



# #9946 TIMELINES OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS: MESOPOTAMIA 1

FILM IDEAS, INC, 2003  
Grade Level: 8-12  
18 mins.

## DESCRIPTION

Introduces Mesopotamia, the region between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers known as the Fertile Crescent or the “cradle of civilization.” Describes the importance of these rivers in the development of civilizations. Focuses first on accomplishments of the Sumerians: irrigation, written language, metal work, the wheel, and more. The Akkadians followed the Sumerians, adapting and improving their inventions, only to be overcome by the next important culture—Babylon.

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

### Subject Area: World History—Era 2—Early Civilizations and the Rise of Pastoral Peoples, 4000-1000 B

- Standard: Understands the major characteristics of civilization and the development of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley
  - ◆ Benchmark: Understands environmental and cultural factors that shaped the development of Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Indus Valley (e.g., development of religious and ethical belief systems and how they legitimized political and social order; demands of the natural environment; how written records such as the Epic of Gilgamesh reflected and shaped the political, religious, and cultural life of Mesopotamia) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 2, 3, and 5.)

### Subject Area: Geography—The World in Spatial Terms

- Standard: Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment
  - ◆ Benchmark: Knows the location of physical and human features on maps and globes (e.g., culture hearths such as Mesopotamia, Huang Ho, the Yucatan Peninsula, the Nile Valley; major ocean currents; wind patterns; land forms; climate regions) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1.)

### Subject Area: History—Historical Understanding

- Standard: Understands the historical perspective
  - ◆ Benchmark: Knows different types of primary and secondary sources and the motives, interests, and bias expressed in them (e.g., eyewitness

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accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos; magazine articles, newspaper accounts, hearsay) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 4.)

### INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To identify where the ancient empire of Mesopotamia was located.
2. To describe the earliest people who lived in Mesopotamia and how their lifestyle was influenced by the environment.
3. To explain important facts about the Sumerian civilization and the advances that their culture made.
4. To show how people have learned about the Sumerians through archeological work.
5. To explain the break-up of the Sumerian empire that allowed the Babylonians to gain control.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Known as the "Land In-Between," Mesopotamia geographically lies between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Today this broad Fertile Crescent plain is part of the modern countries of Iraq and Kuwait. Over the course of 5,000 years this ancient land gave rise to three remarkable civilizations; the Sumerians, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians. By 5,000 BCE, small Mesopotamian villages rapidly changed into large affluent towns. The Sumerians became the first Mesopotamian civilization to emerge. Inventions like the wheel, a form of early writing known as "cuneiform," and the development of natural resources all helped to advance Sumerian culture. However, by 2000 BCE the Babylonian Empire began to flourish.

### VOCABULARY

- |                   |                        |                           |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. agriculture    | 8. King Sargon         | 15. Sumerians             |
| 2. Akkadians      | 9. King Urnammu        | 16. The Epic of Gilgamesh |
| 3. alluvial plain | 10. Iugul              | 17. village               |
| 4. BCE            | 11. Mesopotamia        | 18. wheel                 |
| 5. cuneiform      | 12. Sir Leonard Wooley | 19. ziggurats             |
| 6. inhabitant     | 13. Standard of Ur     |                           |
| 7. irrigation     | 14. stylus             |                           |

### BEFORE SHOWING

1. Locate the area of Mesopotamia, between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, on a world map or globe. Discuss the climate and landforms of the area.
2. Create and discuss a timeline showing major events in history. Leave room between 5,000 and 2,000 BCE to add events from the video, either during or after viewing. Include:
  - a. 200 million years ago: Dinosaurs roamed the earth.
  - b. 65 million years ago: Dinosaurs extinct.
  - c. 2 million years ago: Human species walks upright and begins making tools and weapons.

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- d. 40,000 BCE: Human species first appear in the Mesopotamia area.
- e. 5,000-2,000 BCE: The Sumerians rise to power.
- f. 2,000 BCE: Mesopotamia changes from a large empire into one of smaller kingdoms.

### **DURING SHOWING**

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Consider pausing the video to add significant events to the timeline and review important facts. (See BEFORE SHOWING.)

