

The Fertile Crescent: Cradle of Civilization

The life-giving Crescent offered a plentiful water supply and mineral-rich soil refilled by the flooding of the two large rivers. Because the valley was wide and flat, the rivers snaked their way along. Farming communities that developed along the rivers had little contact with one another, and so established their own individual cultures. These small city-states had their own governments, traditions, and languages and became quite advanced for their time.

To control the floods and help grow more land to feed the area's large and growing population, large-scale irrigation projects were developed. The people in Mesopotamia also made extensive use of metal. They even learned to make bronze --, a mixture of copper and tin -- for tools, weapons, and art.

The bustling city-states also led to a division of labor. People began to specialize in the skills they had and jobs they did. Some farmed, others were metalworkers, others wove fabric for clothing, and so forth. Then they depended on one another to meet their needs through trade. To record sales of products and land, the people of Mesopotamia developed a written language called *Cuneiform*. Writing not only allowed them to record business deals, but also laws and stories. Stories from the region have been recorded in the Torah/Old Testament, the Muslim Qur'an, and other texts.

Because of its advancements, the life-giving Crescent is often referred to as the "Cradle of Civilization," the location of the world's earliest civilizations. The city-states of Mesopotamia did, in fact, have all of the features, qualities, and traits of a civilization. They had cities; government; religion; a stable food supply; a social structure with division of labor; highly developed culture; technology; arts; along with ... writing.

Irrigation -

Bronze -

City-State -

Cuneiform -

- 1) In 1+ paragraphs, describe why the Fertile Crescent was one of the first regions humans settled in large numbers. (Hint: Location, resources, etc.)
- 2) Name and describe two of the effects living in large cities had on civilization (culture, technology, etc.)
- 3) According to the text, what are the 9 characteristics of a civilization?