

# The Ancient Near East

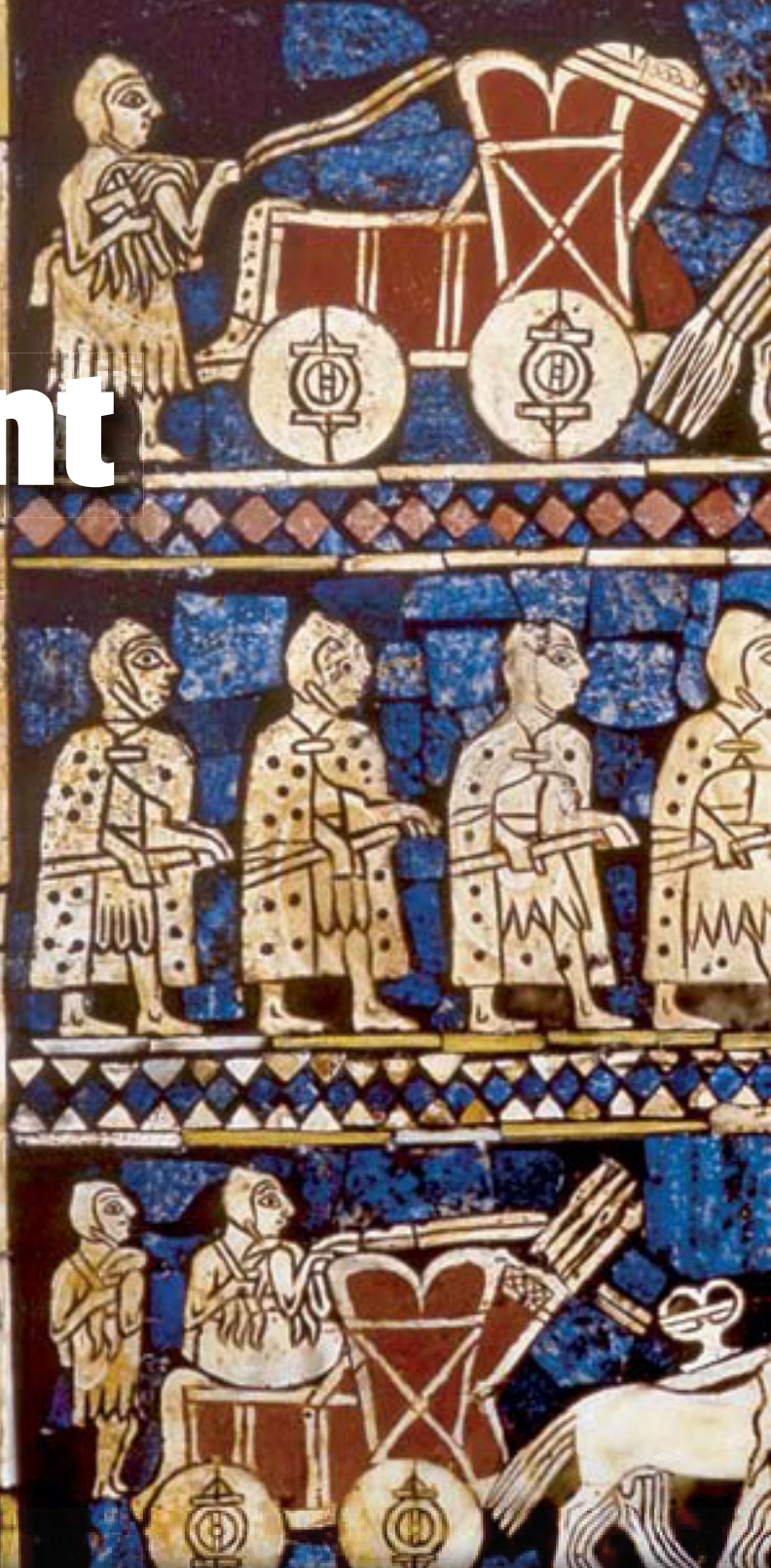
## THE BIG PICTURE

Historians use the term *Ancient Near East* to refer to a number of cultures that developed in Southwest Asia before about 500 BC. This region has often been called the Cradle of Civilization, because the world's first civilizations developed there. People of the Ancient Near East were the first to develop writing, to use the wheel, and to form huge empires.

## Theme GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

Throughout history, the environment has influenced civilizations, and people have changed the environment. In this chapter you will study the relationship that developed between human beings and their environment in the ancient Near East.

Detail from the Standard of Ur, battle panel, c. 2600–2400 BC



## TIME LINE

### CHAPTER EVENTS

**c. 4000 BC**  
People settle in the area of Sumer.

**c. 2330 BC**  
Sargon I creates the world's first empire.

**1792 BC**  
Hammurabi becomes king of Babylon.

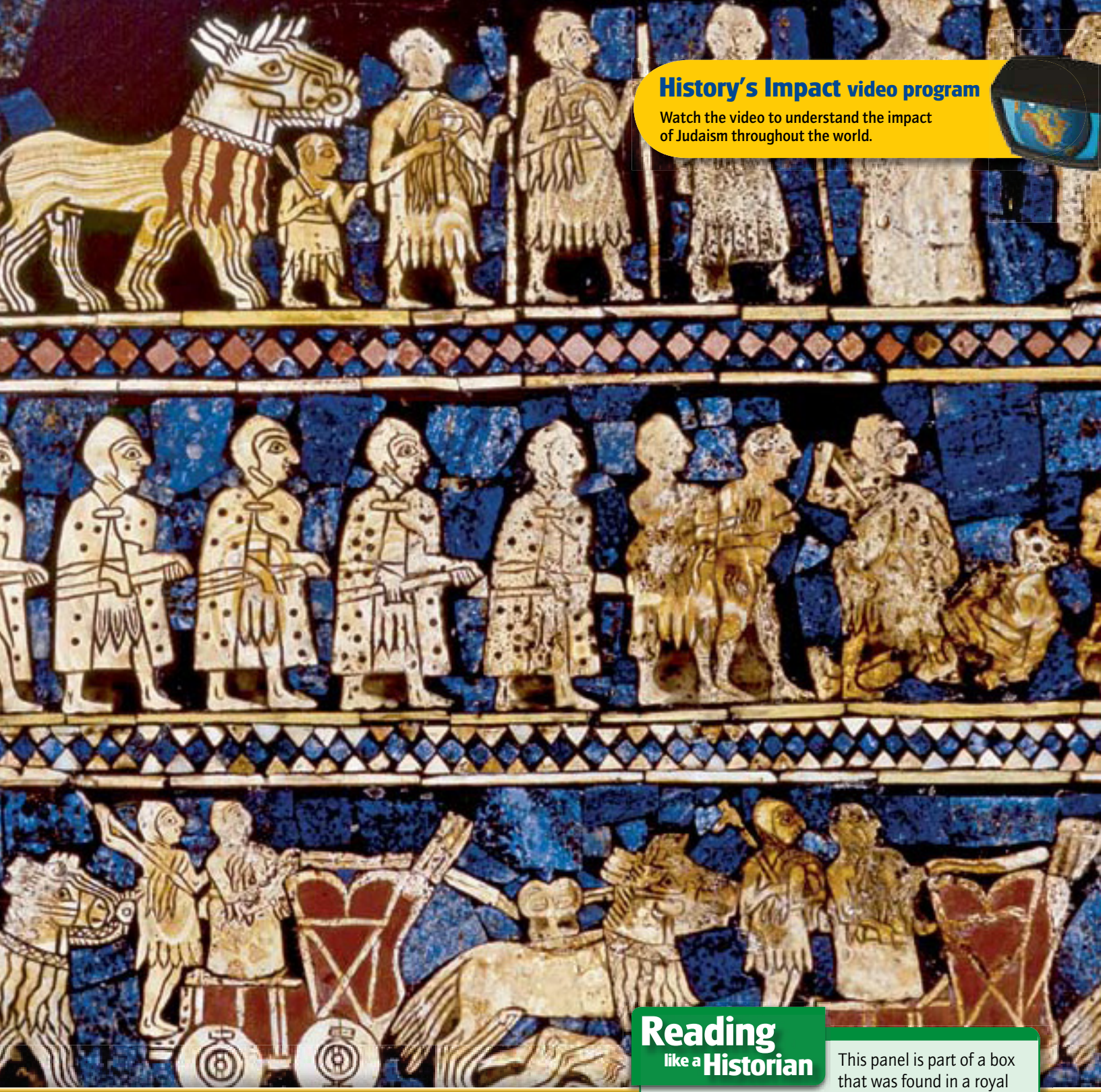
### WORLD EVENTS

**c. 3100 BC**  
Menes unifies Upper and Lower Egypt.

**c. 2500 BC**  
Civilization develops in the Indus Valley.

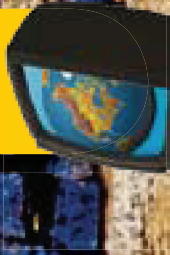
**c. 2100 BC**  
Minoan civilization develops in Crete.

**1766 BC**  
The Shang dynasty begins in China.



## History's Impact video program

Watch the video to understand the impact of Judaism throughout the world.



## Reading like a Historian

This panel is part of a box that was found in a royal cemetery in the city of Ur. Made more than 4,000 years ago, the panel shows a scene of war. Soldiers in chariots rush off to battle, while others deliver prisoners they have captured to the king.

**Analyzing Visuals** What do the decorations on this panel suggest about the people of Ur? Based on this image, what can you conclude about their level of technology? Explain your answer.

See **Skills Handbook**, p. H26

**965 BC**

Solomon becomes king of Israel.

**814 BC**

The Phoenicians build the city of Carthage.

**559 BC**

Cyrus the Great founds the Persian Empire.

**1000 BC**

**c. 750 BC**

The city of Rome is established.

# GEOGRAPHY Starting Points



**Starting Points** The world's earliest civilization developed in Southwest Asia in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This river valley is at the heart of a larger region known through history as the Fertile Crescent. An oasis of fertile land in the midst of a barren desert, the Fertile Crescent saw the rise of many societies.

- 1. Draw Conclusions** Why do you think the area outlined in purple on the map above is called the Fertile Crescent?
- 2. Predict** What physical characteristics of the Fertile Crescent might have allowed early civilizations to develop and thrive there?



## Listen to History

Go online to listen to an explanation of the starting points for this chapter.

[go.hrw.com](http://go.hrw.com)

Keyword: SHL ANE

# Mesopotamia and Sumer

## BEFORE YOU READ

### MAIN IDEA

The first known civilization arose in Mesopotamia, and its culture and innovations influenced later civilizations in the region for thousands of years.

### READING FOCUS

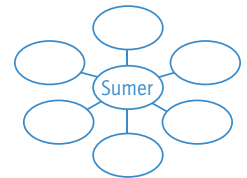
1. How did geography promote civilization in Mesopotamia?
2. What features defined the civilization of Sumer?
3. What were Sumer's main cultural achievements?
4. What events led to later empires in Mesopotamia?

### KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

Fertile Crescent  
Mesopotamia  
ziggurat  
city-state  
polytheism  
dynasty  
cuneiform  
Sargon  
Hammurabi

### TAKING NOTES

Use a diagram like this one to record details about Sumerian society.



### THE INSIDE STORY

**Why might a wedding be held to ensure a good harvest?**

In the city of Ur, crowds began filling the streets to celebrate New Year's Day, the last day of the spring festival. People made their way through Ur's mazelike streets, past mud-brick houses and shops, to the city center. There, an immense temple rose to the moon god, Nanna, and his wife.

A hush fell over the crowd. A small group was solemnly climbing a stairway to a shrine atop the temple. The time had come for the festival's main rite—the Sacred Wedding. In a symbolic ceremony the king of Ur was to marry a priestess. Surely this sacred rite would please the gods and lead to good harvests. Since their survival depended on the harvest, the people badly wanted the gods' favor. ■

## Geography Promotes Civilization

In Southwest Asia a large band of fertile land forms an oasis in the midst of deserts and mountains. This region, sometimes called the **Fertile Crescent**, curves between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. Within the fertile region some of the richest soil lies between two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates (yoo-FRAY-teez). Both of these rivers begin in Turkey and flow south through Iraq to the Persian Gulf. For centuries, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers has been called **Mesopotamia** (mes-uh-puh-TAY-mee-uh), which in Greek means “between the rivers.” There, geographic conditions helped bring about the rise of the world's first civilization.

## THE SACRED WEDDING

The ruins of the temple of Ur have been partially rebuilt. ►

As early as 5500 BC people were farming in southern Mesopotamia. This flat, swampy region was well suited for agriculture. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers often flooded there in spring. The floods left behind a fertile mud called silt, which enriched the soil. In this rich soil early farmers grew grains such as wheat and barley. With plenty of food, the population grew, and villages formed.

Farming in southern Mesopotamia posed challenges, though. The region received little rain. Thus, water levels in the Tigris and Euphrates depended on rainfall and snowmelt in distant mountains. Without warning, rivers could overflow, washing away crops and even villages. If river levels fell too low, crops would die during the hot, dry summers.

Over time, people in Mesopotamia developed methods to control water. They dug basins to store rainwater, canals to carry water to fields, and dikes to control flooding. These large projects required organization: people to assign jobs and allocate resources. As a result, leaders emerged and government formed. Slowly, a civilization developed.

#### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**allocate** to distribute for a particular purpose

**READING CHECK Summarize** What factors influenced the rise of civilization in Mesopotamia?

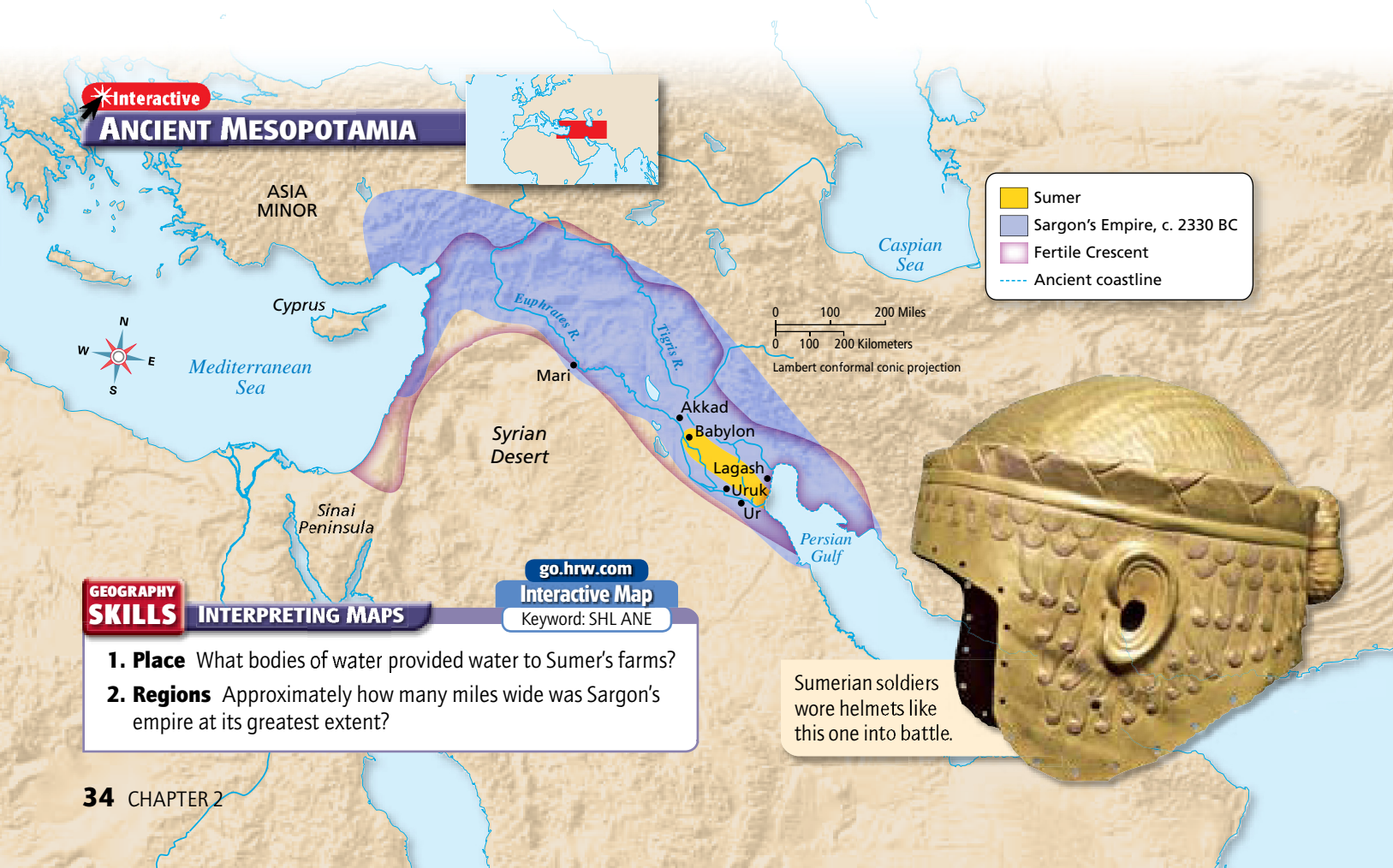
## Sumer

The people who developed this first civilization were the Sumerians (soo-MER-ee-unz). They called their land Sumer. Sumerian civilization would influence many later civilizations.

**The Cities of Sumer** Large cities had begun to appear in Sumer by 3000 BC. Structures in these cities were built of mud bricks because other building materials were scarce. In each city center a large temple rose to the city's chief god. At the heart of the temple, a pyramid-shaped structure called a **ziggurat** rose to the sky. For defense, a massive wall circled each city. Fields surrounded the city.

Over time, each city and the land it controlled formed a **city-state**, a political unit with its own government. As the city-states grew, they increasingly fought over land and water.

**Religion and Government** Religion shaped life in the city-states. The Sumerians practiced **polytheism**, or the worship of many gods. They believed that the gods controlled all natural forces. The god Enlil, for example, ruled the air and storms. The Sumerians also believed that a god protected each city-state.



#### GEOGRAPHY SKILLS INTERPRETING MAPS

- 1. Place** What bodies of water provided water to Sumer's farms?
- 2. Regions** Approximately how many miles wide was Sargon's empire at its greatest extent?

Sumerian soldiers wore helmets like this one into battle.

The Sumerians believed that the gods were like humans in many ways. The gods ate and drank, fell in love and married, and fought. At the same time, the gods had enormous power. They could bring rich harvests or raging floods, depending on their whims.

Because of these beliefs the Sumerians worked hard to please the gods. The people built ziggurats and temples where priests and priestesses offered the gods food and drink and held ceremonies.

Priests held a high status in Sumer and initially governed the city-states. As city-states battled for dominance, however, war chiefs began to rule as kings. These kings, who served as the gods' chief representatives, performed ceremonies to please the gods. In time, many of the city-states' kings formed dynasties. A **dynasty** is a series of rulers from one family.

## Sumerian Culture

Sumerian civilization produced great cultural achievements. Perhaps the greatest was the development of the first writing system. With the ability to write down events, humankind moved from prehistory into the historical age.

**Writing** Sumerian writing is called **cuneiform** (kyoo-NEE-uh-fohrm). To produce this writing, Sumerians used sharp tools called styluses to make wedge-shaped symbols on clay tablets.

Sumerians first used cuneiform to keep business accounts and other records. In time, they put their writing skills to new uses. They wrote works on law and grammar as well as works of literature, such as stories, poems, and songs. The best-known work of Sumerian literature is the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the story of a legendary king.

Sumerians paid scribes, or writers, to create written documents. Becoming a scribe required years of schooling but was a way to move up in social class. Most scribes were men, but some upper-class women also learned to write.

**Math and Sciences** The Sumerians developed a math system based on the number 60. Because of their system we still divide an hour into 60 minutes and a circle into 360 degrees. The Sumerians also learned to use geometry, which was necessary to build elaborate structures and irrigation systems.

## A Cuneiform Tablet

**Analyzing Primary Sources** Early Sumerian writing used pictographs, or picture symbols. Each pictograph represented either an object, such as a tree, or a syllable. Reading a cuneiform inscription can teach us a great deal about the Sumerians. Look at the tablet below and read the translation provided. As you read, think about

- who might have written the document.
- why it was written.
- what we can learn about the Sumerians by reading it.



This symbol can mean "god," "goddess," or "heaven."

This complex symbol means "king."

**Translation of the Tablet** For Innana [a goddess] Lady of Eanna—His Lady. Shulgi, the mighty man, King of Ur, King of Sumer and Akkad.

### Skills FOCUS

### READING LIKE A HISTORIAN

- 1. Creator** Who had this tablet created?
- 2. Point of View** Why was this tablet created?
- 3. Details** What can the inscription on this tablet tell us about ancient Sumerian society?

See **Skills Handbook**, p. H25

The Sumerians also made many scientific advances. They invented the wheel, which they used both to make pottery and to build a variety of vehicles. Sumerians also invented the plow and learned to use bronze to make stronger tools and weapons. Archaeological remains show that Sumerians even built sewers. In addition, they collected and cataloged an impressive amount of medical knowledge. They even performed basic surgery.

**The Arts** Ruins and artifacts provide us with examples of the Sumerians' artistry and creativity. Sumerian architecture includes the use of arches, ramps, and columns, all visible on the ziggurats. Sumerian sculpture includes statues with large, wide-open eyes, as well as small objects carved out of ivory.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

### Hammurabi's Code

Hammurabi's Code listed 282 laws dealing with a variety of subjects. A few examples of these laws are listed below.

196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.
197. If he breaks another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.
198. If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one [silver] mina.
199. If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bones of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.
200. If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.
201. If he knock out the teeth of a freed man, he shall pay one-third of a [silver] mina.
202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public.

