

The Sumerians

About seven thousand years ago, several groups of people settled between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in present-day Iraq. Social scientists believe that the first civilization or complex society developed in Mesopotamia or this land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Every spring the rivers flooded their banks and made the land fertile. In addition, people in this area learned how to divert water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to irrigate the already extremely fertile soil. Irrigation allowed farming settlements to flourish and food surplus or extra food from successful farming allowed some people to specialize in or perform activities other than farming. All of these factors led to the rise of several city-states or independent cities surrounded by farmland. The Sumerians were one of the many different tribes that lived in this area. They shared a common language and religion although they lived in separate and independent city-states. The Sumerians built strong protective walls around their cities. They also built canals and irrigated the farmlands. Each city had its own government and sometimes Sumerian cities fought each other for access to water and farmland. Sumerian civilization lasted from 3500 B.C. to 1700 B.C.

Questions:

1- Before people settled, they were nomads. The first humans were always nomads. Define nomad.

2- Why were the first humans' nomads?

3- What did people need to learn to do in order to settle?

4- What was the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers called?

5- How did the rivers benefit the people of the region?

6- What is a city-state? Why did Sumerian city-states fight one another?

7- Why were walls built around cities? _____

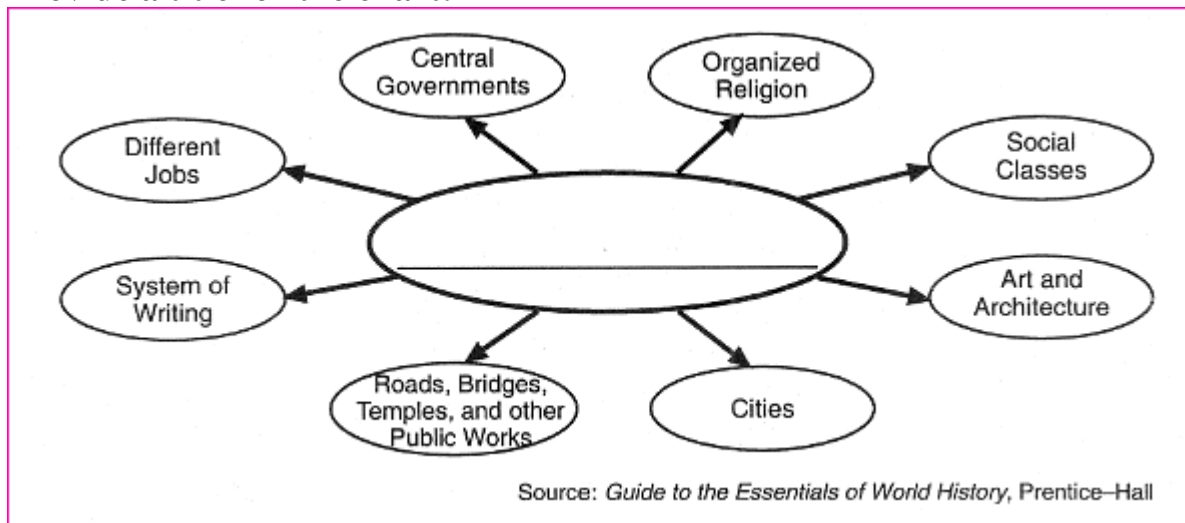
The Neolithic Revolution:

1. The Neolithic Revolution was a turning point or a big change.
2. People learned to farm and domesticate animals.
3. People settled.
4. People built cities.
5. People developed civilization.

The Neolithic Revolution began in river valleys. Rivers provided water for farming and fertile soil.

What was the Neolithic Revolution and how did the Neolithic Revolution change people's lives?

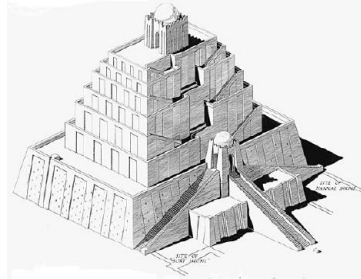
Provide a title for the chart:



A river valley civilization is a civilization that develops in a river valley. The earliest civilizations developed in river valleys because river valleys provided water for farming. The Tigris and Euphrates river valley, the Nile river valley, the Indus river valley, and the Huang He or Yellow river valley were locations of the earliest civilizations.

Some of the most important inventions in world history were developed by the people of Mesopotamia known as the Sumerians. The Sumerians invented the wheel and the sail boat, and developed the first tools and weapons of copper and bronze (a mixture of tin and copper). The Sumerians devised a calendar, dividing the year into 12 months. They also invented the earliest known writing system, **cuneiform**, a form of symbol-writing on clay tablets. The Sumerians were also the world's first city-builders. They built walled cities, and stepped-pyramids known

as **ziggurats**. The ziggurat was the main building in each Sumerian city. The people worshipped their gods in the ziggurats. Like most people at that time, the Sumerians believed in gods who had human feelings. They believed that when the gods became angry, they punished the Sumerians and made rivers flood and crops fail.



8- What was the main building in each Sumerian city?

9- Define Ziggurat.

10- Discuss the religious beliefs of the Sumerians:

11- What was the most important Sumerian invention?

12- What were other Sumerian inventions?

Civilization developed slowly in different parts of the world. People began to settle in areas with abundant natural resources. A section of the Middle East is called the Fertile Crescent. The Fertile Crescent is a rich food-growing area in a part of the world where most of the land is too dry for farming. The Fertile Crescent is a quarter-moon shaped region that extends from the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf.



Which heading best completes the partial outline below?

I. _____
A. Centralized governments
B. Organized religions
C. Social classes
D. Specialization of labor

- (1) Economic Development in Ancient Egypt
- (2) Cultural Diffusion in Mohenjo-Daro
- (3) Features of the Old Stone Age
- (4) Characteristics of Civilizations

What is the main reason the Neolithic Revolution is considered a turning point in world history?

- (1) Fire was used as a source of energy for the first time.
- (2) Spoken language was used to improve communication.
- (3) Domestication of animals and cultivation of crops led to settled communities.
- (4) Stone tools and weapons were first developed.

- Planting wheat and barley
- Domesticating animals

- **Establishing permanent homes and villages**

At the beginning of the Neolithic Revolution, the most direct impact of

these developments was on

(1) religion and government

(2) transportation and trade

(3) diet and shelter

(4) climate and topography

Base your answer to question on the map below and on your knowledge of social studies.



Source: Charles F. Gritzner, *Exploring Our World, Past and Present*, D. C. Heath and Company (adapted)

The main purpose of this map is to illustrate the location of

(1) overseas trade routes

(3) river valley civilizations

(2) early belief systems

(4) burial sites of ancient rulers