

World History

Objective 2.01: Lesson

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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.

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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.

Lesson: Using the examples given for Mesopotamia, write a similar presentation for the civilization of Ancient Egypt.

Use your textbook as well as other source to do this.

Egypt will have many things in common with Mesopotamia but will excel in some of its own. To get you started, I will give you a number of key words. Once you understand them, you can write your explanation of Egyptian society and how it worked.

Here are some key words and questions to help you:

Where is Egypt?

The Nile River and its annual flooding.

Isis and Osiris and other Egyptian gods.

Egypt's focus on the afterlife: mummies; pyramids; embalming.

What kind of government did they have? (What do we mean by a bureaucracy)?

How important was education in their society?

Why was it important for them to have a calendar? (Think about the flooding of the Nile).

What did they invent?

Your explanation should be at least as long and complete as the example given for the Fertile Crescent.

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Here are some key words to help you:¶
Where is Egypt? Nile River (and its annual flooding), Isis and Osiris and other Egyptian gods; Egypt's focus on the afterlife...what they did to accommodate their rulers (pharaohs) after they died; how this influenced some of their most famous architecture.¶

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What kind of government Egypt had; what do we mean when we talk of a bureaucracy?¶

How important was education in their society. ¶

Find out about some of their inventions. Why was it important for them to have a calendar and how did they develop it?¶
Look at a map to see how much of Egypt was actually fertile and then read about why they had to learn how to justify divide the fertile land. (Map development)

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The Indus River Civilizations

The Chinese River Civilizations

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

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