

# Lesson: Mesopotamia

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## Enduring Understanding:

Students will understand the contributions early civilizations made to the foundations of human culture

## Essential Questions:

- Where was the first civilization?
- Why did early civilizations develop in river environments?

## Core Curriculum:

standard 1, objectives 2 and 3

## Sources:

- <http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk>

## Materials:

- computer lab

## Key Terms:

- Tigris and Euphrates rivers, fertile crescent, Sumer
- irrigation
- ziggurat
- pictogram, cuneiform

## Anticipatory Set:

What is the story of the “Garden of Eden”?

## Instructional Input:

Discussion: Neolithic Agricultural Revolution (10 minutes)

Discuss with the class how the story of the “Garden of Eden” may be a metaphor for historical events. How could this story relate to the Neolithic Revolution? (*The story could be a metaphor for the beginnings of civilization. About 7000 years ago – the same time that the Bible gives for the Garden of Eden – early Stone Age hunter-gatherers began to settle in farming communities. This turning point is known as the Neolithic Revolution.*)

Explain that the world’s first civilizations began in Mesopotamia, a region in the Middle East between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Show students this area on a world map. Point out the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, believed to be two of the four rivers described in Genesis as running through the Garden of Eden. (You may also want to point out the larger area known as the Fertile Crescent, the area of fertile land that lies within the modern countries of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria.)

Tell students that towards the end of the Neolithic Revolution, in 5000 B.C., a civilization called the Sumerians were found in Mesopotamia along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. They had once been a nomadic people, but they settled on the wide, flat plain to farm the rich soil. The Sumerians began to build the earliest cities on Earth. This ancient land is known as Sumer. The Sumerians are described as “the first great civilization in the world.” Ask students what they think this tells us about the Sumerians. What makes a group of people a “civilization”?

Activity: Computer lab (40 minutes)

Students will research topics about the Mesopotamia civilization in groups of 4. Each student will be assigned one of the following topics: geography, Gods, writing, and Sumer. Students will use the appropriate links to learn about these topics. Students should answer the following questions in their journals:

1. Click on the geography link:
  - What does Mesopotamia mean?
  - What are the two rivers which flowed through Mesopotamia?
  - Describe the geography of Mesopotamia (2 regions). Where did cities develop?
  - Please read the story, explore the maps, and complete the challenge.
2. Click on Gods, Goddesses, Demons and Monsters:
  - What did the people of Mesopotamia believe about religion?
  - What did the people of Mesopotamia believe about human creation?
  - Please read the story, explore, and complete the challenge.
3. Click on Writing:
  - What are pictograms?
  - What is cuneiform?
  - Please read the story and explore a scribe’s world.
4. Please click on Sumer, then on Ziggurats:
  - What are Ziggurats?
  - Please read the story, explore the ziggurat, and complete the challenge.

Activity: Characteristics of Mesopotamia (20 minutes)

- In groups of 4 each student will take 5 minutes to present the information they researched. Students listening to the presenter should answer the Mesopotamia journal questions.

**Assess Knowledge:**

- How did geography impact the people of Mesopotamia?
- What does Mesopotamia mean?
- Describe the religion of the people of Mesopotamia.
- What writing system did the people of Mesopotamia use?
- What are Ziggurats?

**Independent Practice/Closure:**

If students did not finish the questions they should use the website (link found on my website) we used today at home to finish.