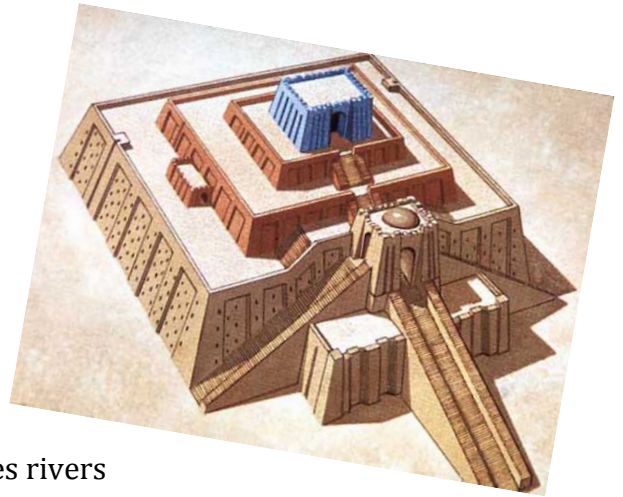


Chapter 4
Lesson 1
The Sumerians



The First Civilizations in Mesopotamia

- located near water and fertile land
- had social classes
- developed systems of values and beliefs

The Two Rivers

- Mesopotamia-earliest known civilization
 - means “the land between the rivers”
 - located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers
 - located in the Fertile Crescent

Early Valley Dwellers

- believe people first settled here in 7000 B.C. (hunters and herders)
- 4000 B.C. began farming villages

Taming the Rivers

- little rain in the summer left water levels low
- during spring river would flood, sometimes washing away crops, homes, and livestock
- silt**, fertile soil, was left after a flood
- overtime learned to build dams and dug canals for their fields
 - irrigation**-system that supplies dry land with water through ditches, pipes, or streams
 - surplus**, extra amount, of food
 - surplus of food allowed people to specialize in other areas.
- villages grew into cities in Sumer, a region in southern Mesopotamia

Sumer's Civilization

- Sumer's people were Sumerians
- built cities of Ur, Uruk, and Eridu
 - controlled lower part of the valley

City-States Arise

- city-states**, city that governs itself and its surrounding territory, were spread apart
- area was arid
 - made it difficult to communicate, became independent
- each city-state had own government
- had a wall built around them for protection
- times of peace and war

Gods, Priests, and Kings

- worshipped many gods
 - polytheism**-belief in more than one god
- believed some gods had power over nature or guided what they did
- ziggurat**-pyramid-shaped structure with a temple at the top

- priest of ziggurat ruled the city-state
- Sumerian kings claimed they received their powers to rule from the city's god
- first king probably war hero
- hereditary, son took over when king died

Social Groups

- generally people remained in social classes into which they were born
- upper class
 - kings, priests, warriors, and government officials
- middle class
 - largest class
 - merchants, farmers, fishers, artisans
- lower class
 - enslaved people
- men were head of the home, boys went to school
- women ran the home, daughters learned to do the same

Farmers and Traders

- most were farmers
- wheat, barley, dates
- raised sheep, goats, pigs
- merchants went to other lands to trade
- traded for timber, minerals, and metals

Sumerian Contributions

- beginning of organized human society

Writing

- earliest known writing system
- cuneiform**-writing system that used wedge-shaped marks made in soft clay
- boys of wealthy families only learned how to read and write
- after years of training they became **scribes**-official record keepers
- oldest story is an **epic**, long poem of a hero

Technology and Mathematics

- first to use the wheel
- built first carts
- developed the chariot
- sailboat
- plow for fields
- potter's wheel
- make bronze out of copper or tin
- studied math and astronomy
 - used star position for planting crops
 - made 12 month calendar based off of the moon