Skills  
FOCUS

#### READING LIKE A HISTORIAN

1. **Analyze** How was a person who broke another's arm punished?
2. **Analyzing Primary Sources** What do these laws suggest about class equality in Babylon?

See **Skills Handbook**, p. H25

Perhaps Sumer's most famous works of art are its cylinder seals, small stone cylinders engraved all around with detailed designs. Rolling a seal over wet clay left behind an imprint of its design. People used cylinder seals to "sign" documents or to show ownership.

**Trade and Society** Sumerians obtained many of the materials for their buildings and art through trade. Sumer lacked many raw materials, such as wood and metals. To obtain these materials, Sumerians traded with people across Southwest Asia and beyond, exchanging woven textiles for metals, timber, and stone.

As trade enriched Sumer, a distinct social hierarchy, or ranking, developed. At the top were the kings, priests, and their principal agents. Next were large landowners and wealthy merchants. Below them were the majority of Sumerians—artisans, farmers, and laborers. At the bottom were slaves, many of whom had been captured in battle.

Sumerian men and women developed distinct roles as well. Men held political power and made laws while women took care of the home and children. A few upper-class women received educations and served as priestesses in the temples.

#### READING CHECK

**Draw Conclusions** Why was the Sumerians' development of cuneiform a major turning point in history?

### Empires in Mesopotamia

Over time, frequent warfare weakened Sumer's city-states. Then one after another, invading peoples conquered the region. Because each new invader adapted aspects of Sumerian culture to its own society, Sumerian civilization continued to influence life in Mesopotamia.

**Sargon's Empire** To the north of Sumer lived the Akkadians (uh-KAD-ee-uhns). About 2330 BC the Akkadian ruler **Sargon I** created a permanent army, the first ruler to do so. From the city of Akkad (ah-kahd) on the Euphrates River, Sargon used this army to conquer all of Sumer and northern Mesopotamia. In doing so, he formed the world's first empire, a land that includes different kingdoms and people under one rule. The Akkadian Empire stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf.

The Akkadians adopted cuneiform from the Sumerians and used it to write their language, which became the official language of the government. Sumerian, though, remained the main language for religious and literary texts. Sargon also kept many aspects of Sumerian society, such as the power of the priesthood. The priests' influence in Akkadian society helped ensure the continuity of Sumerian culture.

Sargon's empire lasted about 140 years. During that time, the Akkadians helped spread Sumerian culture far beyond the Tigris and Euphrates valleys. In the end, however, Sargon's empire fell. Tribes from the east invaded and captured Akkad. A century of chaos followed during which several tribes battled for control of Mesopotamia.

**The Babylonian Empire** One such tribe was the Amorites. They settled in Babylon on the Euphrates, near modern Baghdad, Iraq. In 1792 BC the Amorite king **Hammurabi** became king of Babylon. A brilliant warrior, he united all of Mesopotamia in what became known as the Babylonian Empire, named for its capital.

Hammurabi's skills were not limited to the battlefield. He was also an able ruler and administrator who oversaw building projects and improved the tax-collection system to pay for them. He also increased trade so that the empire grew wealthy. Like Sargon before him, Hammurabi absorbed elements of the earlier cultures of the region. He honored the old Sumerian gods and allowed priests to retain their power and influence. During his reign, schools continued to teach the Sumerian language and cuneiform writing.

Hammurabi is most famous, though, for his code of laws. Hammurabi's Code consists of 282 laws dealing with everything from trade and theft to injury and murder. The code was important not only because it was thorough but also because it was written down for all to see. People across the empire could read exactly what actions were crimes.

During Hammurabi's long reign, Babylon became Mesopotamia's greatest city. Yet after his death, Babylonian power declined. In less than two centuries, the Babylonian Empire had fallen.

**READING CHECK** **Sequence** Who ruled Mesopotamia after Sumer, and in what order?

## MESOPOTAMIAN ACHIEVEMENTS

QUICK FACTS

### Sumerians

Developed the world's first civilization  
Created cuneiform writing  
Invented the wheel and the plow  
Wrote the *Epic of Gilgamesh*  
Built cities and ziggurats

▼ Sumerian model of a wheeled cart



### Akkadians

Established the world's first empire

### Babylonians

Wrote Hammurabi's Code

## SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

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Online Quiz

Keyword: SHL ANE HP

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Define** Where is the **Fertile Crescent**, and which part of it is also known as **Mesopotamia**?

**b. Explain** How did geographic conditions in southern Mesopotamia encourage the development of civilization there?
- a. Describe** What were some common features of Sumer's **city-states**?

**b. Infer** How did geography influence religious beliefs in Sumer?

**c. Elaborate** In what ways did religion shape all aspects of government and life in Sumer?
- a. Recall** What is **cuneiform**, and why is it historically significant?

**b. Draw Conclusions** Why was trade important in Sumer?

**c. Make Judgments** Was Sumerian society fair? Why or why not?
- a. Define** What is an empire, and what group of people created the world's first empire?

**b. Sequence** What three tribes conquered and ruled Mesopotamia after the decline of Sumer's city-states? List the tribes in order.

**c. Evaluate** Why was **Hammurabi's Code** a significant achievement?

### Critical Thinking

- 5. Categorize** Draw a chart like the one below. Use your notes to complete each row with details about the Sumerians' achievements.

Category	Achievement or Innovation
Writing	
Technology	
Math & Science	
The Arts	

### FOCUS ON WRITING

- 6. Description** Write a journal entry from the point of view of a scribe who lives in ancient Sumer. Describe your work, your position in society, and some of the major features of life in your city.



# World Literature

**About the Reading** Composed more than 4,000 years ago, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* tells of a hero called Gilgamesh. Though based on a real Sumerian king, the Gilgamesh of the epic is no ordinary man. He is part man and part god, with great powers but also with human weaknesses. In this passage, Gilgamesh reacts to the death of his friend Enkidu. He seeks out Utnapishtim, a man the gods had made immortal, hoping that he, too, can learn the secret of immortality.

**Note how Gilgamesh expresses his emotions.**

**Excerpt from**

## *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

Bitterly Gilgamesh wept for his friend Enkidu; he wandered over the wilderness as a hunter, he roamed over the plains; in his bitterness he cried, “How can I rest, how can I be at peace? Despair is in my heart. What my brother is now, that shall I be when I am dead. Because I am afraid of death I will go as best I can to find Utnapishtim whom they call the Faraway, for he has entered the assembly of the gods.” So Gilgamesh traveled over the wilderness, he wandered over the grasslands, a long journey, in search of Utnapishtim, whom the gods took after the deluge; and they set him to live in the land of Dilmun, in the garden of the sun; and to him alone of men they gave everlasting life.

At night when he came to the mountain passes Gilgamesh prayed: “In these mountain passes long ago I saw lions, I was afraid and I lifted my eyes to the moon; I prayed and my prayers went up to the gods, so now, O moon god Sin, protect me.” When he had prayed he lay down to sleep, until he was woken from out of a dream. He saw the lions round him glorying in life; then he took his axe in his hand, he drew his sword from his belt, and he fell upon them like an arrow from the string, and struck and destroyed and scattered them.



*This image of Gilgamesh fighting a lion was made by rolling a cylinder seal over wet clay.*

So at length Gilgamesh came to Mashu, the great mountains . . . At its gate the Scorpions stand guard, half man and half dragon; their glory is terrifying, their stare strikes death into men, their shimmering halo sweeps the mountains that guard the rising sun. When Gilgamesh saw them he shielded his eyes for the length of a moment only; then he took courage and approached. When they saw him so undismayed the Man-Scorpion called to his mate, “This one who comes to us now is flesh of the gods.” The mate of the Man-Scorpion answered, “Two thirds is god but one third is man.”

**Skills Focus**

**READING LIKE A HISTORIAN**

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**World Literature**

Keyword: SHL WRLIT

- 1. Describe** What fear did Enkidu's death inspire in Gilgamesh?
- 2. Interpret Literature as a Source** Based on this passage, what can you assume about the Sumerian view of death?

See **Skills Handbook**, p. H28

# Fertile Crescent Empires

## BEFORE YOU READ

### MAIN IDEA

Indo-European invaders introduced new technologies to the Fertile Crescent while adapting earlier technologies developed by the civilizations they encountered there.

### READING FOCUS

1. What military advantages helped the Hittites establish an empire in Asia Minor?
2. What events led to the rise and fall of the Assyrian and Chaldean empires?
3. What were the main achievements of the Phoenicians?

### KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

Indo-Europeans  
steppes  
Nebuchadnezzar II

### TAKING NOTES

Use a chart like the one below to describe the peoples of the Fertile Crescent.

↓
↓

### THE INSIDE STORY

#### *Why did the once mighty city of Babylon fall?*

Dust filled the sky as the army of heavy war chariots thundered toward the city of Babylon. Each chariot was drawn by two horses and carried three soldiers armed with spears and bows, ready for combat. Foot soldiers marched alongside the chariots, gripping spears, swords, and axes as they stared grimly ahead at the city of Babylon. The hardened warriors already had two victories to their credit, but Babylon would be their greatest prize. As they drew near the city, the Hittite chariots rushed ahead, breaking through the ranks of the Babylonian army that had set out to meet them. With their king himself leading the final charge, the Hittites captured the city in a lightning strike. The Babylonian soldiers were no match for the Hittites.

In celebration, the victorious Hittites looted Babylon of its wealth. Yet for reasons now lost to time, they chose not to stay and rule the city. Instead, the Hittites loaded up their booty and returned home, some 500 miles to the west. The people of Babylon heaved an amazed sigh of relief. True, they had suffered a great defeat, but the city was still theirs. However, the Hittites' stronger iron weapons had done their damage. In their weakened state, the Babylonians soon met defeat at the hands of other invaders, this time for good. ■

## The Hittites

As the Babylonian Empire declined, other civilizations prospered in and around the Fertile Crescent. Nomadic tribes from the mountains and deserts moved into the region as well, drawn by its wealth. As tribes battled each other for land, a pattern slowly emerged in which control passed from one empire to another.

## THUNDER FROM THE WEST

Hittite soldiers stormed through Babylon in the 1500s BC. ►



# Conquering the Fertile Crescent

Waves of invaders swept into and ruled the Fertile Crescent after the fall of the Babylonian Empire. These invaders created huge empires and introduced new technologies to the region.



### THE IMPACT TODAY

Indo-European languages, such as Greek, Hindi, and Russian, are still spoken in Europe, South Asia, and Southwest Asia.

**Indo-Europeans** The tribes who invaded Mesopotamia included the **Indo-Europeans**, several tribes who spoke related languages. The Indo-Europeans may have come from the **steppes**, or arid grasslands, north of the Black Sea, driven out by drought, conflicts, or a lack of resources. By studying modern languages, scholars can tell that Indo-Europeans gradually spread west and south from that area.

**Hittite Military Might** The Hittites, a warlike Indo-European tribe, developed in Southwest Asia. About 2000 BC, they settled in Asia Minor, which is now Turkey. There, the Hittites conquered the surrounding people to build a strong empire.

