

Chapter Summary

Mesopotamia

Lesson 1 *The Sumerians*

- The earliest known civilization developed in Mesopotamia in the region between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
- Around 4,000 B.C., farming villages began to develop along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Farmers used floodwaters to irrigate the land.
- Since food became plentiful, not all people needed to farm. Some became artisans who specialized in making certain goods. Goods began to be traded.
- People began to live together in locations that favored trade. By 3000 B.C., several villages had developed into cities in Sumer, a region in southern Mesopotamia.
- Sumerian cities developed into city-states, self-governing regions that included a city and its surrounding area.
- The people in the city-states practiced polytheism. Each city-state was ruled by a king. This position became hereditary.
- Social groups developed in Sumerian city-states. These groups included an upper class, a middle class, and a lower class.
- Sumerians created many inventions including a writing system called cuneiform, the wheel, and the wooden plow. Many of these inventions were copied and improved upon by later civilizations.
- Sumerians wrote the world's oldest story, an epic poem called the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

Lesson 2 *Mesopotamian Empires*

- Around 2340 B.C., an Akkadian named Sargon conquered the Sumerian city-states, thereby forming an empire.
- In the 1800s B.C., the Amorites conquered Mesopotamia and built their own cities. The grandest of these was Babylon.
- Soon a Babylonian king, Hammurabi, conquered the Amorite-controlled cities and formed the Babylonian Empire. He created a collection of laws called the Code of Hammurabi. Hammurabi's Code influenced later law codes.

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- Around 900 B.C., the Assyrians used their well-trained soldiers to take over Mesopotamia. The Assyrians harshly treated the people they conquered.
- Eventually, the Assyrian Empire extended from the Persian Gulf in the east to the Nile River in the west. The empire's capital was at Nineveh. The empire was ruled by a king and was divided into provinces.
- The Assyrians modeled their culture on the culture of the Babylonians.
- Around 600 B.C., the Chaldeans conquered the Assyrians and formed the New Babylonian Empire.
- King Nebuchadnezzar reconstructed Babylon and built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, which became one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.
- The people of Babylon traded with caravans that passed through the city and thereby brought much wealth to the city. They also made many scientific advances.