

World History
Objective 2.01:
Enrichment

Trace the development and assess the achievements of early river civilizations including but not limited to those around the Huang-He, Indus, and Tigris-Euphrates rivers.

Civilization depends on large permanent settlements. Fertile river valleys that can support a large population are ideal locations for such settlements. Highly organized societies then evolved in these regions.

To complete this objective, students must show an understanding of how early civilizations developed, why they developed where they did and some of their achievements.

The Fertile Crescent:

This term refers to the area known as Mesopotamia, the land between the two rivers, namely, the Tigris and Euphrates. This area stretches from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Persian Gulf in the east. Even though the land has little rain, layers of fertile silt were deposited when the rivers flooded from the melting snows in the nearby mountains. One problem was that the floods of the rivers were unpredictable.

The people of Mesopotamia, however, learned to control the flow of the rivers by building a series of drainage and irrigation ditches. This gave them a regular source of fertile land and allowed them to grow an abundance of food and support both the farmers and large cities.

Religion provided the answers to questions that could not be explained. Their answer was the development of a polytheistic (many gods) religion. In Sumer, the earliest of the important civilizations to develop here, government was a theocracy, one in which religious rule was superior to human rule and the leaders were believed to be agents of the gods.

Cuneiform, a very ancient language was developed in Mesopotamia and young boys were trained in the language for the position of scribe. Writing allowed the Sumerians to keep records and one of the earliest epics known, Gilgamesh, came out of that society.

In addition to the irrigation systems already mentioned, Mesopotamians were responsible for the wagon wheel, the potter's wheel, the arch. They were the first to make bronze out of copper and tin. They made achievements in astronomy and math.

Perhaps the most well known of the ancient legal systems comes out of Mesopotamia as well. Hammurabi's Code was based on a system of strict justice "an eye for an eye" that included not only punishments but also protective laws.

All of the above came from Mesopotamia.

We've given you thorough examples. This civilization led the way in many things; technology, development of organized religion, development of writing, the earliest known literature and a famous Code of Laws.

Now, Mesopotamia was but one of the earliest civilizations.

Enrichment:

Using the example given for the Fertile Crescent and the guided example from which you developed your explanation of Egyptian society, now do a similar example for TWO of the following:

- Egypt
- The Indus River Civilizations
- The Chinese River Civilizations
- Other Middle Eastern Civilizations including Hittites, Israel, Phoenicians, Assyrians and Persians. This last group can all be included in one example or used in more than one if you prefer.

The Indus River Civilizations

The Chinese River Civilizations

Other Middle Eastern Civilization including: Hittites, Israel, Phoenicians, Assyrians and Persians.