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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Civilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3500 BCE – 2000 BCE</td>
<td>Sumerian Civilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 BCE – 605 BCE</td>
<td>Assyrian Civilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 BCE – 539 BCE</td>
<td>Babylonian Civilization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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