The Rise of Sumerian City-States

I. Introduction
   A. Small Neolithic villages grew into large, complex cities
   B. Villages were located in an area called Mesopotamia
   C. Greek word that means the “land between the rivers.”
   D. Two main rivers of the Fertile Crescent are the Tigris River and the Euphrates River
   E. Cities first appeared in the southern part of this land.
   F. Ruins in the Syrian Desert reveal an ancient Sumerian walled city
   G. Earliest cities in this area date back to about 3500 B.C.; were like small, independent countries

II. Mesopotamia: A Difficult Environment
   A. Not easy to live in the part of the Fertile Crescent called Mesopotamia
   B. Mesopotamia: in ancient times, the geographic area located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers
   C. Tigris & Euphrates Rivers: the two largest rivers in Southwest Asia that flow from the mountains in Turkey to the Persian Gulf
   D. Mesopotamians were farmers; farms needed water
   E. Building materials were difficult to find
   F. Faced 4 major problems as they tried to survive in this environment:
      1. Food shortages in the hills
      2. An uncontrolled water supply on the plains
      3. Difficulties in building and maintaining systems that provided water across village boundaries
      4. Attacks by neighboring communities

III. Food Shortages in the Hills
   A. Mild weather & plentiful rains made the foothills a good place to farm
   B. Some historians believe that by 5000 B.C., farmers in the Zagros foothills didn't have enough land to grow food for the increasing population
   C. Below the foothills & to the south, the Euphrates and Tigris rivers ran through flat plains
   D. In spring, both rivers flooded, bringing water to the land
   E. Driven by the need to grow food, people moved out of the foothills & onto the plains
   F. This region became known as Sumer; its people, the Sumerians

IV. Uncontrolled Water Supplies in the River Valley
   A. During the spring, rain & melted snow flowed into the Tigris & Euphrates rivers, causing them to flood across the plains
   B. For much of the rest of the year, the soil was dry and hard as stone
C. Farmers constantly struggled to raise crops
D. Needed a way to control the water so they would have a reliable water supply year round
E. Sumerian farmers began to create irrigation systems for fields; built levees along the sides of the river to prevent flooding
F. Levee: a wall of earth built to prevent a river from flooding its banks
G. Over time, Sumerians learned other ways to control the supply of water

V. Building and Maintaining a Complex Irrigation System
A. Irrigation systems provided enough water for farmers to grow plenty of food
B. A new problem arose: how to maintain the irrigation system across village boundaries
C. The irrigation system needed constant care and repair
D. Silt: fine particles of rock
E. Villages were connected for miles around by canals, farmers had to work together for the common good
F. Villages came to depend on one another to build and maintain the complex irrigation system
G. As Sumerians worked together, they created larger communities

VI. Attacks by Neighboring Communities
A. As cities grew, Sumerians fought over the right to use more water
B. Disputes over water became so intense they often led to bloodshed
C. Sumerians looked for ways to protect cities from neighboring communities
D. Sumerians began to build strong walls around their cities
E. Walled cities of Sumer were like independent countries
F. City-states: an early city that was like a small, independent country with its own laws and government

VII. From Small Farming Villages to Large City-States
A. Beginning around 3500 B.C., Sumerians progressed from living in small farming villages to building large, walled cities
B. To control the water supply, Sumerians built a complex irrigation system; it crossed village boundaries, Sumerians had to cooperate with one another
C. This led them to live in larger communities: the first cities
D. To defend themselves, Sumerians built walls and dug moats around their cities