

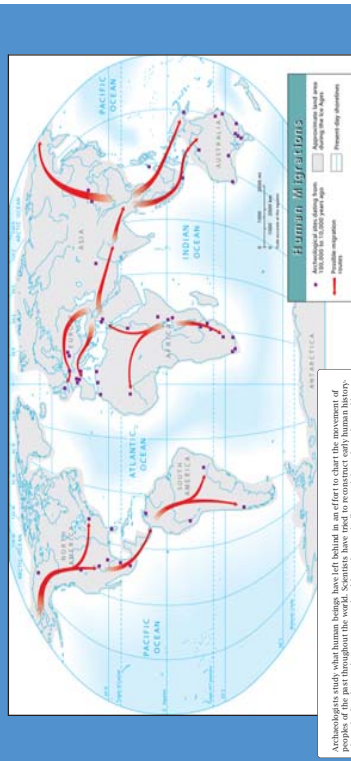


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**Critical-Thinking Question:**  
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**Critical-Thinking Question:**  
What theory of the origin of humanity does the map present? How do you know?



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Civilization probably developed in the Indus Valley in the middle of the third millennium BCE. Rivers from the Himalayas provided water for irrigation and deposited silt that enriched the land. There is strong evidence that the Indus Valley people traded with people from the Mesopotamian civilization.

The Indus civilization was destroyed by Aryan invaders from central Asia. While such invasions did occur, it is more likely that the civilization gradually declined because of climatic changes and natural disasters. One cause of its decline was the drying up of water. China's civilization developed along the Huang He or Yellow River. The river deposited rich layers of the silt that made the soil fertile. The Huang He valley people developed a civilization that was similar to the Indus Valley. The Huang He valley people developed a civilization that was similar to the Indus Valley. The Huang He valley people developed a civilization that was similar to the Indus Valley.

**Critical-Thinking Question:**  
Why do you think the Indus Valley and Huang Valley civilizations ever had contact with one another?



In most of the world, farming gradually displaced hunting and gathering over time as it spread in all directions from the early river valley civilizations.

Excellent climatic conditions for farming a wide range of domesticated animals, and the natural prevalence of self-pollinating crops like wheat and barley made the fertile crescent the perfect place for agriculture to begin. The first agricultural societies were established in the Tigris and Euphrates valleys around 3500 BCE, in Mesopotamia. The first agricultural societies were established in the Nile valley around 3500 BCE, in Egypt. The first agricultural societies were established in the Indus Valley around 3500 BCE, in the Indus Valley. The first agricultural societies were established in the Huang He valley around 3500 BCE, in the Huang He valley. The first agricultural societies were established in the Indus Valley around 3500 BCE, in the Indus Valley. The first agricultural societies were established in the Huang He valley around 3500 BCE, in the Huang He valley.

**Critical-Thinking Question:**  
Did agriculture begin in one place and spread? Why or why not? How do you know?

# The Ancient Middle East

**Akkadian Empire**  
c. 2300 B.C.

**Babylonian Empire**  
c. 1750 B.C.



Mesopotamia, the "Land Between the Rivers" that comprises part of modern-day Iraq, was home to some of the earliest civilizations that left records of their progress. The earliest was that of the Sumerians, who migrated to the Tigris-Euphrates valley in southern Mesopotamia from Central Asia around 3500 BCE and gradually displaced the native Ubaidian settlements. City-states in Sumer-including Erida, Ur, Uruk, Lagash, Umma, and Nippur-were established at that time. In these laboratories of civilization, Sumerians developed pictograph and cuneiform writing, invented the wheel, expressed key mathematical concepts, set up an economic system based on money, and built reservoirs and canals for irrigation. Sumerian merchants traded textiles and crops in Asia Minor and Iran. The Sumerians also created a sophisticated religion with many gods and rituals.

Conflicts among the city-states made the Sumerian civilization ripe for conquest by outsiders. In 2334 BCE, King Sargon and the Akkadians subdued the city-states. In 2180 BCE, the city-states came under the control of the Gutti invaders from the north. Over the next 70 years, the city-states revolted against these conquerors, and in 2112 BCE Ur-Nammu of Uruk reassembled the empire of Sumer. However, internal and external pressures caused the empire to disintegrate before 2000 BCE. In the years after that, the region came firmly under the control of the Babylonian civilization.

**Critical-Thinking Question:**  
In which direction did the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow? How do you know?

