

Chapter Five Social Studies: Ancient Mesopotamia Study Guide

Lesson One

Fertile Crescent-located in present day Iraq Syria, Lebanon, and Israel
-Some was rocky mountains or desert but some was lush and green
-Home to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers

Mesopotamia-region between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
-Currently known as Iraq

Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
-both begin in the Taurus Mountains (in present day Turkey)
-Rivers then reach a plateau (present day Iraq)
-In southern Iraq the rivers flow to lower land where they meet the Persian Gulf

Plateau-An area of elevated flatland

Floods
-Early people in Mesopotamia also depended on the floods to bring silt for farming
-Mesopotamia's floods didn't come as regularly as floods in Egypt
 -floods came usually came just as harvest was going to take place rather than right before planting season.
-These floods not only cost field loss but also the loss of lives
-The south usually had droughts
-The north usually had enough rain to make some farming possible but this land was rocky and did not have much fertile soil.

Droughts-long periods of dry weather

From River to Field
-Harvest was in the spring (wet season) and planting took place in the fall (dry season).
-Farmers learned to build water-control and irrigation systems
-Crops grown
 -wheat and barley were the most important
 -other crops grown: beans, onions, lettuce, cucumbers, spice plants, palm trees, apple trees, and pomegranate trees.
-Farmers had sheep and goats; sheep were important because of their wool and milk
-cattle were also values because they were good work-animals, had milk, used to produce leather and meat.

Lesson Two

Sumer-Region in southern Mesopotamia
-Home of Sumarians
-Made some of the world's first wheeled machines and sailboats
-Came up with new ideas in math and science
-Created cuneiform

Cuneiform-the system of writing invented in Sumer
-Developed to record farm surplus
-Used sharp reeds to scratch the records into wet clay tablets; When dry they became permanent tablets.
-About 500 signs were used; represented sounds, ideas, and objects

School
-Very few people went to school to become a scribe

- Mostly boys attended school (a few girls did also)
- Learned to make tablets, pens, and form signs
- Also studied math and science

City-states-a self-governing city that also governs surrounding villages

- Often went to war fighting over water
- Built strong walls for protection
- Cities were also where people went to purchase and trade goods

Religion

- In the center of most Sumerian cities stood a towering mud-brick building called a ziggurat
- Religion was very important and believed to be polytheistic (belief in many gods and goddesses)
- Each city-state had had a special god or goddess that they worshipped

Ziggurat-a large building with a temple on its peak

Sargon-king of the city-state of Kish

- rose to power about 2300 B.C.
- Spread his empire north to present day Syria
- Because cuneiform was used throughout the Fertile Crescent Sargon could send messages to distant lands.
- Ruled about 56 years

Hammurabi

- About 1800 B.C. he began to control the old city-state of Sumer.
- They dammed the Euphrates river causing flooding downstream
- Hammurabi's army attacked the weak Sumerians and also won control of the city-states around Babylon
- Babylonia became rich and powerful
 - received silver, copper, timber, and wine
 - sent grain and fruits
- In 1901 archaeologists found stone pillars containing the laws written by Hammurabi known as the Code of Hammurabi
 - Showed slavery existed
 - Showed that not everyone was treated equal

New Babylon

- Known for its great beauty and technology
- Protected by massive walls and a moat and was split in two by the Euphrates River
- Was connected by a moveable bridge and an underwater tunnel
- Also had a sewer system and the hanging gardens

Skills Lesson

Cause-something that makes something else happen

Effect-the result of a cause

Lesson Three

Judaism-the record of the Jewish people's history and their religion.

Covenant-special agreement

The covenant was considered by the Jewish people to be the beginning of their history.

- The descendants later became known as people of Israel or Israelites
- Times got tough and the people moved to Egypt
- The Israelites were captured by pharaoh's soldiers and became slaves

Moses

- Born to an Israelite parents but was raised by the pharaoh's daughter
- Was the person who led the Israelites out of slavery

Torah

- First five books of the Bible given to Moses
- Held the laws
- First monotheistic religious belief
- Forbid the worship of other gods
- The Ten Commandments were also given to Moses at Mount Sinai; these were the core of the Jewish religion and teachings.

Monotheism-Belief in only one God

Nation of Israel

- Torah was the basis of life and faith

Sabbath-the weekly day of rest, prayer, and study