

Ancient Sumer

I. Ancient Sumer

- A. The rise of Sumerian city-states began around 3500 B.C.
- B. In the mid-19th century, archaeologists began finding artifacts in the area of the Fertile Crescent that we call Mesopotamia
- C. By studying artifacts, archaeologists have been able to learn a lot about Sumer

II. Characteristics of Civilization

- A. Civilization: a society marked by developed arts, sciences, government, and social structure
- B. Characteristics that make a society into a civilization
 - 1. A **rise in cities**; a stable food supply, to ensure that the people of a society have the food they need to survive
 - 2. A social structure with different **social levels**
 - 3. A system of **government**, to ensure that life in the society is orderly
 - 4. A **religious system**, which involves both a set of beliefs and forms of worship
 - 5. A highly developed way of life that includes the **arts**, such as painting, architecture, music, and literature
 - 6. **Job specialization** and advances in technology
 - 7. A highly developed **written** language
 - 8. **Public works** that benefited the city, such as irrigation systems, canals and bridges
- C. Social structure: social structure: the way a civilization is organized
- D. Technology: the use of tools and other inventions for practical purposes

III. Stable Food Supply

- A. Civilizations need a stable food supply
- B. Sumerians invented two key things to help them create a stable food supply
 - 1. Complex irrigation systems
 - 2. The plow

IV. Social Structure

- A. Civilizations have a complex organization (social structure)
- B. Several classes of people lived in Sumer
 - 1. Top level: priests, landowners, and government officials
 - 2. Middle level: merchants, artisans, farmers and fishers
 - 3. Bottom level: slaves
- C. Merchants: a person who makes money by selling goods
- D. Artisans: a craftsperson

V. Government

- A. All civilizations have a system of government to direct people's behavior and make life orderly

- B. Sumerian city-states were ruled by kings
- C. Sumerian kings enforced the laws and collected taxes
- D. A king also led his city-state's army
- E. Kings appointed officials to help with certain duties
- F. Scribe: a person who writes

VI. Religion

- A. All civilizations have some kind of religious system
- B. In Sumer, religious beliefs influenced every part of daily life
- C. The ancient Sumerians expressed their religious beliefs by constructing temples and religious towers called **ziggurats**
- D. Ziggurats: an ancient Mesopotamian temple tower with outside staircases and a shrine at the top
- E. The Sumerians had many kinds of religious ceremonies

VII. The Arts

- A. All civilizations have a highly developed culture, including the arts
- B. Culture: a characteristic of civilization that includes the beliefs and behaviors of a society or group of people
- C. There were many kinds of artists and artisans in ancient Sumer
- D. Music was another important art in Sumer

VIII. Technology

- A. All civilizations create new forms of technology
- B. Most important Sumerian invention was the wheel
- C. Another technological advance was the arch

IX. Writing

- A. A final characteristic of civilizations is a highly developed written language
- B. Sumerians created a written language called cuneiform
- C. Cuneiform: writing that uses wedge-shaped characters
- D. Cuneiform was based on an earlier, simpler form of writing that used pictographs
- E. Pictograph: a symbol that stands for an object