

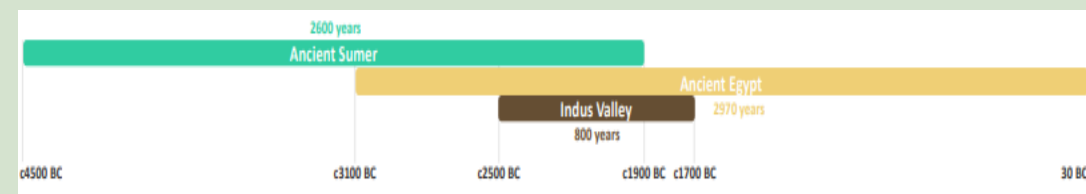
Year 4 – Spring Term History – Who were the Ancient Sumerians?

Vocabulary and Glossary

Civilisation	The developed culture and way of life of a society
Fertile Crescent	The semi-circular are of land where the first ancient civilisations began.
Nomadic	A lifestyle involving moving from place to place
Ziggurat	A large pyramid made from mud bricks, with a temple on top.
Irrigation	The digging of channels to allow water to flow through a field to water crops
Hierarchy	A system where people of things are arranged in order of importance
BC	Used to show that a date is before the year 0. This is counted backwards, so 200 BC is before 100 BC. Dates after the year 0 are marked AD.
Mesopotamia	The land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, now mostly in modern day Iraq. The name is Greek for 'between rivers.'
Archaeology	The study of human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains
Archaeologist	A person who studies human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains.
Artefact	In archaeology, artefacts are objects found which are evidence of past human life and activities.

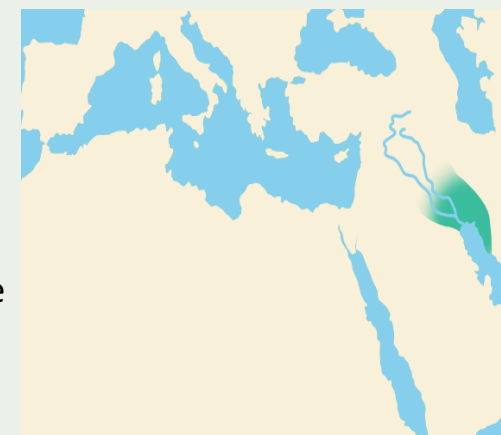
What were the Great Ancient Civilisations?

A civilisation is a developed society. Civilisations share common features, including cities, inventions, language, writing, hierarchy, leadership, infrastructure, arts and culture, trade and religion. Ancient civilisations first appeared over 6000 years ago in, or near, a semicircular area of land in the Middle East known as the Fertile Crescent. The climate, availability of water and variety of plants in the Fertile Crescent meant that nomadic hunter-gatherers could settle in one place and begin to farm for the first time



When and where did the Ancient Sumerian civilisation begin?

Ancient Sumer was the very first civilisation. It originated between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in modern Iraq. This area was known as Mesopotamia. Being near a river was important for early civilisations, providing water for drinking and fertile soil for agriculture. The Ancient Sumerian civilization began c4500 BC and lasted for around 2600 years.



Who were the Ancient Sumerians?

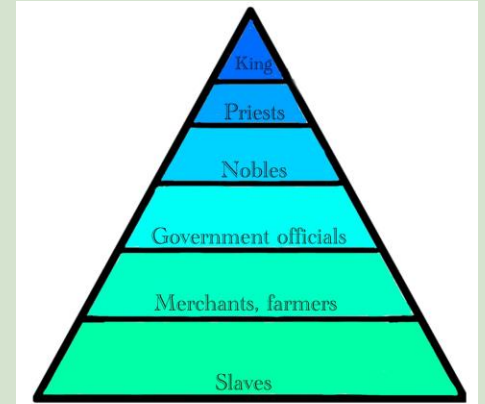
Where did the Ancient Sumerians live and why?

After nomadic people settled down as farmers instead of hunter-gatherers, small villages grew into cities. Public buildings and temples were built, surrounded by a protective wall. Cities, such as Uruk and Ur, had ports on the river for trade and canals for irrigation. The ancient Sumerians used mud bricks to build homes and huge ziggurats. The Sumerians grew their food in the fertile soil next to the rivers. Plenty of food meant that the population grew and there were crops to trade.



What was the hierarchy of Ancient Sumer?

A series of city states grew up in Ancient Sumer, often on isolated areas of fertile land, separated by desert. A king or queen ruled each city and lived in a palace. Each city became its own self governed unit centred around a temple to the gods. People were roughly divided into the free classes and the enslaved, who were forced to serve them. The city states were often at war with each other. King Lugalzaggisi united the city states of Ancient Sumer under one rule but then King Sargon, of the neighbouring kingdom of Akkad, conquered Ancient Sumer.



How do we know about Ancient Sumer?



Archaeologists have found artefacts that tell us about Ancient Sumer life, rulers and beliefs. The Epic of Gilgamesh is a collection of stories written about a superhuman king called Gilgamesh. They were written thousands of years ago on clay tablets. The Sumerian King List is a group of clay prisms with names of Sumerian cities and rulers on them. In the 1920s, Sir Leonard Woolley excavated at the site of Ur. He found artefacts in graves from around 2600BC. One of these was the Royal Standard of Ur buried in a royal grave. It shows the King of Ur as a warrior on one side and him enjoying a banquet on the other.

How has Ancient Sumer contributed to life today?

The Ancient Sumerians invented many things to make work easier and life more comfortable. They developed a form of writing, called cuneiform, and a numbering system to communicate and keep records. They also invented the wheel, the plough, astronomy, irrigation and beer.

