


World  
History  
\*  
MAP ACTIVITIES



Marvin Scott

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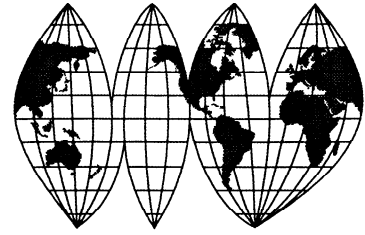
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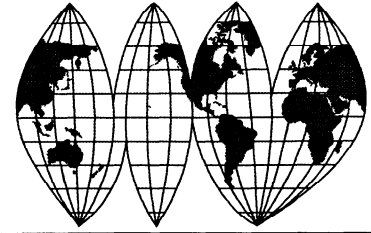


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# I. Ancient Near East



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## TEACHER BACKGROUND

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The river valleys seem to be the keys to understanding the ancient Near East. The two earliest civilizations started in the river valleys. Mesopotamia was the name of a valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The word Mesopotamia is Greek for “land between two rivers.” The Nile River valley was also an early center of civilization. Why? The theory based on archaeology runs as follows. The highlands around the valleys produced wild wheat and barley. The women, who were the seed gatherers in the group, began to intentionally plant these grains (and so became the first farmers). Over time, some people moved to the hillsides bordering the valley and found that sometimes their crops needed extra water. They dug simple irrigation ditches for such emergencies. At some point they moved down into the valley and made two discoveries. The soil of the valley was very rich and produced much better yields. But the problem of irrigation was much more complex. Out of the need for a more effective organization to manage irrigation came an interlocking set of developments we call civilization: writing, cities, government.

These early civilizations used copper and bronze tools and weapons. Copper ore occurs in natural outcroppings in the hills of the Near East. Copper ore is a green stone that can be quite pretty. Malachite, a green gem that is also a rich copper ore, was apparently traded among the New Stone Age farmers. Somehow copper ore was heated and turned into copper metal. It may have been a campfire or an early pottery kiln that produced this first metal. Tin to make bronze was not locally available but could be obtained by trade.

The Tigris and Euphrates river valley presented special challenges. It is very flat, with a swamp at the river mouths. The land is rich, however. The valley is formed by the deposit of soil carried by the river. Such alluvial soils are excellent cropland. When the first civilized peoples, the Sumerians, moved in about 5000 years ago (3000 B C ), the rivers had not filled in the delta to the degree that it is today. But the rivers were also a challenge. Some years they would not bring enough water, and drought would result. Other years they would bring too much water and flood the valley. In their *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Sumerians described a great flood. In each Sumerian city-state, the government controlled the crops. The city of Ur was an early Sumerian city-state.

The Sumerians built their temples on the tops of ziggurats, large structures made of clay. They could not build with stone because the valley lacked it. They may have felt the need to build their temples on high places because they came from the hills and were used to worshipping their gods on hilltops. On clay tablets they wrote the elaborate records needed for managing irrigation, flood control, and trade. When baked, the clay tablets became permanent records. The cuneiform writing of the Sumerians became the basis for the later writing in Mesopotamia. It even seems to have influenced Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Sumer was located at the downstream end of Mesopotamia. Upstream and later in time was Babylonia with its capital city, Babylon. The Babylonians spoke a Semitic language. Hammurabi was the most famous ruler of Babylon, but certainly the city had been the capital of empires

for centuries. He issued his famous law code written in cuneiform, but in the Akkadian language. The Akkadians had been the first of several waves of conquerors to sweep into Mesopotamia after the Sumerians. There was little in the way of natural barriers to stop such invaders. They kept coming after the Babylonians, too. Among these later invaders were the Assyrians, who built their capital at Nineveh, farther upstream from Babylon.

Moving west from Nineveh along the coast of the Mediterranean was a series of city-states built by the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians were a trading people who liked to locate their cities on peninsulas. Their homeland featured mountains that produced trees. These were famous in the Near East as the cedars of Lebanon. These cedars were used to build the boats in which the Phoenicians sailed the Mediterranean and beyond. The sea also provided the Phoenicians with their most expensive product, a purple dye that they got from the murex, a shellfish.