The Hittites' success came largely through their use of the horse-drawn war chariot. The Hittite chariot was heavy and slow, but very powerful. Whereas most chariots of the time held only two soldiers, Hittite chariots held three. As one man drove, a second fought, and a third held shields for defense. This extra defender enabled the Hittites to move their chariots in close to enemy forces while staying protected, easily crushing most foes.

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**technique**  
method, way for performing a task

With these advantages, the Hittites expanded their empire beyond Asia Minor. About 1595 BC, they sacked Babylon. This conquest weakened Babylon, which soon fell to another nomadic tribe, the Kassites, who ruled southern Mesopotamia for almost 400 years.

**Hittite Culture** The Hittites, like the Akkadians and Babylonians, blended their culture with the cultures around them. For example, they used Sumerian cuneiform to write their language. In addition, they developed a law code similar to that of Hammurabi.

The Hittites did make a crucial contribution of their own to Near Eastern culture. They were the first people in the region to master ironworking techniques. The Hittites used iron mostly for making ornaments, though later peoples adopted it for tools and weapons.

Hittite rule reached its peak in the 1300s, but the Hittites remained a strong force in western Asia until about 1200 BC. Their empire then fell to powerful raiders, known to historians only as the Sea Peoples.

**READING CHECK Summarize** How were the Hittites able to build an empire in Asia Minor?



**GEOGRAPHY SKILLS**

**INTERPRETING MAPS**

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**Interactive Map**  
Keyword: SHL ANE

- Regions** Which group that invaded the Fertile Crescent also conquered Egypt?
- Human-Environment Interaction** Why do you think none of the empires extended far south of the Fertile Crescent?

## The Assyrians and the Chaldeans

After the Hittite Empire fell, other peoples fought for dominance in western Asia. In time, the Assyrians (uh-SEER-i-unz) used fierce determination and military might to become the supreme power in the region.

**The Assyrians** The Assyrians were originally from northern Mesopotamia, near the city of Assur along the upper Tigris River. There, they grew barley and raised cattle. Like others in the region, the Assyrians also adopted many aspects of Sumerian culture.

Because the Assyrians' land received fairly good rainfall and lay along major trade routes, many tribes invaded, seeking to control the area. Over the centuries, the Assyrians had often been dominated by other people.

The Assyrians briefly gained power in the 1300s BC and built an empire, but it did not last. Then about 900 BC the Assyrians regained strength. They built a new empire, which came to include all of Mesopotamia as well as parts of Asia Minor and Egypt.

**The Assyrian War Machine** Assyria's power relied on its military. Frequent warfare had hardened Assyria into a fierce warrior society. Its army included not only war chariots and foot soldiers but also a cavalry, all armed with iron weapons. In addition, Assyrian soldiers were masters of siege warfare. They used battering rams to pound through city walls or dug beneath the walls to weaken them.

Assyrian warfare also relied on terror to awe enemies and to control conquered areas. To spread fear, the Assyrians often killed or maimed captives. An Assyrian king recalled,

### HISTORY'S VOICES

“Many of the captives I burned in a fire. Many I took alive; from some I cut off their hands to the wrist, from others I cut off their noses, ears, and fingers; I put out the eyes of many.”

—Ashurnasirpal II, quoted in *Barbarian Tides*, 1500–600 BC

Captives who lived were enslaved. In some cases, the Assyrians also split up and resettled conquered people to keep them from rebelling.

**Assyrian Rule** The Assyrians created an efficient system to govern their vast empire. Kings ruled through local leaders, each of whom governed a small area of the empire. In that area, the local leader collected taxes, enforced laws, and raised troops for the army. A system of roads linked the distant parts of the empire. Over these roads, messengers on horseback raced with orders, troops moved with ease, and merchants carried on a thriving trade.

To maintain peace across the empire, the Assyrians ruthlessly punished anyone who opposed them. They were widely known and feared for their harsh treatment of anyone who opposed them. One Assyrian king boasted of his treatment of a group of rebels: “I fed their corpses—cut into small pieces—to the dogs, the swine, the wolves, the vultures.” Such brutality fueled bitter hatred toward the Assyrians.

In spite of such brutality, the Assyrians produced great cultural achievements. Perhaps the greatest was the library in Assyria’s capital, Nineveh (NI-nuh-vuh). This huge library included more than 20,000 cuneiform tablets collected from across the empire. Among them were many from Mesopotamia, including the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Today the texts this library preserved are a valuable source of information for scholars.

Like many other empires, Assyria began to decline over time. As the empire grew larger, the Assyrians found it harder to control. Seeing their chance, the Chaldeans (kal-DEE-unz), who lived in southern Mesopotamia, and the Medes, who lived in what is now Iran, joined forces. In 612 BC they captured and torched Nineveh. With its capital and government gone, the Assyrian empire came to a sudden end.

## The Splendor of Babylon

Babylon was one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. Archaeologists have found the ruins of the Ishtar Gate (below), but no trace of the Hanging Gardens (right) remains. **How might we know of the Hanging Gardens?**



### FACES OF HISTORY

#### Nebuchadnezzar II

c. 630–562 BC

When he took the throne, Nebuchadnezzar II ordered the complete rebuilding of

Babylon. Among its greatest structures was the Hanging Gardens. According to legend, he built this magnificent structure for his wife, who missed the mountains and forests of her birthplace.

**Make Inferences** Why might a ruler rebuild his capital city?

**The Chaldeans** As Assyria crumbled, the Chaldeans swooped in to pick up the pieces. Taking much of southern and western Assyria, the Chaldeans formed their own empire.

The Chaldeans made the old city of Babylon the capital of their new Babylonian empire. **Nebuchadnezzar II** (neb-uh-kuhd-NEZ-uhr), the most famous Chaldean king, was known as both a warrior and as a builder. He fought the Egyptians and the Jews, capturing the Jewish capital of Jerusalem and taking many of its residents to Babylon as slaves. He also rebuilt Babylon into a place of splendor. Numerous palaces and temples, including an immense multistoried ziggurat, filled the city, and the Euphrates River flowed through the center. For himself, Nebuchadnezzar built a grand palace that, according to legend, featured the famous Hanging Gardens. There, thousands of trees and flowers grew on the terraces and roofs as if hanging in the air. Ancient writers listed the Hanging Gardens of Babylon as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The Chaldeans, who like many others admired ancient Sumerian culture, studied the Sumerian language and built temples to Sumerian gods. The Chaldeans also developed a calendar based on the phases of the moon and made advances in astronomy. In Babylon, scholars charted the positions of the stars and used them to track economic, political, and weather events.

In spite of its achievements, the Chaldean Empire was short-lived. In 539 BC, less than a hundred years after they conquered the Assyrians, a people called the Persians conquered Babylon. With that event, the Chaldean Empire came to an end.

**READING CHECK Compare and Contrast**

How were the Assyrian and Chaldean empires similar and different?

## The Phoenicians

As great empires rose and fell, smaller states also emerged in western Asia. In an area called Phoenicia (fi-NI-shuh), city-states like Sidon and Tyre emerged as trading centers. Though the city-states of Phoenicia often came under the rule of foreign empires, the Phoenicians built a wealthy trading society whose legacy is still felt today.

**PHOENICIAN TRADE, C. 800 BC**

The map illustrates the extensive trade network of the Phoenicians around 800 BC. It shows the Mediterranean Sea as a central hub, with red arrows indicating trade routes that radiate from Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon) to various regions. Key locations marked include Carthage in northern Africa, Tyre in Phoenicia, and several points along the coast of Europe, including the British Isles. The map also shows major rivers like the Nile, Danube, and Rhine, and mountain ranges like the Atlas and Taurus. A legend identifies Phoenicia in green, the settlement area in purple, Phoenician colonies in red dots, and trade routes in red arrows. A scale bar shows distances up to 400 miles and 400 kilometers. The map uses an Azimuthal equal-area projection.

**GEOGRAPHY SKILLS INTERPRETING MAPS**

**1. Movement** To what areas did Phoenician traders sail in their journeys?

**2. Location** How did Phoenicia's location help it become a major trading society?

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Interactive Map  
Keyword: SHL ANE

**Growth of a Trading Society** Phoenicia lay at the western end of the Fertile Crescent, along the Mediterranean Sea. Today most of the region once known as Phoenicia is the nation of Lebanon.

The land of Phoenicia rose from a narrow coastal plain to rugged hills and mountains. Because farming was difficult and resources were limited, the Phoenicians turned to trade and the sea for their livelihood. They became expert sailors, dominating trade on the Mediterranean and sailing to ports in Egypt, Greece, Italy, Sicily, and Spain. Their ships even passed through the Strait of Gibraltar. Phoenician explorers sailed south along the west coast of Africa as far as modern Sierra Leone, and possibly even farther. Some historians also think that the Phoenicians sailed to the islands of Britain to obtain goods.

As trade grew, the Phoenicians founded colonies along their trade routes. One of the most famous colonies was Carthage (KAHR-thij), on the coast of northern Africa. Carthage later became a powerful city in the Mediterranean in its own right.

# ALPHABET

QUICK  
FACTS

The Phoenician alphabet, adopted and modified by the Greeks and then the Romans, developed into our modern alphabet.

**What similarities and differences can you see between the three sets of letters shown here?**

## Phoenician

𐤀 𐤁 𐤂 𐤃 𐤄 𐤅 𐤆 𐤇 𐤈

## Greek

Α Β Γ Δ Ε Φ Ζ Η

## Latin

A B C D E F G H

Trade brought Phoenicians great wealth. Local resources, although limited, included valuable export items. Giant cedar trees from Phoenicia were prized for timber. A local shellfish produced a purple dye used to color fabric, a fabric that was costly but popular with the rich. The Phoenicians invented glassblowing—the art of heating and shaping glass—and

glass objects became trade items as well. Other exports included ivory carvings, silverwork, and slaves.

**The Phoenician Alphabet** Trade was not the Phoenicians' only achievement. Perhaps their greatest achievement—and their most influential legacy—was their alphabet. To record their activities, Phoenician traders developed one of the world's first alphabets. Letters and alphabets, which can be combined to form countless words, are more flexible than writing systems that use symbols or pictographs to represent words or ideas.

The Phoenician alphabet consisted of 22 letters, all consonants. As Phoenician traders traveled from port to port, many people adopted their new alphabet because it made writing easier. Among these people were the Greeks, who expanded the alphabet to include vowels and modified some of the letters.

The Phoenician alphabet influenced not only the ancient world but the modern one as well. The Greeks' modified version of the old Phoenician alphabet is the ancestor of the modern alphabet we use to write the English language. Many civilizations, including our own, have benefited from the innovations of the seafaring Phoenicians.

