Mesopotamia Study Guide

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Hour: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Where is Mesopotamia found? Why does the name Mesopotamia make sense for the location?

Mesopotamia is the land between two rivers (the Tigris and the Euphrates). It is in the modern day Middle East in what is today Iraq and stretching to the Mediterranean where Lebanon and Israel are found. The name Mesopotamia means the land between two rivers and this name makes sense because it is literally the land between two rivers.

1. How does the flooding of the river a positive and a negative thing for the people of Mesopotamia?

The flooding of the river provides mineral rich silt which makes the area good for farming, but it also can be a destructive force that destroys crop, livestock, and even kills people (unpredictable).

1. How does farming and irrigation lead to civilization? (use the comic strip to help)

Irrigation leads to **farming**

Farming leads to **food surpluses**

Surplus food leads to **population growth**

Large population leads to **specialized jobs**

Specialized jobs lead to **larger settlements**

Larger settlements lead to **government and civilization**

1. How was silt helpful in the ancient world?

Silt is a mineral rich combination of soil and small rocks. This combination is extremely useful for farming.

1. What is a city-state?

A city-state is a city and the surrounding rural countryside. City-states fought for control in ancient Sumer and each gained power and prominence at different points in the history of Mesopotamia.

1. Who was Sargon? What did he do?

Sargon was an Akkadian leader who established the capital Akkad near the Euphrates River. He established a permanent army and brought the entire region of Mesopotamia under his rule

1. What was the purpose of religion in the past? Why were most religions polytheistic?

Religion helps to explain why natural events occur and the pleasing of the gods was important to the success of the Sumerian people. Most religions were polytheistic because each aspect of society was ruled by a different god.

1. Who was in the highest social class? Where did most people in society belong?

The highest social class in Mesopotamian society was the king, but just below them was the priestly caste. The lowest people in society were the slaves and the farmers, but the farmers made up most of society.

1. How was the treatment of men and women different in Sumer?

Men and women were treated differently in Sumerian society. The men were usually given more important positions and the women were usually in charge of the household (though they could hold important roles like priestesses.)

1. What is cuneiform? How did it change things in the past?

Cuneiform is the early wedge and line shaped writing that was invented by the Sumerians. It changed things in the past because it allowed people to keep records and to communicate differently.

1. Who were the people that learned to read and write?

The people that learned to read and write were the scribes. They were important members of society and usually were located higher in the social hierarchy.

1. What did the Sumerians invent?

The Sumerians invented writing, invented the wheel, invented the plow, and developed a math system based on the number 60 (part of the reason we divide a circle into 360 degrees). They studied the natural world, catalogued different medicines and plants, and built new architecture like the ziggurat.

1. What was Hammurabi’s Code? What did it do?

Hammurabi’s Code was the first set of written laws that created logical consequences for the crimes that were committed (eye for an eye). This gave people in society access to specific rules they had to follow and it was written for everyone to see.

1. Why are written laws important?

It gives people in society access to all of the rules that they must follow

1. Who were the Hittites? What did they do?

The Hittites built a strong empire in Turkey and they eventually captured Babylon around 1595 BC. They were skilled with iron-working and they also worked with chariots.

1. Who were the Assyrians? What did they do?

The Assyrians briefly gained control of Babylon and were known as fierce fighters. They had a strong army and were well organized. They also used iron weapons and chariots like the Hittites. They demanded heavy taxes from their people and they built roads to connect distant parts of the empire.

1. Who were the Chaldeans? What did they do?

The Chaldeans were a group from the Syrian Desert that conquered the Assyrian empire. They rebuilt Babylon and featured the Hanging Gardens in their empire. They also became a center of astronomy and developed a calendar system and solved complex geometry problems.

1. Who were the Phoenicians? What did they do?

The Phoenicians were a group that settled around the Mediterranean and built a vast trading empire. They controlled trade by creating purple dye, trading for valuable cedar wood found in their territory and by controlling Atlantic trade. They also invented an alphabet that was much easier to write with than cuneiform.

1. Why would the Phoenician alphabet be important to us today?

Our alphabet evolved from the Phoenician.