Near the Phoenicians, along the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, a group of wandering herders named the Hebrews settled. Their early migrations started in Sumer and included a period of captivity in Egypt, but they considered the land of Palestine their promised land. The Hebrews were never a great power, but their kings did build a temple in their capital city of Jerusalem. This temple became the focus of their religion, Judaism. Judaism was the earth's first

ethical monotheism and was the predecessor of Christianity, Islam, and Modern Judaism.

To the west of Palestine was the Sinai Peninsula, a desert area that guards the entrance to Egypt. At first, Egypt was a bit isolated from the rest of the ancient Near East. It developed its own style. For example, its writing was hieroglyphics, not cuneiform. While hieroglyphic writing started later than cuneiform and is thought to be influenced by it, the two are quite different. Also, the Egyptians built their monuments of stone, and they have stood for thousands of years. Thus, Egyptian civilization with its great cities like Thebes and Memphis was never entirely lost. In contrast, the Sumerians, with their clay monuments, were nearly forgotten. The ziggurats weathered into mounds that archaeologists used as clues about locations. When the archaeologists dug, they found the baked clay tablets that recorded what we now know of this early civilization.

**Key:**

*Note:* Throughout, more difficult tasks are marked on the worksheets with asterisks.

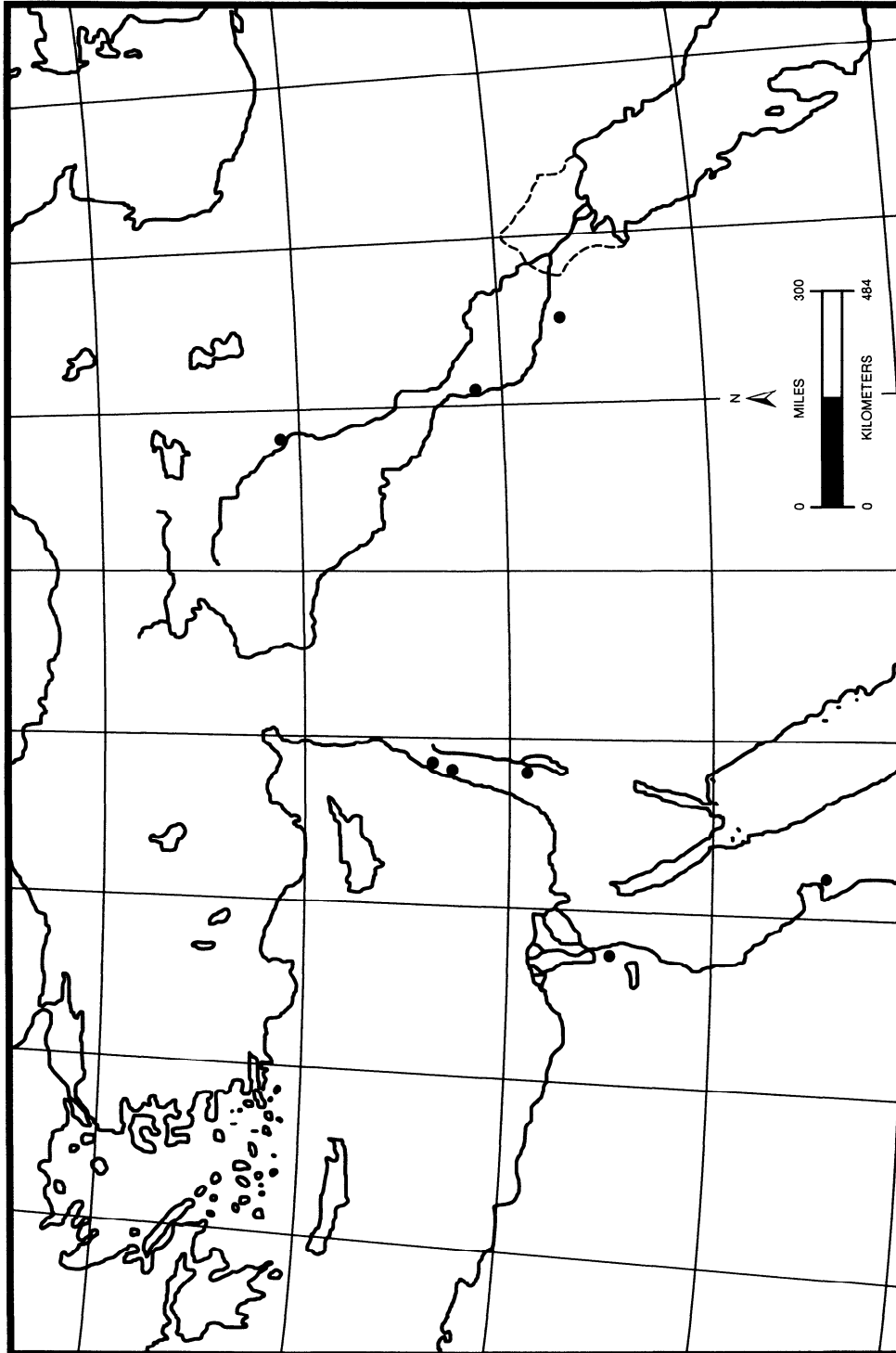
8. Babylon
9. Sidon, Tyre
10. Nineveh

*Weight:* 10 points

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Ancient Near East



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Ancient Near East

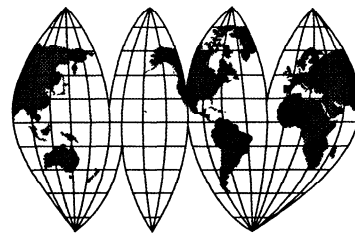
*Read all directions before starting work. Print all labels neatly.*

1. The latitude and longitude lines are drawn at 4° intervals. Label these on the west and north sides of the map.
2. With blue pencils, color the bodies of water light blue, and label the following in darker blue:  
Aegean Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Dead Sea, Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea, Black Sea
3. With a blue pencil, trace the following rivers, and label them in blue:  
Nile, Jordan, Tigris, Euphrates
4. Trace the ancient shoreline of the Persian Gulf (shown by a dotted line) with a blue pencil and label it in blue.
5. Label the following areas:  
Greece, Crete, Egypt, Sinai Peninsula, Palestine, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Phoenicia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Sumer, Arabia, Persia