### READING CHECK

**Find the Main Idea** What were the Phoenicians' most significant achievements?

## SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

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Online Quiz

Keyword: SHL ANE HP

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- Identify** Who were the Indo-Europeans, and how have scholars traced their migrations?
  - Identify Cause and Effect** What was the major cause of the Hittites' success as empire builders in Asia Minor?
  - Support a Position** Do you agree or disagree with the position that ironworking was the greatest contribution of the Hittites? Support your answer.
- Recall** Who was Nebuchadnezzar II, and what legendary Chaldean achievement is associated with him?
  - Summarize** What were some of the key achievements of the Assyrian and Chaldean empires?
  - Make Judgments** Was the Assyrian use of terror and brutality as a means of control successful? Explain your answer.
- Describe** Where and what did the Phoenicians trade?
  - Explain** Why did the Phoenicians focus on trade by sea for their livelihood?

- Elaborate** Why is the Phoenicians' alphabet considered one of their greatest legacies?

### Critical Thinking

- Identify Cause and Effect** Copy the chart below. Use it to list the causes and effects of the rise and fall of each empire.

Empire or State	Causes of Its Rise/Success

### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Persuasion** Of the many cultural achievements described in this section, select the one that you think was the most important. Then write a letter to persuade a historian to agree with your position.

# The Hebrews and Judaism

## BEFORE YOU READ

### MAIN IDEA

The ancient Hebrews and their religion, Judaism, have been a major influence on Western civilization.

### READING FOCUS

1. What are the major events in the history of the early Hebrews?
2. How did the Kingdom of Israel develop, and who were some of its key leaders?
3. What are the basic teachings and sacred texts of Judaism?

### KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

Judaism  
Torah  
Abraham  
covenant  
patriarch  
Moses  
Exodus  
Diaspora  
monotheism

## JOURNEY to an UNKNOWN LAND



Abraham, Sarah, and an Angel, Jan Provost II, c. 1520

### THE INSIDE STORY

*Why might a man leave his home and move to a strange land?*

Ancient accounts say that a shepherd named Abram lived near Ur during the time of the Babylonians. One day, God spoke to Abram: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house," God said, "unto the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great . . . and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1–4, Masoretic text)

So Abram took his family, herds, and belongings and began a long journey west. God led Abram to a land called Canaan, on the Mediterranean Sea. There, God gave Abram a new name—Abraham, meaning the "father of many." Abraham made a new home in Canaan, and his descendants multiplied. They became known as the Hebrews. ■

## The Early Hebrews

The Hebrews were the ancestors of the people called Jews. Originally nomadic pastoralists, they moved into the desert grasslands around the Fertile Crescent between 2000 and 1500 BC.

Much of what we know about the Hebrews comes from their own later writings, which contained not only the laws and requirements of their religion, **Judaism** (JOO-dee-i-zuhm), but also much of their early history. These writings later formed the foundation of both the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. The findings of Near Eastern archaeologists have also shed some light on early Hebrew history.

▲ According to the Bible, God promised to lead Abraham to a new homeland.



**The Hebrew Fathers** The accounts of the Hebrews' early history appear in five books. Together, these books form the **Torah**, the most sacred text of Judaism. The Torah, along with other writings, is part of the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible is called the Old Testament in the Christian Bible.

The Torah traces the Hebrews back to a man named **Abraham**. A shepherd, he lived near Ur in Mesopotamia. The Torah says that God told Abraham to leave Mesopotamia and to abandon the polytheism he had grown up with. In return for Abraham's obedience, God made a **covenant**, or solemn promise, to him. God promised to lead Abraham and his descendants to a new home, a Promised Land, and to make those descendants a mighty people.

The land to which the Torah says God led Abraham was called Canaan (KAY-nuhn), a region along the eastern Mediterranean Sea. There, Abraham and his descendants lived for many years. In time, his grandson Jacob had 12 sons who were the ancestors of 12 tribes. Because Jacob was also called Israel, the tribes were called the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and the Hebrews became known as the Children of Israel or Israelites. Later Israelites all traced their roots to these twelve tribes. As a result, the Israelites—and modern Jews—considered Abraham, his son Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob **patriarchs**, or ancestral "fathers."

In time, some Israelites left Canaan and went to Egypt, driven there by famine. The Israelites lived well there, and their population grew. Egypt's ruler, the pharaoh, began to fear that the Israelites might rise up against the Egyptians. To prevent an uprising, he made the Israelites slaves.

**Moses and the Exodus** The Torah tells of the Israelites' years of bitter toil as slaves in Egypt. Then a leader named **Moses** arose among them. According to the Torah, Moses had been born an Israelite but raised in the pharaoh's palace. One day God spoke to him and told him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Moses went to the pharaoh and demanded the Israelites' freedom. But the pharaoh refused. God responded, the Torah says, by raining down a series of terrible plagues, or disasters, on Egypt. These plagues so terrified the pharaoh that he agreed to free the Israelites. In a journey called the **Exodus**, Moses

led the Israelites out of Egypt. The Israelites believed that these events proved that God loved them and was watching over them.

The Exodus is a major event in Jewish history. Today Jews remember the Exodus by celebrating Passover in the spring of each year. During Passover, Jews eat a special meal called a seder (SAY-duhr) that includes foods symbolizing their hardships in Egypt and the escape from slavery to freedom.

After the Exodus the Israelites wandered through the desert for years. During this time, they came to a mountain called Sinai. The Torah says that, on that mountain, God gave Moses two stone tablets on which were 10 moral laws. These laws are the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments state that only one God exists and stress the importance of life, self-control, and justice. The Israelites made a new covenant with God to follow the Commandments, which shaped their society. Over time, these laws had a major influence on the laws and values of Western civilization:

## World Religions

### SACRED TEXTS

## The Torah

**About the Reading** The Torah, one of Judaism's most sacred texts, includes the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. It includes descriptions of the laws Jews are expected to follow and a history of the Jewish people up to the death of Moses. Among the events described in the Torah is the Exodus, the freeing of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. In this passage from the Torah, God instructs Moses to lead his people to freedom.

**AS YOU READ** Pay attention to the instructions God gives to Moses.

A Torah scroll encased in a decorative case ►



### HISTORY'S VOICES

“I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing . . . Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain . . . Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work. . . Honour thy father and thy mother . . . Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife . . . nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”

—Exodus 20:2–14, Masoretic Text

**The Promised Land** The Torah says the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years before entering Canaan. The Israelites believed that God had promised them this land, which was said to be “flowing with milk and honey.”

Because other people now lived in Canaan, the Israelites battled for land for many decades. When they had once again gained control of Canaan, that land became known as Israel.

**READING CHECK Sequencing** What are some key events, in order, in early Israelite history?

## The Kingdom of Israel

In Canaan, the Israelites settled in scattered communities where they farmed and raised livestock. The communities were organized loosely by the Twelve Tribes and did not have a central government. Instead, each community chose judges to enforce laws and settle disputes. The Hebrew Bible says that one of the most effective judges was a woman, Deborah.

And the LORD said: “I have surely seen the affliction of My people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their pains; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me; moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” And Moses said unto God: “Who am I, that I

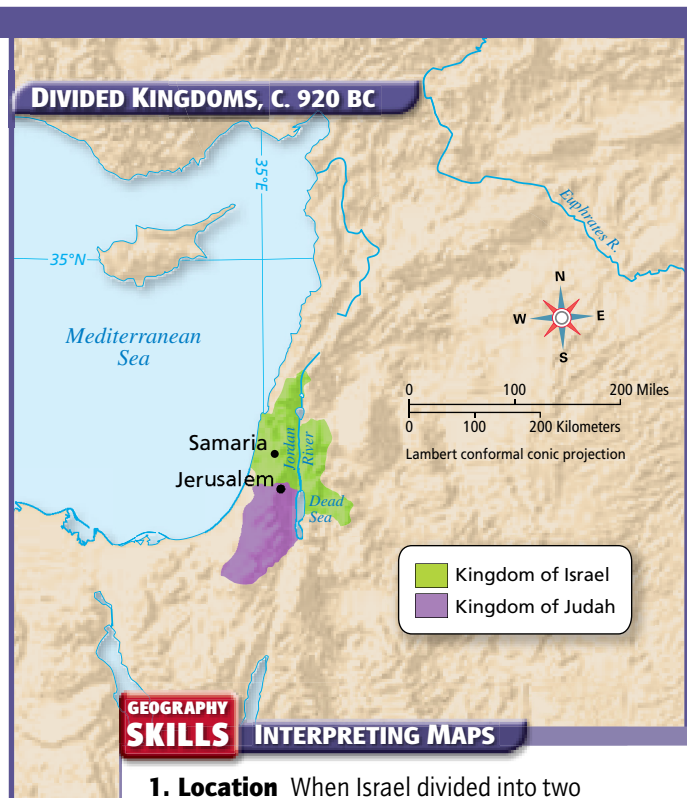
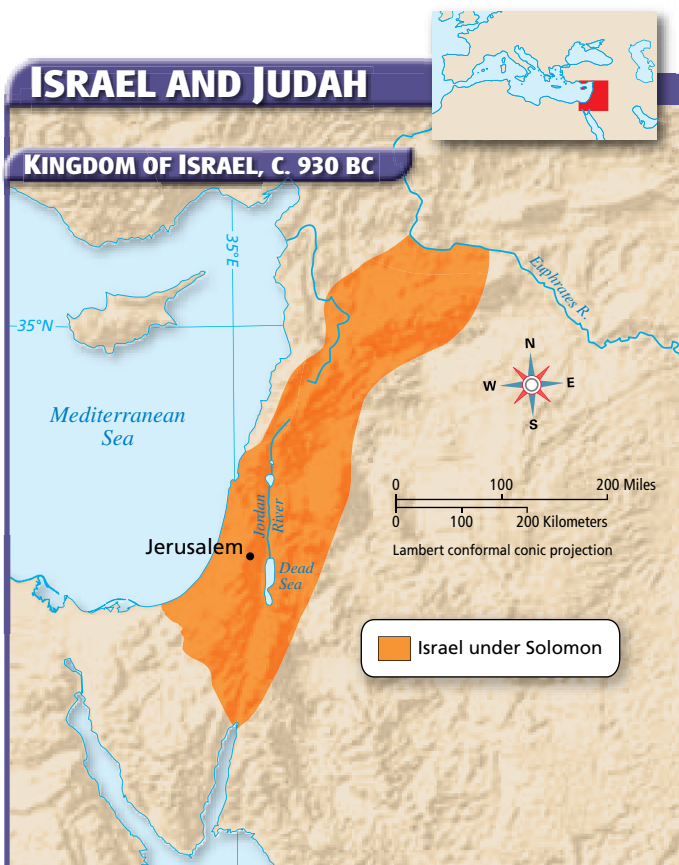
should go unto pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” And He said: “Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.” And Moses said unto God: “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them: The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me: What is His name? what shall I say unto them?” And God said unto Moses: “I AM THAT I AM”; and He said: “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you.”

—Exodus 3:7–14, Masoretic Text

**Analyze** What does God promise to Moses?



▲ A Jewish teen holds a pointer called a yad as she reads from a Torah scroll.



