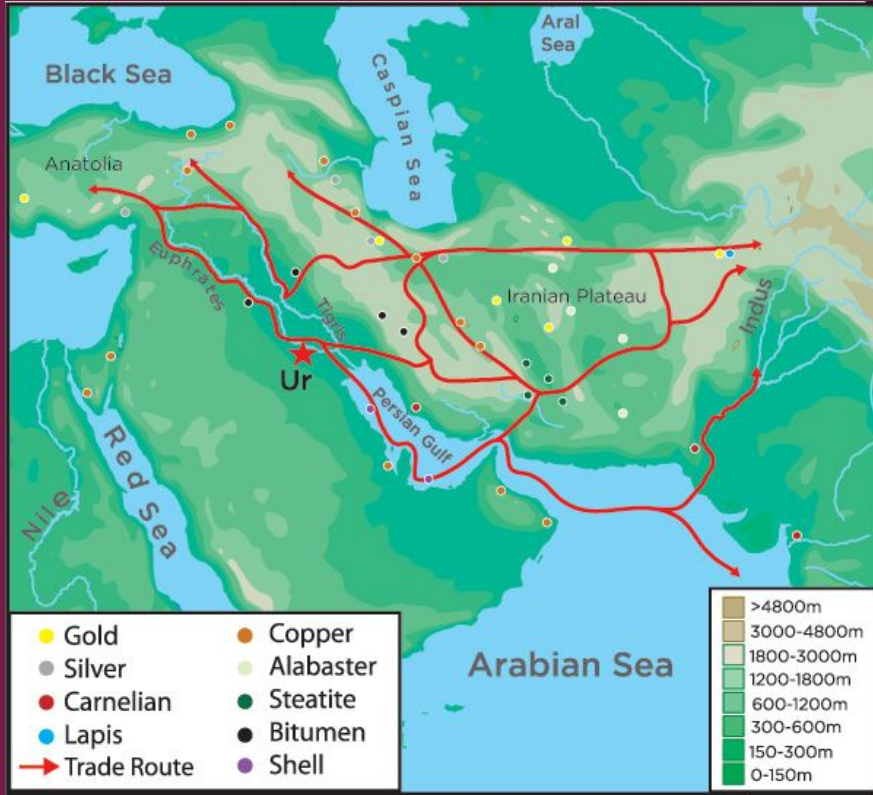
City-States of Sumer

- A **city-state** is an independent state that includes a city and its surrounding territory.
- Each Sumerian city-state had its own government and laws, and each had its own main god.



Trade

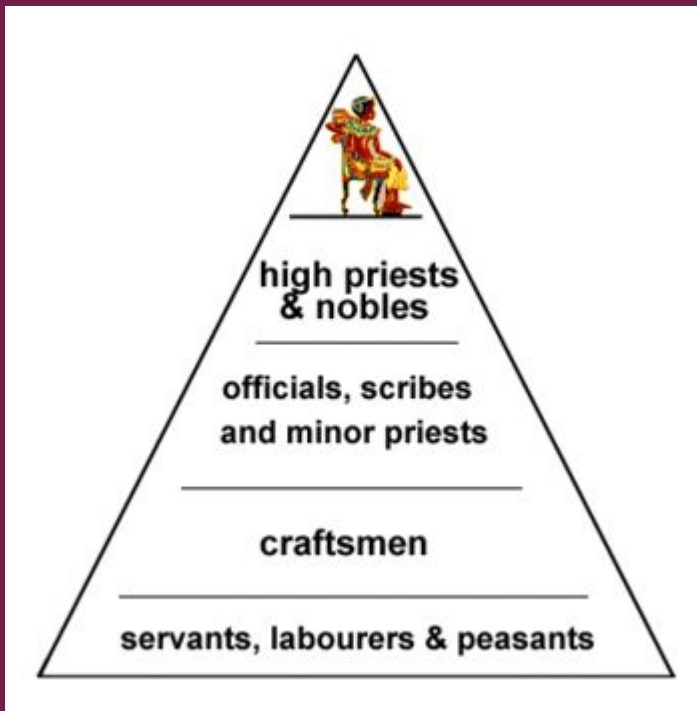
- Southern Mesopotamia had little wood or stone, and no metal ores.
 - Sumerians had to travel far to find these resources.
 - Most trade was done by **barter** (a trading system in which people exchange goods directly without using money).
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Trade

- Sumerians used technology to make trade easier:
 - Wheels on their carts
 - Sails on their boats

