

Section 1: Land Between Two Rivers  
The Fertile Crescent

## Reading Readiness Guide

### Anticipation Guide

How much do you think you know about the ancient region known as the Fertile Crescent? As your teacher reads the statements, mark whether you think each statement is true (T) or false (F) in the Me column. Then discuss your answers with your group and mark the group's decision in the Group column. As you read, look for information that will clarify whether the statements are true or false.

After you read the section, read the statements again and mark the After Reading column to indicate whether they are true or false.

Before Reading		Statements	After Reading
Me	Group		
		1. Professional writers known as scribes were important because they were the only people who could keep records for kings and priests.	
		2. Students in the ancient region of Sumer normally went to school from age 8 to 15.	
		3. The word Mesopotamia comes from the Greek words that mean "between the mountains."	
		4. Floods along the riverbanks sometimes arrived unexpectedly, sweeping away people, animals, crops, and houses.	
		5. Sumerian homes relied on candles for light.	
		6. Sumerian myths warned that the gods would punish people who angered them.	

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## Guided Reading and Review

### A. As You Read

**Directions:** As you read Section 1, fill in the table below with details about Mesopotamia and the civilizations that developed there.

Facts About Mesopotamia	
Location	1.
Important Geographic Features	2.
Ways of Life	3.
Religion	4.

Chapter and Section Support

### B. Reviewing Key Terms

**Directions:** Complete each sentence by writing the correct term in the blank provided.

5. In ancient Sumer, if a person wanted a letter written or a list of trade items drawn up, he or she would hire a professional writer called a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The site of the first civilizations was known as the \_\_\_\_\_, a region in Southwest Asia.
7. In ancient Mesopotamia, each \_\_\_\_\_ acted as a state with its own ruler.
8. The belief in many gods is called \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Stories about gods are also known as \_\_\_\_\_.

Section 1: Land Between Two Rivers  
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**Directions:** Match the descriptions in Column I with the terms in Column II. Write the correct letter in each blank.

**Column I**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. belief in many gods
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. professional writer
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. a region in southwest Asia
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. a traditional story
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. city with its own traditions, government, and laws

**Column II**

- a. scribe
- b. polytheism
- c. myth
- d. Fertile Crescent
- e. city-state

**B. Main Ideas**

**Directions:** Write the letter of the correct answer in each blank.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Why were scribes important people in Sumer?
  - a. They had acquired large amounts of land.
  - b. They refused to teach anyone else how to read.
  - c. They negotiated treaties between the city-states.
  - d. They kept records for the kings and priests.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What attracted people to the Fertile Crescent?
  - a. convenient navigation
  - b. rich soil
  - c. cool temperatures
  - d. religious temples
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Although Sumerian city-states shared language and culture, how were they independent?
  - a. different architecture
  - b. each had own government
  - c. no travel between city-states
  - d. no trade with each other
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What was the main cause of wars between the Sumerian city-states?
  - a. disputes over land and water
  - b. exhausted armies
  - c. religious disagreements
  - d. theft of livestock
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A Sumerian ziggurat was made of terraces, because
  - a. it was architecturally unstable.
  - b. Sumerians society had many classes.
  - c. multiple crop growth was better.
  - d. it was the gods' ladder.

# CHAPTER 2

## Prepare to Read

### Section 1 Land Between Two Rivers

#### Objectives

1. Find out how geography made the rise of civilization in the Fertile Crescent possible.
2. Learn about Sumer's first cities.
3. Examine the characteristics of Sumerian religion.

#### Target Reading Skill

**Reread** Rereading is a skill that can help you understand words and ideas. Rereading means to read something again. Sometimes you may not understand a word or idea the first time you read it. There may be words you do not recognize.

When this happens, rereading can help. Sometimes you may need to reread two or three times. As you reread, look for specific information that will clarify the word or idea you didn't understand. Look for connections among the words and sentences. Put together the facts that you do understand. See if you can find the main idea. Think about how the idea you don't understand relates to the main idea.

