

City-States of Ancient Sumer

Focus Question: What were the characteristics of the world's first civilization? (Sumer)

Lesson Objectives

16. Understand how geography influenced the development of civilization in the Fertile Crescent.
17. Outline the main features of Sumerian civilization.
18. Explain how the advances in learning made by the Sumerians left a lasting legacy for later peoples to build on.

16. Understand how geography influenced the development of civilization in the Fertile Crescent.

The Fertile Crescent

- The Fertile Crescent was a region of the middle east known for its rich soils and golden wheat fields.
- Region became a crossroads.
- Within the Fertile Crescent lies a region called Mesopotamia.
- Sumer was located in the southeastern part of Mesopotamia.



Organizing for Floods and Irrigation

- Mesopotamia means “between the rivers”; specifically the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
- The rivers regularly flooded and damaged farms and settlements.
- Settlers had to learn to control the rivers.
 - Built dikes to hold back floodwaters
 - Dug irrigation ditches to channel water to farmland.



17. Outline the main features of Sumerian civilization.

Sumerians Build Thriving Cities

- Few natural resources- made the most of it.
- No wood; built with clay and water to make bricks.
- Trade brought riches.
 - People traveled along the rivers and would go through Sumer.
 - Sumerians may have made the first wheeled vehicle.



The Sumerian city of Ur

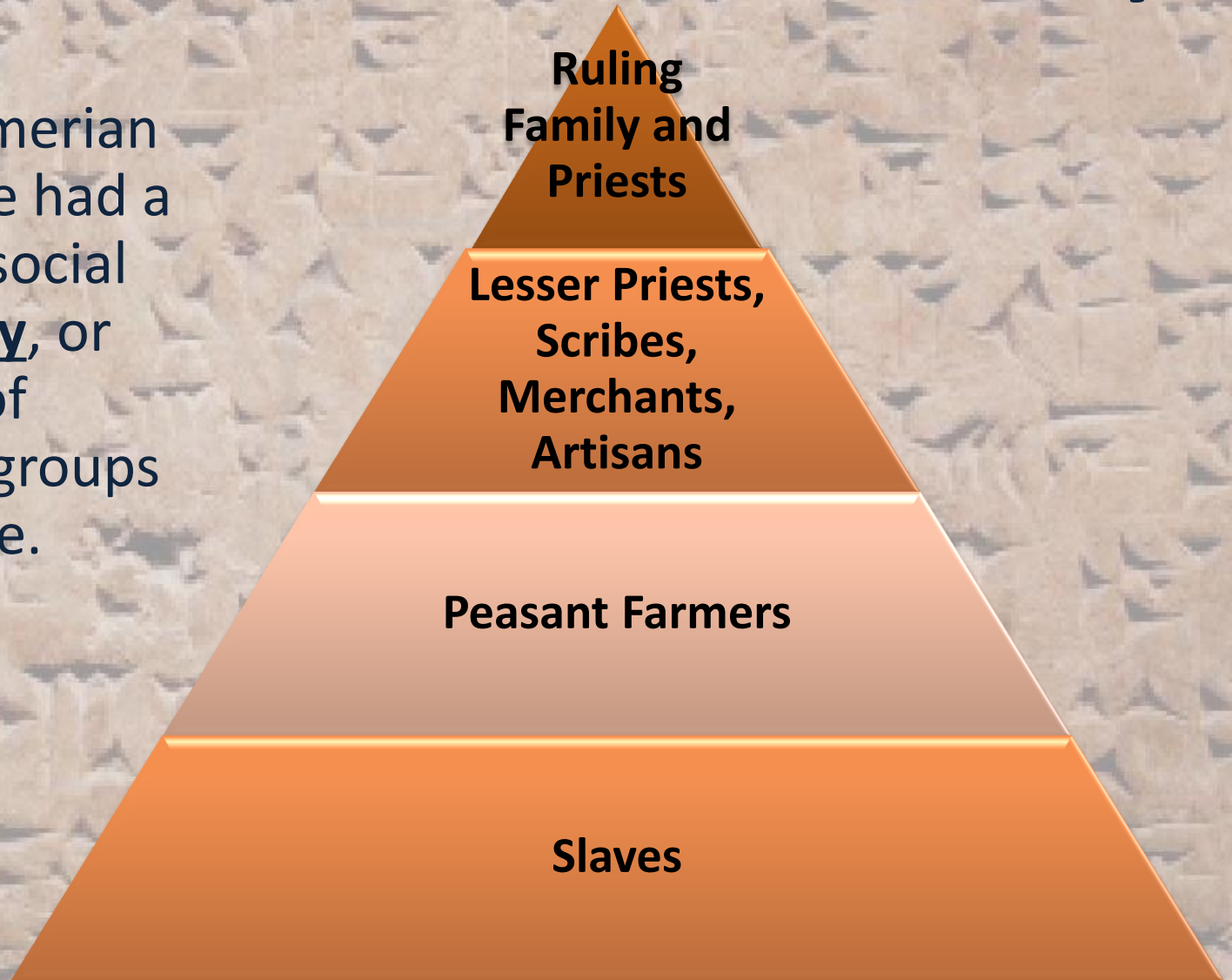
Complex Government Unfolds



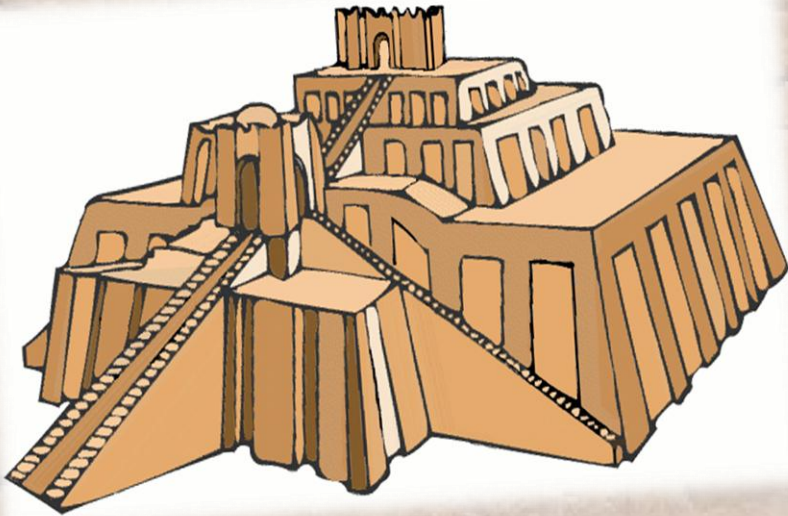
- In each city-state the ruler had complete control.
- The Ruler:
 - Maintained the city walls and irrigation systems
 - Led armies into war
 - Enforced the laws
 - Employed scribes to collect taxes and keep records
 - Was seen as the chief servant of the gods

Sumerians Structure their Society

- Each Sumerian city-state had a distinct social **hierarchy**, or system of ranking groups of people.



