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Date _____

Period _____

Ancient Civilizations for Children: Ancient Mesopotamia

Historical Background

Mesopotamia, which in Greek means “between two rivers”, is known as the birthplace of civilization. Located on the fertile plain between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in what is today Iraq and southern Syria, Mesopotamia is where farming gave rise to the world’s first cities around 3500 BCE. The first archaeological expeditions to Mesopotamia were made in the 19th century, as historians searched for evidence of biblical stories. After excavations at famous biblical sites such as Babylon and Ur, archaeologists discovered the earlier civilization of Sumer. The first farmers and city dwellers, Sumerians were the inventors of writing, mathematics, and the wheel. As Sumer declined, the Assyrians from the north built a powerful empire around 1000 BCE which included Mesopotamia. The Babylonians were the third great civilization to control the lands of Mesopotamia, ruling until they were conquered by the Persians in 539 BCE.

Timeline

3500 BCE – 2000 BCE	Sumerian Civilization
2000 BCE – 605 BCE	Assyrian Civilization
2000 BCE – 539 BCE	Babylonian Civilization

Vocabulary

- 1.) Archaeology
- 2.) Mesopotamia
- 3.) Tigris & Euphrates Rivers
- 4.) Sumerians
- 5.) Babylonians
- 6.) City-State
- 7.) Lyre
- 8.) Lapis Lazuli
- 9.) Fertile
- 10.) Irrigation
- 11.) Ziggurat
- 12.) Lugal – Gal
- 13.) Cuneiform
- 14.) Stylus
- 15.) Scribe