#### Vocabulary Strategy

**Using Context to Clarify Meaning** When you come across new words in your text, they are often defined for you. Sometimes the definition appears in a separate sentence or in the same sentence. Sometimes the word *or* is used to introduce the definition. Look at the following examples.

scribes, or *professional writers*

myths, or *stories about gods that explain a people's beliefs*

polytheism comes from Greek words that mean "*a belief in many gods*"

The underlined words are defined in context. In these examples, brief definitions appear in italics. Look for definitions in the context as you come across unfamiliar words in your reading.

## Section 1 Summary

- 1 The first known schools were set up in the land of Sumer (SOO mur) over 4,000 years ago. They taught the new invention of writing. People who went to these schools became scribes. Scribes kept records that help  
5 tell the story of this early civilization.

### The Geographic Setting

Sumer was located in an area called Mesopotamia (mes uh puh TAY mee uh). It had rich soil. The rivers provided water. The people who settled there became farmers, city builders, and traders.

The word *Mesopotamia* comes from Greek words that mean "between the rivers." The region lies between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. It is part of a larger area called the Fertile Crescent. This area was a very good place for growing crops.

- 15 Each spring, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flooded. The floods left rich topsoil on the land. Farmers grew crops in this soil. The floods did not always happen at the same time each year. Sometimes they took people by surprise. When this happened, the flood waters  
20 washed away people, animals, crops, and houses. ✓

### The First Cities

Success in farming led to surpluses of food. This helped cities grow. By 3500 B.C., cities arose in Sumer, along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

- These cities shared the same culture and language.  
25 But they did not all have the same ruler. Instead, they were independent city-states. Each Sumerian city acted as an independent state with its own government, its own army, and its own king.

#### Key Terms

**scribe** (skryb) *n.* someone who writes for a living  
**Fertile Crescent** (FUR tul KRES unt) *n.* a region in Southwest Asia; site of the first civilizations  
**city-state** (SIH tee steyt) *n.* a city with its own traditions, government, and laws; both a city and an independent state

### Vocabulary Strategy

The term *Mesopotamia* is defined in context in the bracketed paragraph. Circle its definition. *Hint:*



Look in the first and second sentences of the paragraph.

### ✓ Reading Check

List how flooding rivers affected people who settled in Mesopotamia.

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### Target Reading Skill

Reread this paragraph. In what ways did Sumerian cities act as independent states?

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✓ **Reading Check**

Describe the cities of Sumer.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

✓ **Reading Check**

What forces weakened the cities of Sumer?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Life was bustling in these cities. Merchants displayed goods in outdoor market places. Streets were crowded with musicians, acrobats, beggars, and water sellers. Sumerian houses faced onto inner courtyards. On hot nights, people slept on their flat roofs. ✓

**Sumerian Religion**

At the heart of a Sumerian city was the ziggurat (ZIG o rat). It was the main temple to the city's gods. Much of the town's activity took place there. A ziggurat was a tall pyramid. It had a shrine on top. Sumerians believed that gods used the ziggurat as a stairway to come down to Earth.

The people of Sumer practiced polytheism. Their myths promised that the gods would punish people who angered them. The gods would reward those who pleased them. The Sumerians honored their gods with ceremonies. The Sumerians' religion gives us an idea of what mattered to them.

Sumer's wealth led to its downfall. Sumerian city-states fought each other over land. They also fought over who could use the river water. Rulers of several city-states won and lost power. Around 2300 B.C. King Sargon of Akkad (AK ad) united the city-states of Sumer. He improved Sumer's government and army. Sumer stayed united for about 100 years. Then it split up again. After 2000 B.C., Sumer was no longer a main power. In the 1700s B.C., Babylon took control of Sumer. ✓

**Review Questions**

- 1. How did Mesopotamia's geography help civilizations grow in the area?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Describe the religious beliefs of the people of Sumer.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Key Terms**  
**polytheism** (PAHL ih thee iz um) *n.* the belief in many gods  
**myth** (mith) *n.* a traditional story or a legend that explains people's beliefs