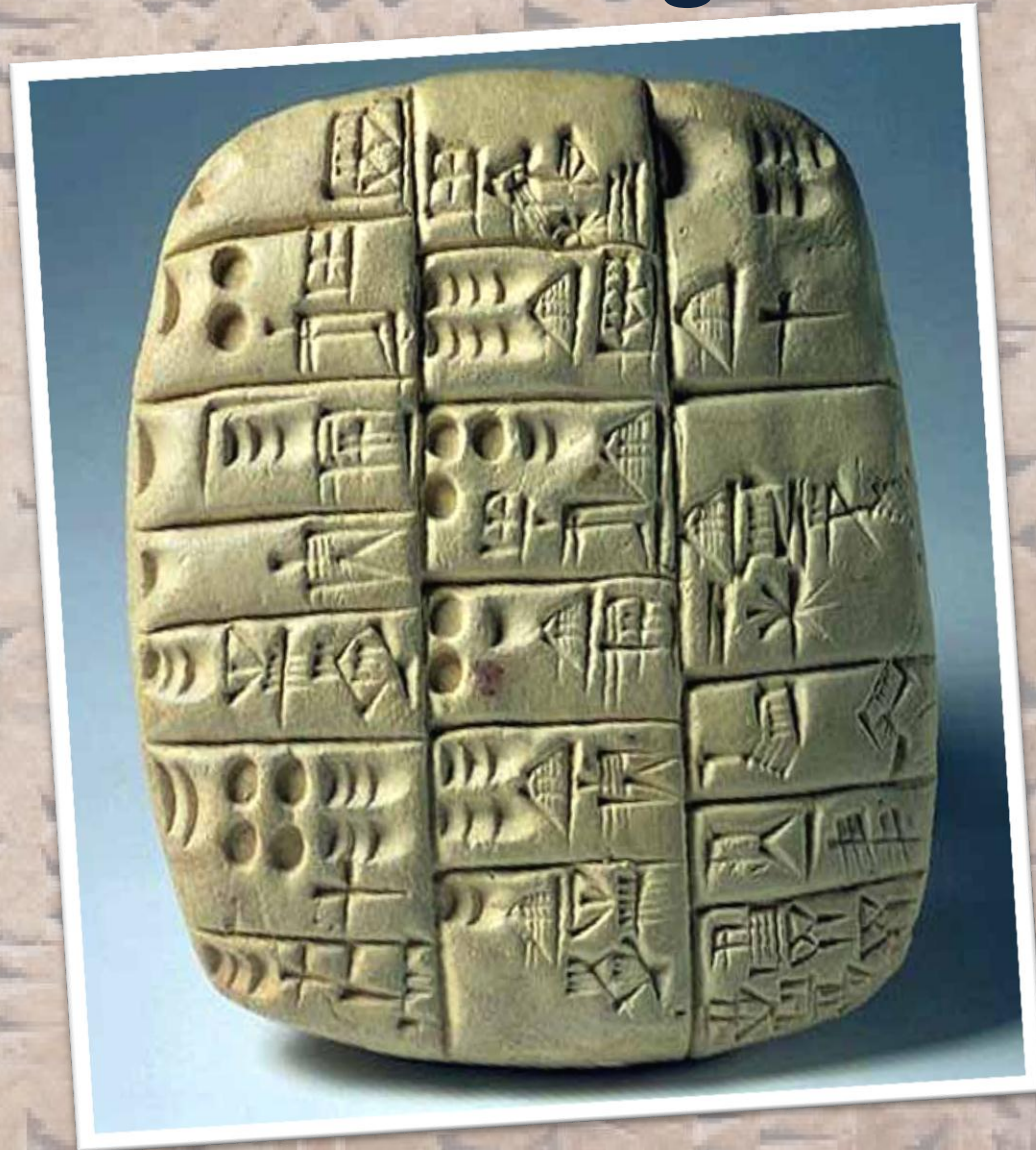
Sumerians Practice Religion



- Polytheistic: believe in...?
- Gods controlled every aspect of life.
- Duty was to keep gods happy.
- Each city built a **Ziggurat**, a large stepped temple.
- Afterlife
 - Grim underworld
 - “the place where they live on dust, their food is mud,...they see no light”.- *Epic of Gilgamesh*

Sumerians Invent Writing

- Invented the earliest known writing called cuneiform.
- Scribes wrote by making wedge shaped marks on a clay tablet.
- Recorded the exchange of goods, myths, prayers, laws, and business contracts.
- Scribes went to school to learn to write.



18. Explain how the advances in learning made by the Sumerians left a lasting legacy for later peoples to build on.

The Lasting Legacy of Sumer

1. Cuneiform
2. Developed astronomy
3. Number system based on the number 6
 1. 60 minute hour
 2. Circle = 360 degrees
4. Mathematical knowledge helped Babylonians to develop basic algebra, geometry, and calendars.
5. Epic of Gilgamesh