6. With green pencils, shade the Fertile Crescent, and label it in darker green.
7. Label and underline the following points:  
Babylon, Nineveh, Jerusalem, Memphis, Thebes, Sidon, Tyre, Ur
8. \*Which city was Hammurabi's capital? \_\_\_\_\_
9. \*Which cities on the map were Phoenician trading centers? \_\_\_\_\_
10. \*Which city on the map was the Assyrian capital? \_\_\_\_\_





## 2. Ancient Egypt



---

### TEACHER BACKGROUND

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Ancient Egypt was a narrow strip of land along the banks of the Nile. The Nile made settlement possible, and its features influenced life along its banks.

Neither the Nile Valley nor the deserts surrounding it got enough rain to sustain farming. The average annual rainfall at Thebes in modern times is too little to record. On the coast, there is some rain, about 7 inches (190 mm) a year; but in July, August, and September, there is none. This desert climate in and around Egypt formed a barrier against invaders.

Both the water and the land that the Egyptians lived on was brought by the Nile. The rain that provided most of the water for the Nile floods fell on Ethiopia—a band of daily rainfall along the equator that each summer shifts north into Ethiopia, filling the streams and washing soil into them. These streams emptied into the Blue Nile, which carried the muddy water to Egypt. The floods were very reliable. They typically started in mid-July and lasted through September. As the waters withdrew, they left a layer of rich silt on the fields. Thus the fields of the Nile Valley were much richer than the sands of the surrounding deserts.

The regularity of the floods and the resulting fertilization meant that Egypt was a rich farming land. A carefully organized program of flood control and irrigation made this possible. It also provided an incentive to have a strong government.

Some of the silt was carried to the mouth of the Nile, where it was deposited to form the rich triangle of alluvial soil called the delta. While the

Nile Valley was narrow, only 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) wide in places, widening to a bit over 20 miles (32.2 kilometers) in others, the delta was 150 miles wide. The Egyptians called it the Lower Kingdom. The valley upstream they called the Upper Kingdom. The delta coastline served as a barrier to invaders from the sea during the Bronze Age.

After each flood, the Egyptians had to survey the land and once again divide it into fields. They became quite good at measuring the land, developing ideas we now call “geometry,” the Greek word for earth measuring. These ideas were also used to lay out buildings, temples, and pyramids.