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

### INTERPRETING MAPS

- 1. Location** When Israel divided into two kingdoms, in which kingdom did Jerusalem lie?
- 2. Regions** About how much farther north did Solomon's kingdom extend than the divided Kingdom of Israel?

From time to time during the period of the judges, prophets—holy men who were believed to carry messages from God—appeared among the Israelites. The goal of the prophets was to keep the Israelites focused on their faith.

**Saul, David, and Solomon** In the mid-1000s BC the Philistines, a powerful people who lived along the Mediterranean coast attacked Israel. The effort to drive out the Philistines led the Israelites to unite under one king.

Israel's first king was a man named Saul. Chosen for his military leadership, Saul had some success fighting against the Philistines. Described in the Hebrew Bible as a jealous and troubled ruler, Saul was never able to win the full support of the people.

David, who became Israel's second king in about 1000 BC, was well loved, and the people united behind him. A strong king and military leader, David was also a gifted poet and musician. Under David, Israel grew into a strong kingdom centered on the capital, Jerusalem.

Under David's son Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel reached the height of its wealth and influence. Solomon, praised in the Hebrew Bible for his great wisdom, traded with other

powers of the Near East. Through this trade, Solomon became very rich. With his wealth, he built a magnificent temple in Jerusalem.

**Division and Conquest** Within a year of the death of Solomon about 931 BC, conflict over who should be king ripped Israel in two. The ten tribes in the north formed a new kingdom, also called Israel. The two tribes in the south formed the Kingdom of Judah and became known as Jews.

The two kingdoms lasted a few centuries. About 722 BC Israel fell to the Assyrians. The Assyrians then scattered the people of Israel across their empire. The second kingdom, Judah, fell to the Chaldeans in 586 BC. The Chaldeans destroyed Solomon's Temple and brought thousands of Jews to Babylon as slaves. The Jews called this enslavement the Babylonian Captivity. It lasted about 50 years. This event marked the start of the **Diaspora**, the scattering of the Jews outside Judah.

At that time a powerful new empire called Persia conquered the Chaldeans. The Persians let the Jews return to Jerusalem, where they rebuilt Solomon's Temple, which became known as the Second Temple. However, many Jews did not return to Jerusalem but stayed in Babylon or moved into Persia.

**READING CHECK** **Find the Main Idea** Why are Saul, David, and Solomon significant?

## The Teachings of Judaism

Religion was the foundation upon which the ancient Hebrews, and later the Jews, based their whole society. Today Judaism's central beliefs continue to influence Jewish society.

**Belief in One God** The most important belief of Judaism is that only one God exists. The belief in one God is called **monotheism**. Most of the ancient world worshipped many gods, so the Jews' worship of one God set them apart. Many scholars believe that Judaism was the world's first monotheistic religion.

**Justice and Righteousness** Also central to Judaism are the beliefs of justice and righteousness. To Jews, being just means treating other people with kindness and fairness. Being righteous refers to doing what is right and proper, even when others do not.

The Jewish emphasis on righteousness has led to their creation of a strong code of ethics, or standards of behavior. For example, Jews are expected to respect their families, to tell the truth, not to cheat, and to treat all people equally. The Jewish ethical tradition was later carried forward into Christianity and became known as Judeo-Christian ethics.

**Obedience to the Law** Closely tied to the idea of righteousness is the Jewish emphasis on obedience to the law. The most important laws of Judaism are the Ten Commandments, but they are only part of the many laws that Jews believe Moses recorded. A whole system of laws, called Mosaic law, guides many areas of Jewish life. For example, Mosaic law governs how Jews pray and when they worship. The laws also limit what foods Jews may eat and how foods are prepared. Today food prepared according to these laws is called kosher, or fit.

**Jewish Sacred Texts** The beliefs and laws of Judaism are recorded in several sacred texts. As you have read, the most sacred of these texts is the Torah. The Torah is the first part of the Hebrew Bible. The other sections are the Prophets, which includes the teachings of early Israelite prophets, and the Writings, which contains lessons, history, poetry, songs, and proverbs, or sayings of wisdom.

Another sacred text of Judaism is the Talmud (TAHL-moohd). Written by Jewish scholars over several centuries and finished in the AD 500s, the Talmud contains explanations and interpretations of the other sacred texts. The beliefs in these sacred texts have helped the Jews remain a united religious community.

**READING CHECK** **Identify Supporting Details** What are the central beliefs of Judaism?

## SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

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Online Quiz

Keyword: SHL ANE HP

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- Identify** Who were **Abraham** and **Jacob**, and what is their significance in early Hebrew history?
  - Analyze** Why is the **Exodus** a major event in early Jewish history?
  - Elaborate** In what ways do the Ten Commandments stress the values of human life, self-control, and justice?
- Define** What is the **Diaspora**?
  - Sequence** What happened to the Kingdom of Israel after Solomon's rule?
  - Make Judgments** Who do you think was the greater king of Israel—David or Saul? Why?
- Recall** What are the three sections of the Hebrew Bible? Which one do the Jews consider to be the most sacred?
  - Summarize** How do the central beliefs of **Judaism** shape Jewish life?

### Critical Thinking

- Sequence** Draw a series of boxes like the one below. Using your notes, list and describe each key event in the history of the Hebrews from Abraham's migration to Canaan to the Babylonian Captivity.



### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Exposition** Write a short newspaper article covering one of the following major events in Hebrew and Jewish history: the Exodus, the division of Israel into two kingdoms, the Babylonian Captivity, or the return of Jews to Jerusalem from Babylon. You should write the article from the point of view of an objective reporter who lived in the ancient world. Your article should be clear and address the questions of who, what, where, when, and how.

# The Persian Empire

## BEFORE YOU READ

### MAIN IDEA

The Persians formed one of the largest and best-governed empires in the ancient world and made great cultural achievements.

### READING FOCUS

1. Who shaped the growth and organization of the Persian Empire?
2. What were the main teachings of Zoroastrianism?
3. What were the most significant Persian achievements?

### KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

Cyrus the Great  
Darius I  
satrap  
Xerxes  
Zoroaster  
dualism

### TAKING NOTES

Use a chart to take notes on the politics and religion of the Persian Empire.

The Persian Empire	
Politics	Religion

### THE INSIDE STORY

#### *Could a newborn infant be a threat to a king?*

According to an ancient legend, the baby who grew up to be King Cyrus the Great of Persia was indeed a threat. Cyrus, the legend says, was the grandson of Astyages, king of the Medes. The king's daughter had married a prince of the Persians, a people the Medes had conquered. Shortly after the couple's first son, Cyrus, was born, the king had a dream that the baby would grow up to overthrow him. Afraid the dream would come true, he ordered his servants to kill young Cyrus.

Not wanting to kill a helpless baby, one of the servants took Cyrus out of the city and gave him to an old shepherd to raise. Under the shepherd's care, Cyrus grew to be a clever and capable leader who wanted to free his people from rule by the Medes. When he reached adulthood, Cyrus led a rebellion, overthrew his grandfather, and made himself the new king. ■

## A DANGEROUS BABY?

According to legend, Cyrus the Great was given as a baby to a shepherd to raise.

*The Infant Cyrus with the Shepherd,*  
by Sebastiano Ricci, 1700s



**CYRUS AND DARIUS** **QUICK FACTS**

**Cyrus the Great**

- Founded the Persian Empire
- Conquered many lands
- Let people keep their customs

**Darius I**

- Created a standing army
- Divided empire into satrapies
- Built the Royal Road

**GEOGRAPHY SKILLS** **INTERPRETING MAPS**

- 1. Place** What geographic features marked the Persian Empire's northern boundary?
- 2. Regions** Which Persian ruler added the most territory to the empire?

**Growth and Organization**

Legends about the rise to power of Cyrus the Great have grown over time. Historians are not sure which of the legends' details are accurate. For example, they question whether Cyrus was really Astyages's grandson. What they do not question, however, is the greatness of his achievements. Cyrus conquered the Medes and established one of the largest empires of the ancient world, the Persian Empire.

**Persia under the Medes** The Persians and the Medes were both Indo-European tribes originally from Central Asia. Over time, both tribes settled on the plateaus of what is now Iran. There, the Medes created a new kingdom, Media, and set out to conquer their neighbors.

Among those conquered by the Medes were the Persians. The Medes allowed the conquered Persians to keep their own leaders as long as they did not rebel. In this way, the Persians remained subject to the Medes for centuries.

**Cyrus the Great** A new leader arose among the Persians in 559 BC, though, who would change everything. His name was Cyrus II, better known as **Cyrus the Great**. About 10 years after becoming the Persian king, Cyrus led a revolt against the Medes. He defeated the Median army and united the Persians and the Medes under his rule.

Once Cyrus had taken control of Media, he set out to expand his lands. He marched into Asia Minor and conquered the fabulously wealthy kingdom of Lydia. He also captured several Greek cities in Ionia, a region of Asia Minor along the Aegean Sea. From there, Cyrus moved south into Mesopotamia, where he defeated the Chaldeans and captured the city of Babylon.

When Cyrus conquered a region, he allowed people to keep their own customs rather than forcing them to adopt Persian ones. This tolerance for other people's customs won Cyrus the respect of those he conquered. The Jews, for example, admired Cyrus and considered him a hero. When he conquered Babylon, Cyrus freed the Jews from slavery and allowed them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple.

**READING SKILLS**

**Questioning**

As you read, ask yourself what Cyrus is doing and why.

## The Persian Army

A strong army was the key to building a powerful empire. Led by Cyrus and Darius, the Persian army was one of the mightiest fighting forces in the ancient world. **What made the Persian army so strong?**



▼ **Cavalry and chariots were used to support the Immortals.**

Pulled by four horses, Persian chariots could move swiftly but could not easily turn.

◀ **A troop of highly trained soldiers called the Immortals was the heart of the army.**

Cyrus died in 530 BC while fighting in Central Asia. At the time of his death, he ruled the largest empire in the world. According to a Greek historian, the Persians summed up Cyrus's achievements with this inscription carved on his tomb:

### HISTORY'S VOICES

“O man, I am Cyrus, son of Cambyses, who founded the empire of the Persians and was king of Asia. Do not therefore grudge me this monument.”

—Arrian, *Anabasis*, Book VI

After Cyrus died, his son Cambyses II became emperor. Building on a plan first designed by his father, Cambyses invaded Egypt and added it to the Persian Empire.

Unlike Cyrus, who was admired for his tolerance, Cambyses was described as a tyrant and a madman. While in Egypt, he received word of a rebellion in Persia. On his way back home to crush the rebellion, Cambyses died and Persia was left without a ruler.

**Darius I** Out of the confusion surrounding the rebellion and the death of Cambyses rose a new leader for Persia. His name was **Darius I**.

For the first year of his reign, Darius had to fight to restore order in Persia. Many Persians did not like him and fought to keep him off the throne. Once he had extinguished the last flames of rebellion, Darius began a program to reorganize and strengthen his empire.