### **AFTER SHOWING**

#### **Discussion Items and Questions**

1. Why was Mesopotamia called “the cradle of civilization”? Why was the land called the “Fertile Crescent”?
2. Name the three civilizations that lived in Mesopotamia. What did they totally depend on for their survival?
3. Describe the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. What effect did they have on the land over time? Why was that important to the area?
4. What did the first homes look like? How did we know they raised sheep and goats and grew crops? Describe their tools. How did their pottery tell of their advancement?
5. What kinds of houses did the Sumerians build?
6. Why did the Sumerians have success in agriculture? What happened when they grew more than enough food for themselves?
7. What happened after they started using metal?
8. Why did they invent the wheel? What did they use clay for?
9. Describe Sumerian writing. What was it used for? What was the Epic of Gilgamesh?
10. Discuss the rulers of Sumerian cities and their responsibilities. What were the three classes of citizens?
11. Describe the temples or ziggurats and the city of Ur.
12. Discuss how we know so much about the Sumerians. Describe the Standard of Ur and other artifacts that were found.
13. Discuss their death and burial rituals.
14. What group of people were developing a culture to the north of Sumerian in 2,350-2,000 BCE?
15. What did the Akkadian king, Sargon the First do? How long did Sargon and his heirs rule?
16. What happened to the Akkadian Dynasty in 2100 BCE?
17. The Sumerians regained control of the area less than a year later. Who was their new leader? What else was King Ur-Nammu famous for?
18. What happened to the large empire of Mesopotamia in about 2000 BCE? This allowed what other group to rise to power?
19. What would the Babylonians eventually do?

## Applications and Activities

1. Review the timeline begun BEFORE SHOWING. Add any additional dates and information gained from the video or from texts. Illustrate the events.
2. Imagine you lived during the time of ancient Mesopotamia. Discuss how life would be different than living in the twenty-first century. Write a story about your experiences.
3. Research the history and origins of one of the Sumerian inventions. Write a brief report explaining how these inventions changed the ancient and modern world.
4. Invite an archeologist to visit your school, or arrange a class trip to visit them, to explain the importance of archeology and ancient Mesopotamia.
5. Discuss the differences and similarities between ancient Mesopotamia and present-day Mesopotamia. Some possible discussion topics are:
  - a. Who is the leader of Iraq and Kuwait today?
  - b. What is and was the primary religion practiced in ancient Mesopotamia and Mesopotamia today?
  - c. What are and were the major industries in existence in ancient Mesopotamia and Mesopotamia today?
  - d. What is and was the primary means of transportation in ancient Mesopotamia and Mesopotamia today?
  - e. What is and was the primary language of ancient Mesopotamia and Mesopotamia today?
6. Identify Mesopotamia on individual maps.
  - a. Draw in and label the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
  - b. Label the Persian Gulf.
  - c. Label famous land features, such as the mountains mentioned in the video.
  - d. Identify the famous cities of the Sumerians and other civilizations from that time period.
7. Watch the video *Timelines of Ancient Civilizations: Mesopotamia II*, CMP #9947, for more information about the ancient civilizations of this area.



## CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- [The Assyrians #3565](#)
- [Timelines of Ancient Civilizations: Mesopotamia II #9947](#)

## World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

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- **THE BRITISH MUSEUM: MESOPOTAMIA**

<http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/menu.html>

Explore this Web site loaded with information and pictures. Choose "Sumer," "Babylonia," or "Assyria" for more specific culture information. In the section called "Time," find archeological information and see different timelines for six different cultures. Other sections include "Geography," "Gods and Goddesses," and "Writing." All information pieces have unique words hot-linked to a glossary. Worth showing to the whole class.

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- **INTERNET ANCIENT HISTORY SOURCEBOOK**

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook03.html>

Under "Contents," choose a culture and time period to get a list of related links for more information. The Sumerian section includes links related to "The Epic of Gilgamesh," "Sumerian Language," "Art," and "Connections with India," along with links for maps and other topics.

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- **ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA**

<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/edpgs/su96/meso/mesopotamia.html>

This site is a seventh-grade World History/World Geography unit designed to be used by both students and teachers. It can be used by students as an educational resource supplementary to the traditional social studies textbook, or it can be used by teachers in order to attain important vocabulary terms, vocabulary exercises, a study guide, an example quiz, hands-on activities, and final unit evaluations.