**Why did the
Sumerians need
to trade?**



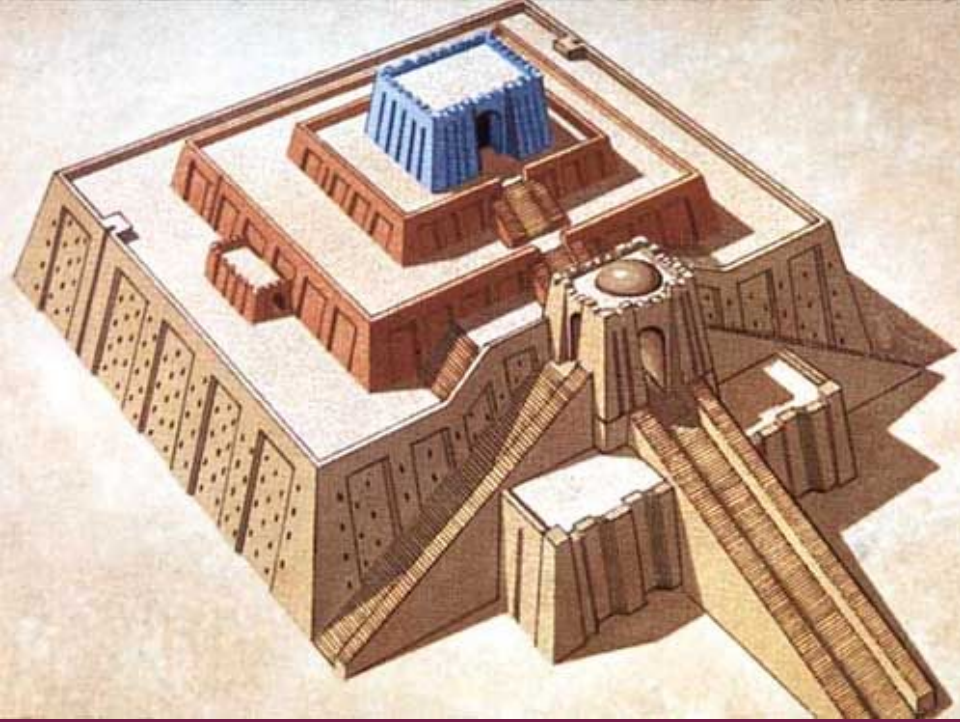
Social Classes

- Sumerian society had 3 social classes, each with distinct roles.
- The classes were connected to the government and religious beliefs.
- Upper class
 - The ruler, top officials, priests, wealthy merchants, and large landowners.
- Middle class
 - Farmers and skilled workers
- Lowest class
 - Mostly slaves.

Exit Ticket

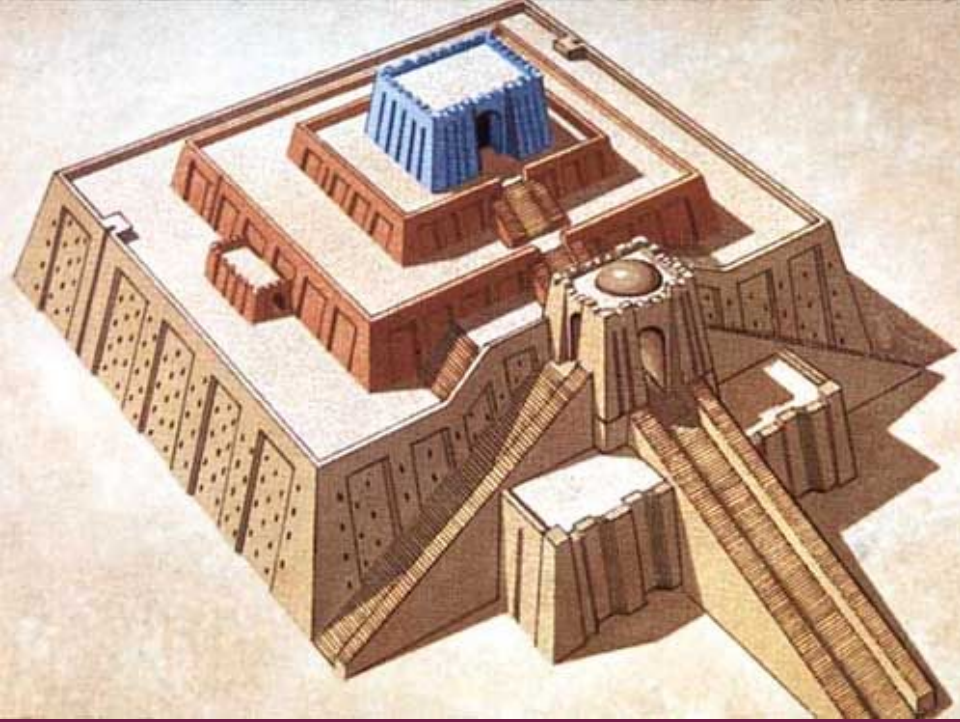
Monday, October 17th

How did technology
help Sumerian
civilization develop?