# Assyrian & New Babylonian Empires

**Assyrian Empire, c. 650 B.C.**

**New Babylonian Empire, c. 562 B.C.**

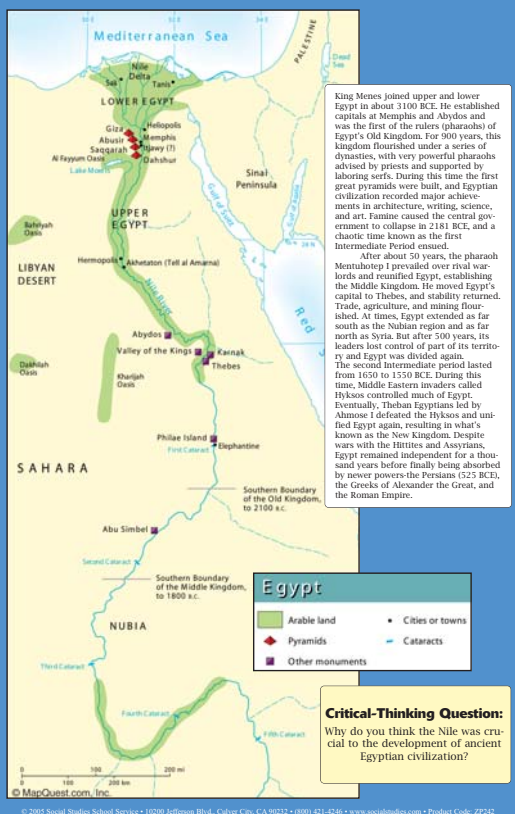


Control of the city-states of Mesopotamia passed among various empires until about 1775 BCE, when the Babylonian Empire began to emerge under the powerful king Hammurabi. Hammurabi increased trade, agriculture, and building in areas under his control; pioneered taxation; and developed the system of laws known as the Code of Hammurabi.

Over the next few hundred years, however, the Babylonian empire was supplanted, first by such groups as the Hittites and the Mitanni and then by the Assyrian empire around 1350 BCE. From their capital city of Nineveh, the Assyrians succeeded as empire builders because they made significant advances in weaponry and warfare. They also made advances in culture: The Epic of Gilgamesh, one of the world's earliest literary masterpieces, was produced during the reign of Assyrian King Ashurbanipal (668-626 BCE).

Eventually, the far-flung nature of the Assyrian empire proved to be its downfall: despite their smelted-iron weapons and sophisticated military organization, the Assyrians could not defend all the areas under their control. A people known as the Chaldeans gradually slipped away at Assyrian-controlled areas, and conquered Nineveh in 612 BCE. Also called the Babylonians because their capital was the ancient city of Babylon, the Chaldeans made significant advances in mathematics and astronomy. Among other achievements, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar built the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon (considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) and conquered Jerusalem in 586 BCE, sending the biblical Hebrews into exile.

**Critical-Thinking Question:**  
What does the geography of Mesopotamia suggest about why the city-states were constantly trying to conquer one another?



King Menes joined upper and lower Egypt in about 3100 BCE. He established capitals at Memphis and Abydos and was the first of the rulers (pharaohs) of Egypt's Old Kingdom. For 900 years, this kingdom flourished under a series of dynasties, with very powerful pharaohs advised by priests and supported by laboring serfs. During this time the first great pyramids were built, and Egyptian civilization recorded major achievements in architecture, writing, science, and art. Famine caused the central government to collapse in 2181 BCE, and a chaotic time known as the first Intermediate Period ensued.

After about 50 years, the pharaoh Mentuhotep I prevailed over rival warlords and reunited Egypt, establishing the Middle Kingdom. He moved Egypt's capital to Thebes, and stability returned. Trade, agriculture, and mining flourished. At times, Egypt extended as far south as the Nubian region and as far north as Syria. But after 500 years, its leaders lost control of part of its territory and Egypt was divided again.

The second Intermediate period lasted from 1650 to 1550 BCE. During this time, Middle Eastern invaders called Hyksos controlled much of Egypt. Eventually, Theban Egyptians led by Ahmose I defeated the Hyksos and unified Egypt again, resulting in what's known as the New Kingdom. Despite wars with the Hittites and Assyrians, Egypt remained independent for a thousand years before finally being absorbed by newer powers-the Persians (525 BCE), the Greeks of Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire.

**Critical-Thinking Question:**  
Why do you think the Nile was crucial to the development of ancient Egyptian civilization?

# The Fertile Crescent & the Nile Valley



Only in modern times did an American archaeologist coin the phrase "Fertile Crescent" to describe the broad, curving area that gave rise to the civilizations of the Middle East. But the term will probably last since it is perfectly descriptive: Because of its fertility, or ability to sustain life, this quarter moon-shaped area became the birthplace of the earliest civilizations.

Experts believe that the western part of the Crescent, near the Jordan and upper Euphrates Rivers, was the site of the first farming-based settlements about 11,000 years ago. The first town-like settlements may have existed at Iraq-el-Dubb and Tell Aswad, in modern-day Jordan and Syria respectively. Societies developed along the banks of the rivers of the Fertile Crescent. Although surrounded by desert, plants and crops could grow in the Crescent regions because of the climate and the annual flooding of the rivers that enriched the soil. The presence of domesticated animals in the region-cows, goats, pigs, and sheep-also favored the development of civilizations. People could settle down in the wetter areas of the Fertile Crescent, leaving behind the nomadic life led by most early humans.

Today, the Fertile Crescent region includes Lebanon, Israel, and the Palestinian territories, plus parts of Jordan, Syria, and Turkey. A political powder keg, it was dubbed by Time magazine a "crucible of crisis" a generation ago.

**Critical-Thinking Question:**  
Is the Fertile Crescent the same as Mesopotamia? Explain your answer.