ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

“THE FERTILE CRESCENT”

“LAND BETWEEN TWO RIVERS”

“CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION”
1. Divide your paper like this example
2. The column on the left is for Key Terms and Ideas
3. The large box to the right is for writing notes.
4. Skip a line between ideas and topics.
5. Don't use complete sentences. Use abbreviations when possible.
Introduction

ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

song by Mr. Nicky

• Early Civilizations RAP Video
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Song:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdblRch6m3g
Review/Things to Know/Remember

- **River Valleys** were prime locations for cultures to develop into civilizations- good for travel, trade, and farming. Other things a civilization would want to settle near would be **Mountains** to shelter from weather and enemies who may attack, **Fertile Soil** that is good for farming, and **Forests** to get supplies and wood for fire or shelter.

- A civilization is a highly developed culture complete with **religion, government, social class structure, and writing system**. What were the other 4 elements?
**Fertile Crescent**

- Eastern part of Fertile Crescent
- Area of the Middle East where civilization began
- Present day - Iraq (Syria and Turkey)
- “Land between 2 Rivers”
  - 1. Tigris River
  - 2. Euphrates River

Great place to grow crops due to fertile soil and being close to the rivers for irrigation
What geographical features were the reasons Mesopotamians settled here?
Ancient Civilizations for Children Video

- Show the students “Ancient Mesopotamia” (Minutes 6-12)
What were City States?

The earliest known people of the Fertile Crescent were the Sumerians. They lived in southern Mesopotamia in a number of independent city-states.

Each city-state consisted of a small city and its surrounding area. The rulers of these city-states constantly warred with one another for control of land and water. For protection, people turned to courageous and resourceful war leaders.

The ruler of each city state was responsible for maintaining the city walls and the irrigation systems. He led armies in war and enforced the laws.

The ruler also had religious duties. He was seen as the chief servant of the gods and led ceremonies designed to please them.
Hammurabi

- Hammurabi was the king of the city-state of Babylon. About 1800BC, Hammurabi conquered the nearby city-states and created the kingdom of Babylonia.

- The Code of Hammurabi were laws engraved in stone and placed in a public location. Hammurabi required that people be responsible for their actions.

- Some of Hammurabi’s laws were based on the principle “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”
Hammurabi continued...

- 282 laws
- Laws for trade, loans, theft, marriage, injury, and murder.
- Ideas still in laws today.
- Specific penalties with class specification.
- Written for all to see.
- Example: Law 196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.
- Hammurabi ruled for 42 years and the Babylonian Empire fell shortly after his death.

Hammurabi's Code Video
By 3200 B.C., the Sumerians had invented the earliest known form of writing called **cuneiform**.

The Sumerians employed a **sharp-pointed instrument** made from a reed—called a **stylus**—to inscribe wedge-shaped characters on **soft clay tablets**, which were then hardened by baking in the sun.
Cuneiform Writing

As time progressed, Cuneiform changed a bit (from more pictures into characters or symbols), see the chart below.

### Development of Cuneiform, 3000 B.C.–600 B.C.

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<th>Meaning of Pictograph</th>
<th>Ear of Barley</th>
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<td><strong>Pictographs c. 3000 B.C.</strong></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Ear of Barley" /></td>
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<td><strong>Rotated Position Pictographs c. 2800 B.C.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Cuneiform Signs c. 600 B.C.</strong></td>
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Deciphering Cuneiform
Hammurabi’s Code Written in Cuneiform
**Scribes**

- During this time, everyone could NOT read and write. That was the job of a scribe.

- Scribes were society’s record keepers and served the needs of the temple, royal government and businesses.

- Most scribes were children of government officials, priests and wealthy merchants (a.k.a. a higher class)

- Scribe school lasted from sunrise to sunset.

- There were 600 different characters to memorize.

- Scribes read out loud to audiences since most people could not read.
  - For example, Hammurabi’s code/laws were posted in a public place. Scribes would periodically have to read them aloud to groups of people so they would know the laws.
Religion

- Sumerians were *polytheistic*, worshipping or believing in *many gods*. These gods were thought to control every aspect of life, especially the forces of nature.
- Each city-state had its own special god or goddess to whom people prayed and offered sacrifices of animals, grain, and wine.
- They believed in an *afterlife*. At death, a person descended into a grim underworld from which there was no release.

Ziggurats were pyramid-temples that soared toward the heavens. Their sloping sides had wide steps that were sometimes planted with trees and shrubs. On top of each ziggurat stood a shrine to the chief god or goddess of the city.
Ziggurat at Ur

- Temple
- "Mountain of the Gods"
THE CLASS SYSTEM

Three Major Classes

- **Highest class**: the ruling family, leading officials, & high priests.
- **Middle class**: merchants, artisans, and lesser priests and scribes.
- **Bottom**: majority of people who were peasant farmers. Some had their own land, but most worked land belonging to the king or temples.

Sumerians also owned slaves. Most slaves had been captured in war. Some had sold themselves into slavery to pay their debts. But once they paid the debt, their masters had to set them free.
Mesopotamian Trade

“The Cuneiform World”
A long, narrative Sumerian poem, \textit{The Epic of Gilgamesh}, is one of the oldest works of literature in the world. This epic is a collection of stories about a hero named Gilgamesh. In one of these, Gilgamesh travels the world in search of eternal life. On his journey, he meets the sole survivor of a great flood that destroyed the world.
Gilgamesh Epic Tablet: Flood Story

Epic of Gilgamesh Video Summary
Farming/Irrigation

• Using the canals, farmers would flood their fields and then drain the water to restore nutrients to the soil.

• This was a type of irrigation they used to get water to their crops from the river.
Notes

Song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdblRch6m3g

Ancient Mesopotamia

Main Idea: Details:

- Nicknames
  - Fertile Crescent
  - Land between 2 rivers
  - Cradle of Civilization

- City state
  - Small city & the area around it; had own ruler, money, laws, religion

- Laws
  - Hammurabi's Code: he was a king who made 282 laws based on fair punishments "Eye for an Eye"

Writing

- Cuneiform: (first writing ever)
  - On clay tablets

Religion

- Polytheistic = believed in multiple gods (that controlled nature)

Social Classes

- 3 major classes & slaves
Review

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Extra...
Life of a Sumerian

- What events and other records did the ancient Sumerians document?

- How did the Sumerians write down their laws, myths, and other records?

- What was the importance of scribes in Mesopotamia?

- What is the moral of the story of Gilgamesh
## Mesopotamia Vocabulary

- Read the definitions on your paper, & choose the correct vocabulary term from below.
- Then write down **Key Words & draw Pictures** to help you remember the term.

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