The first step Darius took to strengthen the empire was reforming the army. Under Cyrus, the Persians had had no permanent army. The emperor called people to fight for him when he went into battle, and they returned home when the fighting was done. Darius changed that system by creating a permanent army made up of paid soldiers. He also instituted a new training system for the army.

At the heart of Darius's army was a group of highly trained soldiers called the Ten Thousand Immortals. Hand picked for their skills and dedication, these soldiers often acted as a bodyguard for the emperor. In battle, they were supported by cavalry soldiers mounted on horses or camels and by chariots. The Persian chariots sometimes carried archers, who pelted their foes with arrows from a distance. With this army, Darius won new lands in the east and tried—but failed—to conquer Greece.

Darius also made changes to the Persian government. For example, he surrounded the kingship with ceremony and ritual. As king, Darius was all powerful, and he wanted to demonstrate that power to everyone. Calling himself the Great King and the King of Kings, Darius surrounded himself with symbols of power. He wore embroidered robes and jewelry decorated with gold and gems. Anyone who came into his presence had to bow low to the ground, never looking directly at the king.

Powerful as Darius was, he could not personally control everything that happened in the empire. Persia was simply too large. To help him rule, Darius chose governors called **satraps** (say-traps). Each satrap governed a region, or satrapy, in the emperor's name.

Although satraps had considerable local authority, they had to obey the wishes of the king. To ensure that the satraps remained loyal, Darius sent officials called the king's eyes and king's ears on inspection tours. Satraps who received unfavorable reports from these inspectors were punished or replaced.

Darius's reforms also strengthened the Persian economy. Under his rule, the first coins ever minted in Persia were issued. He also encouraged trade by building roads throughout the Persian Empire. As a result of this increased trade, the empire grew richer.

**Persia in Decline** Most historians consider Darius's reign the high point of Persian culture. The emperors who followed never achieved the level of power and prestige he enjoyed.

Emperor **Xerxes** (zuhrk-seez), the son of Darius I, tried to expand upon his father's success. Like Darius, he invaded Greece, hoping to succeed where his father had failed. His attempt failed, however, and Xerxes returned to Persia in defeat.

Xerxes was the last strong ruler of ancient Persia. Later emperors were mostly weak and could not maintain order. Rebellions were common, and trade slowed. Greatly weakened, the Persian Empire nonetheless survived for about 150 years after the death of Darius I. In the 330s BC, however, a Greek king named Alexander the Great conquered Persia in the course of building an empire of his own.

**READING CHECK Analyze** How did Persia grow and change under Cyrus and Darius?

## FACES OF HISTORY

### ZOROASTER

c. 628–c. 551 BC



Although Zoroaster founded a religion that attracted millions of followers, historians do not know much for certain about his life.

They are not even sure when Zoroaster, also known as Zarathushtra, lived. Ancient writings suggest that he was born in a rural community in what is now Iran and that he grew up to become a priest. The same sources say that he began to roam the world in search of wisdom in his early 20s. At age 30, Zoroaster received a vision from the god Ahura Mazda. In this vision, the god revealed teachings that Zoroaster was to share with other people. Zoroaster later recorded those teachings in writings that became the heart of the *Avesta*.

Spreading his new religion brought Zoroaster into conflict with many people. He faced opposition both from townspeople, who followed an older polytheistic religion, and from nomads, whose way of life Zoroaster distrusted. Despite the opposition from these groups, his teachings spread throughout the Persian Empire.

**Draw Conclusions** Why might historians know relatively little about the life of Zoroaster?

## Zoroastrianism

During the reigns of Cyrus and Darius, a new religion took hold in parts of Persia. It was called Zoroastrianism and was based on the teachings of a man named **Zoroaster**.

**Teachings** Zoroaster taught that the world had been created by a god named Ahura Mazda. To Zoroaster, the god was the source of everything good, true, and pure in the world. He was, therefore, the only god that people should worship.

Opposing Ahura Mazda, however, was an evil spirit named Ahriman. The forces of Ahura Mazda were locked in an eternal struggle against the forces of Ahriman. Zoroastrianism was one of the first religions to teach **dualism**, the belief that the world is controlled by two opposing forces, good and evil.

Zoroaster believed that people had free will and could act as they chose. He encouraged people to join the forces of Ahura Mazda and to fight evil by telling the truth and avoiding bad deeds. Zoroaster's teachings on how people should best serve the god were eventually compiled and recorded in the *Avesta*, the sacred text of Zoroastrianism.



The *Avesta* says that people who live good lives in the service of Ahura Mazda will be rewarded after death. They will enter a heaven filled with pleasures. Those who are wicked will be punished for their sins. However, the *Avesta* continues, at the end of time Ahura Mazda will defeat Ahriman and drive all evil from the world. When that happens, the wicked will be purified, and all souls will be restored to life to live happily together.

**Spread** By the time Darius I took the throne, Zoroastrianism had spread through much of the Persian Empire. The emperor himself worshipped Ahura Mazda, as did many of the emperors who followed him. Some emperors discouraged the practice of other religions.

When the Persian Empire fell to the Greeks, Zoroastrianism almost disappeared. The Greeks built temples to their gods and convinced many Persians to convert. The teachings of Zoroaster never completely disappeared, though, and gradually they began to spread again, both in Persia and to other parts of the world.

**READING CHECK Find the Main Idea** What does Zoroastrianism teach about good and evil?

## Persian Achievements

The Persian Empire was huge, stretching across most of Asia. Dozens of peoples with their own customs and traditions lived within that vast area. When they became part of the empire, their diverse customs gradually blended into a single Persian culture. Leaders like Cyrus and Darius encouraged this blending, because they knew the importance of cultural unity.

One advantage of this shared culture was peace. For most of its early history, the Persian Empire was relatively peaceful. There were no major conflicts between peoples. Instead, they worked together to improve their empire. Together, the peoples of Persia made some amazing cultural achievements.

**Communication** Good communication was essential to ruling the Persian Empire. Rulers in the capital needed to know what was happening elsewhere in the empire in order to make decisions.

The heart of the Persian communication network was its high quality roads, which linked every part of the empire. The longest of these roads was the Royal Road, the world's first long highway. It stretched more than 1,500

### THE IMPACT TODAY

More than 2.6 million people practice Zoroastrianism today, mostly in Asia.

## Linking to Today

### Roads and Armies

When Darius the Great ordered the building of the Persian Royal Road, he was not simply creating an easy path for travelers to follow. He was thinking about the defense of the empire.

The Royal Road was a key factor in preventing and defeating attacks. Messengers on horseback could cross the empire swiftly to warn the emperor of imminent attacks. The road also allowed the Persian army to move quickly to any trouble spots in the empire.

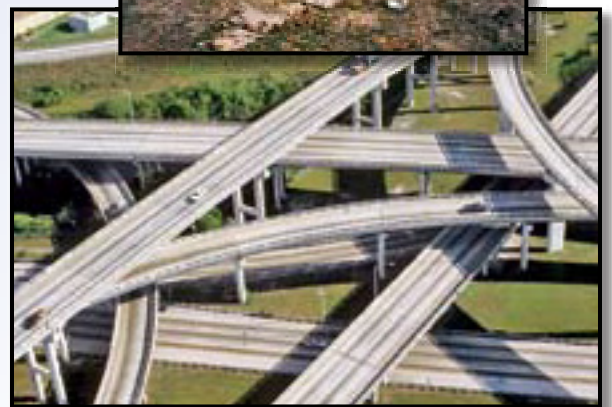
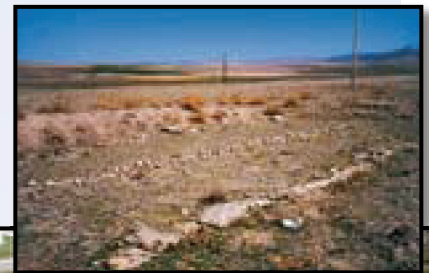
Like Darius, U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower knew the importance of roads in national defense. In 1956 he convinced Congress to pass the Federal-Aid Highway Act, which created the interstate highway system. Like the ancient Persian Royal Road, interstate

highways were planned as a crucial part of our national defense.

With more than 46,000 miles of roads in all 50 states, the interstate highway system allows the armed services to move troops quickly into any part of the country. If necessary, large numbers of forces could be moved completely across the country in only a few days.

In addition, the interstate highway system can be used to protect people in case of attack or natural disaster. Interstate highways provide routes for people to evacuate major cities.

**Summarize** What military advantages do roads provide to a country?



▲ **Top: The foundation of the Persian Royal Road**  
**Bottom: A modern highway interchange**

miles and linked the major cities of Susa and Sardis. Smaller roads branched off the Royal Road to connect other key cities.

Following these roads, messengers on horseback could travel across the entire Persian Empire in a matter of days. To deliver urgent messages, the messengers worked in shifts. Like runners in a relay race, each one would travel only a short distance before passing the message to a partner with a fresh horse. After seeing this system in action, one Greek historian recorded his amazement:

**HISTORY'S VOICES**

“Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers . . . these men will not be hindered from accomplishing at their best speed the distance which they have to go, either by snow, or rain, or heat, or by the darkness of night.”

—Herodotus, *History of the Persian Wars*, Book VIII

**Art and Architecture** The Persians were also widely admired for their art. Many of the objects their artists created were used in the royal court. For example, they crafted delicate drinking vessels out of gold set with precious gems. Many of these golden objects are shaped like animals, such as lions and bulls. Animals were a common subject in Persian art.

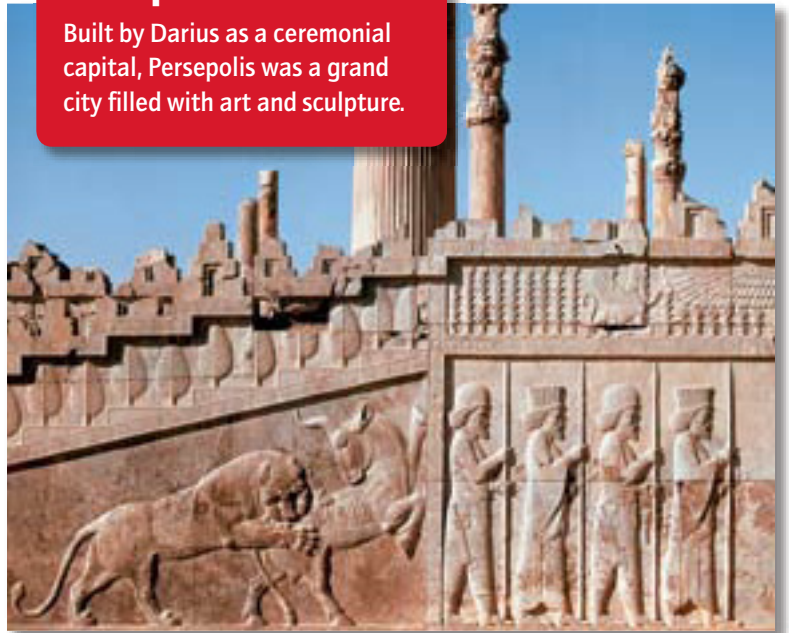
Animals were also common decorations in Persian architecture. The walls of the great palace in the capital city of Susa, for example, sported lions, bulls, and giraffes made of painted brick. Lions and bulls also appeared on the gates and columns of Persepolis, another of the empire’s capitals.