Religion

- Polytheism: the belief in more than one god.
 - Believed the gods controlled every aspect of life, including nature.
 - Believed the gods behaved much like people who ate, drank, slept, and got married. But they had also lived forever and had great power.
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Religion

- If the gods were unhappy, they might cause problems for humans, like wars, floods, or disasters.
 - Only priests knew how to communicate with the gods and find out what they wanted.
 - Built **ziggurats**, pyramid-shaped brick towers, where people worshipped.
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Writing

- First developed to keep track of stored goods.
 - Cuneiform
 - Created by 3400 BCE
 - System of writing that uses triangular-shaped symbols to stand for ideas or things.
 - Written on clay tablets
 - Originally used to record sales, taxes, and agreements
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Epic of Gilgamesh

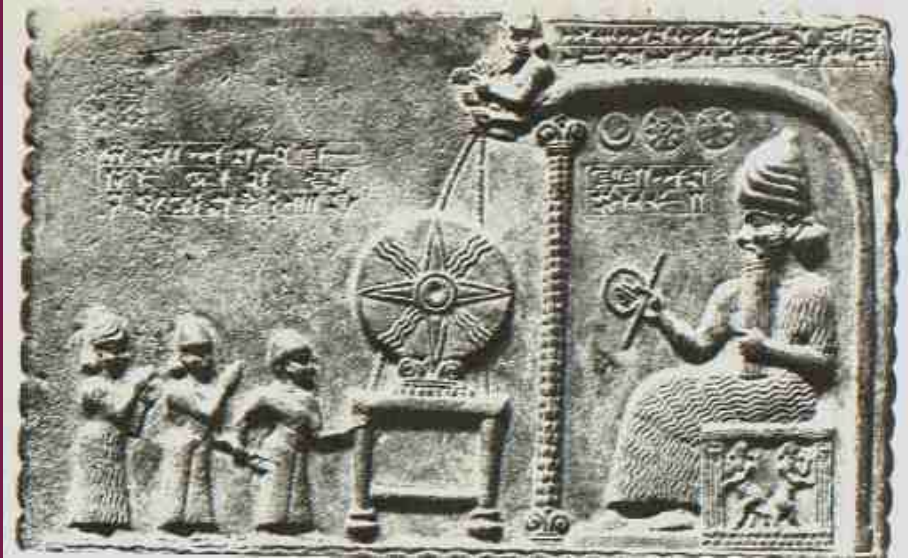
- A long poem written around 2000 BCE.
- Tells of the adventures of Mesopotamian hero, Gilgamesh.
- Myth: made-up tale of a god or hero.
- Gilgamesh may have been a real king, in the city of Uruk.

**Why is it
important to have
a system of
writing?**



Sumerian Government

- The first leaders were priests, not kings.
- After conflicts with other cities, military leaders would sometimes keep power and stay in control of the city-states. They became the first kings.



Sumerian Government

- Kings needed the support of the priests, so they were respectful to them.
- The priests declared that the gods had sent the king to rule the city.
- Kings were the city's chief lawmaker and judge.



Sumerian Achievements

- Technology
 - Plow, sail, wheel, use of irrigation
- Development of bronze
 - Made by mixing copper and tin
 - Harder metal than copper, so better for making tools and weapons



Study Guide

Question 20

Some rulers collected city laws into a law code, or written set of laws. The earliest known law code was issued around 2100 BCE by Ur-Nammu, the king of Ur. The Ur-Nammu law code included laws about marriage, slavery, and causing harm to other people. One law read, “If a man knocks out the eye of another man, he shall weigh out half a mina of silver.” (A mina is a unit of weight that varied over time but was approximately one pound.)

Society	3 social classes: priests/rulers/rich people; farmers and skilled workers; slaves.
Politics	Monarchy. First leaders were priests, but then military leaders took over as kings. Conflicts with other city-states. System of taxes.
Interaction with the environment	Technology: plows and seed funnels, canals for irrigation, sails, wheels. Farming. The gods controlled nature. Fertile soil. Fertile crescent. Relied on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Mesopotamia = “land between rivers”
Culture	Cuneiform (system of writing). Epic of Gilgamesh. Ziggurats. Polytheism (belief in many gods). Bronze tools and weapons (bronze=copper+tin)
Economy	Trading (wood, stone, metal). Barter system (trading goods for goods). No currency. Taxes. Used cuneiform to keep records.