Upstream from the delta was the Faiyum, a wetland on the west side of the Nile. It was home to wildlife, gnats, and palm trees. It was also the main source of papyrus. Papyrus was a reed that grew to a height of 7 to 10 feet (2.1 to 3 meters). It had a variety of uses. Swamp dwellers cut off the bottom 18 inches (45.7 centimeters) or so, baked it, and ate it. Bundles of papyrus were often used to make sails, rope, and sandals. The most famous use of papyrus was as a writing material. The reed’s outer rind was cut off, and the inner pith was cut into long thin strips. The strips were placed in two layers, one crossing the other at right angles, on a smooth stone. They were mashed together, polished, and fastened to other sheets to form a strip that was rolled up into a scroll. Compared to modern paper, papyrus was uneven. The crisscrossing fibers were visible, but the documents written on this material have lasted thousands of years. This is largely because of the dry climate, which preserves all kinds of soft material.

The desert heat near the shore created the Etesian winds. The hot air on land rose and winds blew in from the Mediterranean. These winds made it possible for the Egyptians to move upstream on the Nile by raising a sail. The trip downstream was done by simply drifting with the current. The combination made the Nile a natural highway. The limit on this route was set by stretches of whitewater called cataracts that occurred where the valley narrowed because the bed rock was granite. The first cataract was at Aswan. The granite there was quarried to be used in the pyramids. The limestone used for the pyramids was quarried on the east side of the Nile and ferried across. The pyramids were located at Giza on a plateau above the highest floods, yet near enough to the river to make ferrying practical. The plateau also had a large, flat, solid rock surface strong enough to support pyramids. It was on the western edge of the Nile Valley, and the Egyptians thought of this “evening ridge” as the realm of the dead. It was here that the pharaohs of Old Kingdom Egypt were entombed in their pyramids.

The capital of Old Kingdom Egypt was Memphis. Ancient Memphis was a source of building material for the later city of Cairo, so archaeologists have not been able to discover as much about Memphis as about some other ancient cities. The contrast with Tel el Amarna is dramatic. Ikhanaton (or Akhenaton) chose to build his capital city, which he called Akhetaten, on a new location. After his death, the city was abandoned. The single-layer occupation was there when the archaeologists dug. This is the ancient city layout that is best preserved in all of Egypt.

Thebes, which for most of the New Kingdom and Middle Kingdom was the capital city, was a large complex of temples and other buildings that are now ruins. The two most famous temples were the temple of Karnak and the temple of Luxor. They were joined by a 1.3-mile long (2 kilometer) route lined with sphinxes. The god Amari’s statue was moved back and forth between them during the year.

There were a number of other temples on the west bank of the Nile, and in the nearby hills was the Valley of the Kings. Here the New Kingdom pharaohs were buried in tombs carved into the solid bedrock. Among these was Tutankhamen, whose tomb survived relatively intact until 1922.

In more modern times, Aswan has become the site of a dam that created Lake Nasser. The waters from Lake Nasser are used to irrigate even more of Nile Valley. But this lake has flooded an area of ancient temples, and it now catches the seasonal floods before they move downstream. The unique environment of ancient Egypt no longer exists.

