



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Everything Visual

Maps can show a lot of information in a small space. Different maps show different kinds of information. Some maps show roads. Some show countries. Some show mountains and lakes. Study the map on pages 4–5. Answer the questions.

1. What cities were near the Euphrates River? What cities were near the Tigris River?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why are most of the cities near one or the other of these rivers?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How can you tell that the land around the rivers is more fertile than the land away from the rivers?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What body of water do the Tigris and Euphrates rivers empty into?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Which of the three major civilizations was closest to the Gulf of Persia? Which was farthest away?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Which civilization built the city of Nineveh?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How can the map help you understand why the civilizations of Mesopotamia were invaded and conquered so often?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. What would be a good title for this map? Why?

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\_\_\_\_\_

# Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and More

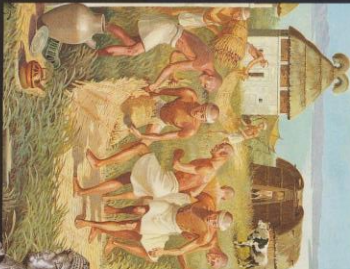
The history of Mesopotamia is measured in millennia rather than centuries. The first cities developed in the south around 3500 B.C. For the next three thousand years, kingdoms rose and fell, empires expanded and contracted, outsiders conquered and were repelled. During that time, three dominant civilizations held center stage at various times: the Sumerians, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians. In brief, here is their story.

## MAGNIFICENT MESOPOTAMIANS

Hammurabi took the throne of Babylon in 1792 B.C. A skilled statesman and warrior, he consolidated rival kingdoms and made Babylon the center of power. Hammurabi advised that the king should rule with a "rod of iron" to make justice appear in the land. So that "the strong may not oppress the weak." As a result, he tried by a code of law that demanded "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (a principle that appears in the biblical book of Exodus).



## SUMER 3500—2006 B.C.



Sumerians use mats to dry the marshes.

The first civilization developed in Sumer, the marshy area at the southern end of the fertile plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Over time, the Sumerians converted their open villages into walled cities. As cities expanded their control, they became city-states ruled by strong leaders. One such leader, Sargon the Great, from Akkad, conquered all of Mesopotamia, ruling from 2371 to 2316 B.C. Akkadian replaced Sumerian as the spoken language. Sumerians developed a system of writing, enabling people to keep records and transmit knowledge. They also developed metal working and were early users of the wheel. Sumer, however, became weakened by constant warfare. It was overrun by invaders in 2006 B.C., and the region splintered into small kingdoms.



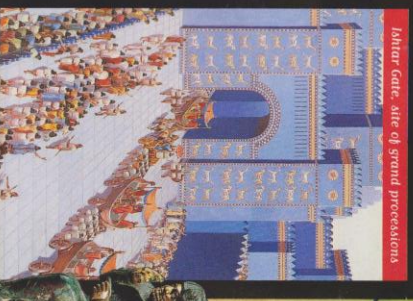
This is a statue of King Gudea, who ruled in copper and metal "crafts."

## BABYLONIA 1792—539 B.C.

The city of Babylon inherited the culture of Sumer and, under Hammurabi (1792–1750 B.C.), became the seat of a strong central government and a great cultural and religious center. However, during the following centuries, Babylon was often invaded—by the Kassites and the Assyrians, for example. In 612 B.C., Babylon was dominated by Chaldeans. They, along with the Medes, crushed the Assyrian empire. Chaldean Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 B.C.) rebuilt Babylon into the greatest city in the world. Babylonians created the 60-minute hour, a calendar with 12 lunar months, and advanced multiplication tables. Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., ending its glory days forever.

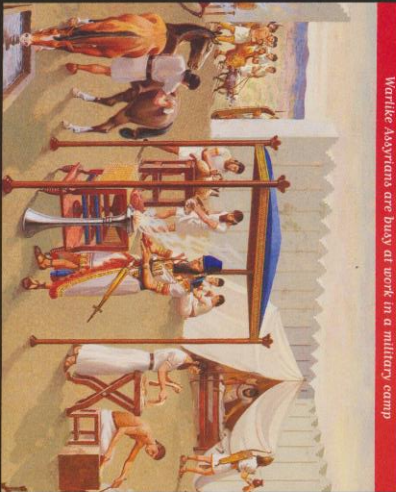


A lion adorns a wall at the entrance to Babylon.



Ishtar Gate, site of grand processions.

## ASSYRIA 1115—612 B.C.

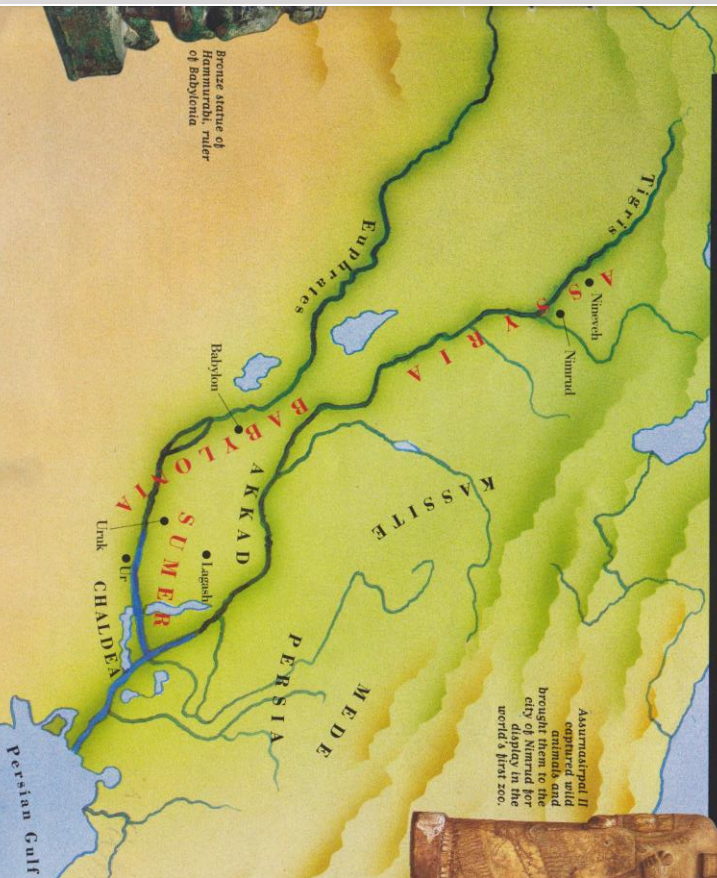


Warlike Assyrians are busy at work in a military camp.

In hilly northern Mesopotamia, the small city-state of Assyria slowly grew to become a powerful kingdom. Using chariots, battle-ready chariots, and armored horses, the bloodthirsty Assyrians conquered Babylon in 689 B.C., as well as other independent states, uprooting the people they conquered and forcing them into slave labor. The cities of Nineveh and Nimrud were built by these prisoners. The cities featured ornate palaces and temples, magnificent sculptures, mighty walls with gateways flanked by winged bulls or lions, and a sewage system. Kings Tiglath-pileser III, Sennacherib, and Ashurbanipal II extended the empire and opened trade links. However, in 612 B.C., Chaldean people from southern Babylon, who had gained control of Babylon, joined the Medes people from Iran and sacked the capital Nineveh. The Assyrian empire never recovered.



Ashurbanipal II captured and brought them to the city of Nimrud for display in the world's first zoo.



Bronze statue of Hammurabi, ruler of Babylonia.