Many archaeologists consider Persepolis the greatest example of Persian architecture. Designed as a ceremonial city by Darius I, the entire city of Persepolis was a monument to Persia’s glory. At the center of the city was a high-ceilinged audience hall unlike anything else in the Ancient Near East. Larger than any other structure in the city, the hall was highly decorated. The columns that supported the ceiling were brightly painted and topped with stone figures. Carved soldiers and royal officials lined the walls, all bearing gifts for the mighty emperor in whose hall they stood.

**READING CHECK Analyze** How did Persian roads make communication faster and easier?

**Persepolis**

Built by Darius as a ceremonial capital, Persepolis was a grand city filled with art and sculpture.



**SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT**

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**Online Quiz**  
Keyword: SHL ANE HP

**Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People**

1. **a. Identify** For what is **Cyrus the Great** best known?  
**b. Identify Cause and Effect** Why did **Darius I** appoint **satraps** to help rule his empire?  
**c. Elaborate** Why do you think the Persian Empire never again regained the heights it had reached under Darius I?
2. **a. Define** What is **dualism**? How is Zoroastrianism an example of a dualistic religion?  
**b. Explain** How did **Zoroaster** say people should act? Why did he think they should act this way?
3. **a. Describe** What were two features that made Persepolis an impressive city?  
**b. Analyze** Why did Darius I have the Royal Road built?  
**c. Elaborate** What might the Greek historian’s amazement about the Persian messenger system tell you about communication in Greece?

**Critical Thinking**

4. **Summarize** Draw a chart like the one below. In each column, list the political or religious achievements of each person named.

Cyrus	Darius	Zoroaster

**FOCUS ON WRITING**

5. **Exposition** Write a paragraph explaining the governmental changes Darius I made in the Persian Empire. Be sure to include details of what he changed about the government and why he felt those changes were necessary.

## Building Empires

**Historical Context** The Fertile Crescent was the home of the world's first empires. Over centuries, dozens of peoples invaded and built empires of their own.

**Task** Study the selections and answer the questions that follow. After you have studied all the documents, you will be asked to write an essay explaining how rulers in the Fertile Crescent built and kept order in their empires. You will need to use evidence from these selections and from Chapter 2 to support your position.

### DOCUMENT 1

#### Sargon's Empire

Archaeologists have found fragments of ancient documents that detail the life of Sargon, the Akkadian emperor. Though none of the fragments are complete, what we have found describes the building of Sargon's empire from the emperor's own point of view.

Sargon, the mighty king, king of Akkad am I,  
 My mother was lowly; my father I did not know;  
 The brother of my father dwelt in the mountain.  
 My city is Azupiranu, which is situated on the bank of the  
 Purattu [Euphrates] . . .  
 And for . . . years I ruled the kingdom.  
 The black-headed peoples [Sumerians] I ruled, I governed;  
 Mighty mountains with axes of bronze I destroyed.  
 I ascended the upper mountains;  
 I burst through the lower mountains.  
 The country of the sea I besieged three times;  
 Dilmun I captured.  
 Unto the great Dur-ilu I went up . . .  
 Whatsoever king shall be exalted after me . . .  
 Let him rule, let him govern the black-headed peoples;  
 Mighty mountains with axes of bronze let him destroy;  
 Let him ascend the upper mountains,  
 Let him break through the lower mountains;  
 The country of the sea let him besiege three times;  
 Dilmun let him capture;  
 To the great Dur-ilu let him go up.

### DOCUMENT 2

#### An Assyrian Conquest

This stone relief carving from Mesopotamia shows Assyrian soldiers attacking an enemy city. The Assyrians are using tall ladders to try to reach the top of the city walls, where defenders await with swords and bows.



## DOCUMENT 3

### Hammurabi's Authority

Known as a lawmaker, Hammurabi was one of the most powerful emperors of the ancient world. In this passage, taken from the same inscription as his laws, he explains that he was chosen to rule by the gods Anu, Bel, and Ea.

When Anu the Sublime, King of the Anunaki, and Bel, the lord of Heaven and earth, who decreed the fate of the land, assigned to Marduk, the over-ruling son of Ea, God of righteousness, dominion over earthly man, and made him great among the Igigi, they called Babylon by his illustrious name, made it great on earth, and founded an everlasting kingdom in it, whose foundations are laid so solidly as those of heaven and earth; then Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the black-headed people like Shamash, and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind.

## DOCUMENT 4

### A Modern Historian's View

The question of how and why ancient rulers gained their power is of great interest to modern historians. In this excerpt from *The Ancient Near East*, historian William Dunstan explains the power of the empire-building rulers of Assyria.

Assyria was essentially a military state depending on the ruthless efficiency of the army for exercising dominance. The overwhelming power of imperial Assyria was embodied in the king, regarded as the earthly representative and instrument of the supreme deity Assur. Almost all of the Assyrian kings were forceful figures who spent the campaign season in the field and much of the rest of the year hunting. The king was also a priest and as such was burdened by numerous time-consuming and complicated magico-religious duties. He presided over the chief religious celebrations of Assyria and Babylonia, most notably the New Year Festival, and took part in numerous rituals. The king consulted oracles on all matters of importance.

### Skills FOCUS

## READING LIKE A HISTORIAN

### DOCUMENT 1

- a. **Describe** How does Sargon say he created his empire?
- b. **Draw Conclusions** Who does Sargon suggest is worthy to take over his empire? What does this suggest about his opinion of kingship?

### DOCUMENT 2

- a. **Identify** Based on this carving, how did the Assyrians form their empire?
- b. **Compare** Do you think the Assyrians would agree with Sargon's view of empire building? Why or why not?

### DOCUMENT 3

- a. **Explain** Why does Hammurabi say the gods gave him power?
- b. **Elaborate** How do you think Hammurabi would have justified ruling a vast empire? Explain your answer.

### DOCUMENT 4

- a. **Recall** What does Dunstan say were the main duties of the Assyrian kings?
- b. **Compare** Having read Document 4, look back at Document 2 again. Based on Dunstan's writing, what do you think led the Assyrians to conquer cities?

### DOCUMENT-BASED ESSAY QUESTION

Over the centuries, dozens of empires ruled the Near East. Why did people think they had the right to rule over others? Using the documents above and information from the chapter, form a thesis that might explain why rulers felt this way. Then write a short essay to support your position.

See **Skills Handbook**, pp. H25–H26, H30

## VISUAL STUDY GUIDE

### Civilization Develops in the Fertile Crescent

Flat land and river floods allow farming.

Complex society with government and religion develops in Sumer.

Military empires conquer and rule parts of the Fertile Crescent.

Societies develop new laws, patterns of trade, and religions.

### Main Teachings of Judaism

- Monotheism—the belief in only one God
- Justice and Righteousness—treating others well and always doing what is right
- Ethics—living according to a set standard of behavior
- Obedience—following God's laws as set forth in the Torah

### Peoples of the Fertile Crescent

#### Sumerians

- Created world's first civilization
- Invented cuneiform and the wheel

#### Akkadians

- Built the world's first empire

#### Babylonians

- Built the city of Babylon
- Issued Hammurabi's Code

#### Hittites

- Made iron ornaments

#### Assyrians

- Formed a military society

#### Chaldeans

- Rebuilt Babylon

#### Phoenicians

- Traded across the Mediterranean
- Developed an alphabet

#### Hebrews

- Practiced Judaism
- Established the Kingdom of Israel

#### Persians

- Formed a huge empire
- Built roads

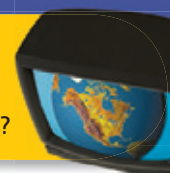
### Review Key Terms and People

Complete each sentence by filling in the blank with the correct term or person.

1. By conquering and ruling many peoples, Sargon created the world's first \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Hebrews practiced a religion called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A ruler named \_\_\_\_\_ founded the Persian Empire.
4. The Sumerians developed a wedge-shaped system of writing called \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The greatest Chaldean ruler was \_\_\_\_\_, who built the famous Hanging Gardens.
6. According to the Hebrew Bible, \_\_\_\_\_ led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt.
7. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a political unit that includes a city and all the land around it.

## History's Impact video program

Review the video to answer the closing question:  
What impact has Judaism had on other cultures and religions?



## Comprehension and Critical Thinking

### SECTION 1 (pp. 33–37)

- 8. a. Identify** What led to the creation of government in Sumer?
- b. Analyze** Why was religion so influential in Sumerian city-states?
- c. Evaluate** Do you think Hammurabi should be remembered for his military achievements or his cultural achievements? Why?

### SECTION 2 (pp. 39–44)

- 9. a. Recall** For what are the Phoenicians best known?
- b. Explain** Why were the Hittites able to defeat the Babylonians?
- c. Make Judgments** Did the Assyrians' cruelty help them or hinder them in ruling their empire? Explain your answer.

### SECTION 3 (pp. 45–49)

- 10. a. Identify** What are the main teachings of Judaism?
- b. Sequence** How did the Hebrew people come to live in Canaan?
- c. Develop** Why is the Exodus so significant in Hebrew history?

### SECTION 4 (pp. 50–55)

- 11. a. Identify** Who was Zoroaster?
- b. Make Generalizations** How did Cyrus the Great treat people he conquered? Why?
- c. Evaluate** Why is the reign of Darius I considered the high point of Persian culture?

## Reading Skills

**Questioning** Reread the *Inside Story* feature that begins Section 2 of this chapter. As you read, ask yourself who the story is about, what they are doing, and why. After you have read the passage and questioned yourself, answer the questions below in your notebook.

- 12.** Who is the *Inside Story* feature about?
- 13.** What are they doing?
- 14.** Why are they doing that? What do they hope to gain or accomplish?

## Analyzing Primary Sources

**Reading Like a Historian** The bronze image below shows Assyrians attacking a city.



Detail from bronze gate at palace of King Sargon II, 800s BC

- 15. Identify** What kinds of weapons are the Assyrians using?
- 16. Draw Conclusions** What does this scene suggest about Assyrian culture?

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Practice Online

Keyword: SHLANE

## Using the Internet

- 17.** The ancient Near East was shaped by the actions of powerful leaders. Rulers like Sargon, Hammurabi, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus the Great shaped history through their actions and ideas. Enter the activity keyword and choose one ancient ruler to learn more about. Then write a short newspaper article that describes your chosen subject's life and achievements.

## WRITING FOR THE SAT



Think about the following issue.

**For centuries, people fought for control of the Fertile Crescent. From the earliest times of the Akkadians and the Babylonians through the Persians and the Greeks, rulers have fought and died to control this territory.**

- 18. Assignment:** Why were people so eager to live in and rule the Fertile Crescent? What made this area so appealing? Write a short essay in which you develop your opinion on this issue. Support your point of view with reasoning and examples from your reading and studies.