**Key:**

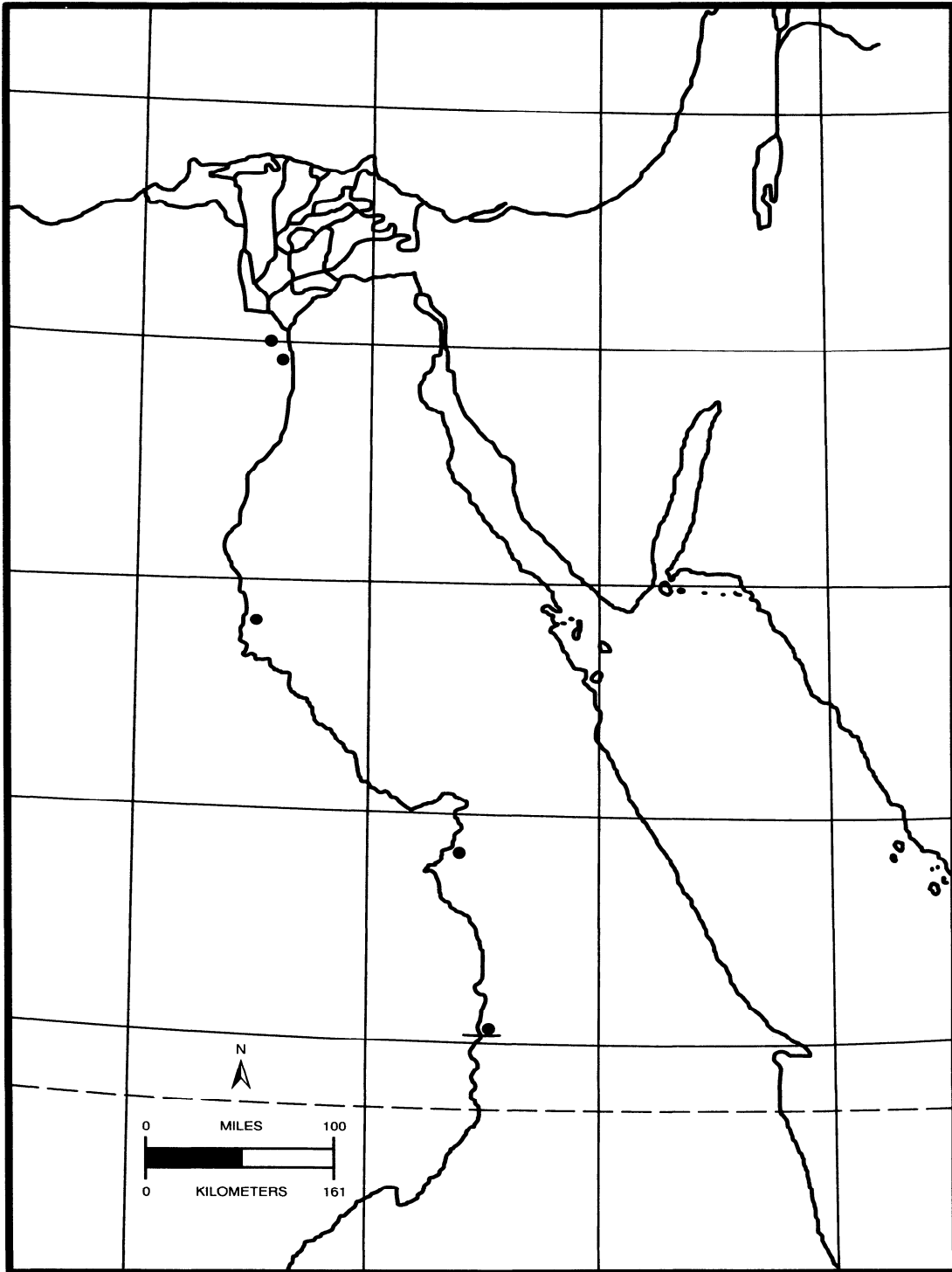
- 13. Memphis
- 14. Thebes
- 15. Akhetaten

**Weight:** 10 points

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Ancient Egypt



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Ancient Egypt

*Read all directions before starting work. Print all labels neatly.*

1. The latitude and longitude lines are drawn at 2° intervals. Label these on the west and north sides of the map.
2. Label the Tropic of Cancer.
3. With blue pencils, color the bodies of water light blue, and label the following in darker blue:  
Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Dead Sea
4. With a blue pencil, trace the Nile River and label it.
5. With a blue pencil, label the Nile delta.
6. With a blue pencil, draw an arrow showing the direction in which the Nile flows.
7. With a red pencil, draw an arrow showing the direction of the Etesian winds.
8. \*Label the following land areas in brown pencil:  
Libyan Desert, Arabian Desert, Isthmus of Suez, Sinai Peninsula, El Faiyum
9. Label the following points and underline them:  
Memphis, Thebes, Aswan, Tel el Amarna (Akhetaten), Giza, First Cataract
10. With a green pencil, color the land area flooded and thus made farmable by the Nile.
11. Label Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt.
12. \*\*Look up the average annual rainfall of Egypt; then look up the average annual rainfall of your home state and compare the two. Put the written rainfall figures and comparison on the back of your map.
13. What city was the capital of Old Kingdom Egypt?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What city was the capital of Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom Egypt?  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What city was the capital of Ikhanaton (Akhenaten or Amenhotep IV?)  
\_\_\_\_\_

