

## MAIN IDEAS

- 1 **Culture** Food surpluses, new technology, and advanced social organization led to a complex way of life. It is called civilization.
- 2 **Government** A new type of government developed in Sumer that included a city and its surrounding lands.
- 3 **Government** Religion dominated life in Sumer, but in time, powerful men who were not priests became the political rulers.

## TAKING NOTES

### Reading Skill: Making Generalizations

As you read Lesson 2, use your own words to record information about Sumer on a chart like this. You will be asked to make a generalization, or broad judgment, later.

Civilization in Sumer	
Advanced cities	
Specialized workers	
Complex institutions	
Record keeping	
Advanced technology	

 Skillbuilder Handbook, page R8



▲ **Votive Statues** Sumerian artists made these statues to worship the gods when people were busy doing other things. Notice how big their eyes are from gazing at the gods.

## Words to Know

Understanding the following words will help you read this lesson:

**advanced** beyond others in development or progress (page 89)

*Historians have studied the advanced societies that lived in Mesopotamia.*

**mouth** the part of a river that empties into a larger body of water (page 92)

*The mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers are in the Persian Gulf.*

**hometown** the town in which one is born or raised (page 92)

*The hometown of the religious leader Abraham was Ur.*

**foothill** a low hill at the start of a mountain range (page 93)

*The travelers approached the foothills of the Zagros Mountains.*



# The First Civilization

## TERMS & NAMES

civilization

Sumer

city-state

ziggurat

polytheism

king

**Build on What You Know** Cities today have a wide range of cultural options. These include sports, entertainment, museums, and restaurants. They also offer people the chance to gain a good education or a promising job. As you are about to read, even the earliest cities were places of opportunity and culture.

## The Rise of Civilization

- 1 ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did civilization develop in the region of Sumer?

The rise of agriculture enabled people to settle in villages. They didn't have to search for food. As more people decided to live in communities, villages grew larger. In time, they became cities. City leaders had to start organizing workers to solve problems, such as building and cleaning irrigation canals. Over time, society and culture grew more complex. These changes led to an advanced form of culture called **civilization**. Most historians think the first civilization rose about 3300 B.C. in **Sumer**, which was a region in southern Mesopotamia.

**Ruins of Ur** The ancient Sumerian city of Ur once stood on the banks of the Euphrates. The river has shifted over time. Now it is ten miles away. ▼










**Traits of Civilization** Five traits characterize civilization: advanced cities, specialized workers, complex institutions, record keeping, and advanced technology.

- 1. Advanced Cities** Civilization is closely linked to life in cities. At first, cities became important because farmers needed a place to store and trade their surplus grain. As cities grew, they began to offer other advantages. For example, the cities of Sumer had large temples where people prayed. Cities also offered many different types of work of work.
- 2. Specialized Workers** In general, a society needs food surpluses before civilization can develop. Having a food surplus allows people to do other types of work besides farming. Workers can specialize, which means to do a job that requires special skills. For example, Sumerian workers built houses, made jewelry, sewed clothes, or created pottery. When people specialize, the quality of their work improves because they can develop their skill.

Because cities are crowded, people must learn to live together. They also have to cooperate on projects, such as building irrigation canals. As a result, some people took on

## Civilization in Sumer

Basic Traits of Civilization	Examples from Sumer
Advanced cities	Kish, Nippur, Ur 
Specialized workers	priest, king, artisan 
Complex institutions	the temple, the army, schools 
Record keeping	writing 
Advanced technology	irrigation, bronze tools 

**Kings** City-states in ancient Sumer were ruled by kings. King Gudea ruled the city-state Lagash. ►



the job of organizing society. In early Sumerian cities, priests did that job. They ran society and acted as judges.

3. **Complex Institutions** In time, religion and government became institutions. An institution is a group of people who have a specific purpose. Often it exists to help society meet its needs. For example, schools are institutions that exist to educate children. An army is an institution that exists to protect a society. Sometimes society uses an army to conquer others.
4. **Record Keeping** Societies must keep track of many things. For example, the rulers may want to measure the food supplies stored in the city. Keeping records usually involves writing, but not always. In Mesopotamia, people started by using wooden counting sticks. Later, they invented the world's first system of writing. (You will learn about this in Lesson 3.)
5. **Advanced Technology** Societies advance as people learn better ways to do things. For example, the people of Sumer learned to use canals to irrigate crops. They also created new tools and used new materials. For instance, the Sumerians began to make tools of bronze (a mixture of copper and tin). Bronze tools replaced tools made of copper, which is a softer metal.

**REVIEW** Why was Sumer a good example of civilization?

## Sumerian City-States

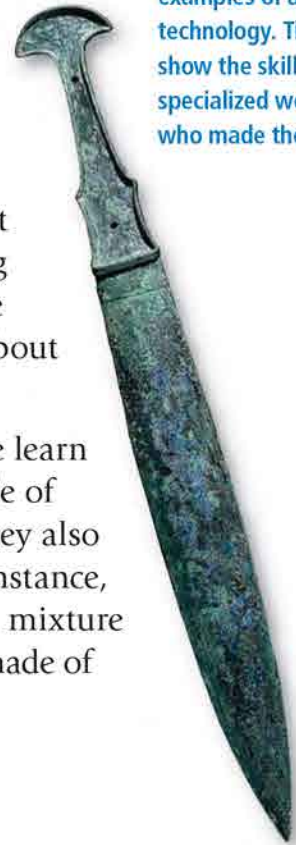
- 2 **ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What new type of community developed in Sumer?

Sumerian cities offered many advantages to people who lived in the surrounding lands. Cities were centers of trade, learning, and religion. Most people still lived in the countryside. Even so, over time the cities began to rule the surrounding lands and villages.

A community that included a city and its nearby farmlands was called a **city-state**. The nearby land might include several villages. Between 10,000 and 100,000 people might have lived in a city. Each city-state ruled itself.



**Helmet and Sword**  
This gold helmet and bronze sword are examples of advanced technology. They also show the skill of the specialized workers who made them.





**The City-States of Sumer** By 3000 B.C., Sumer had at least 12 city-states. Some of the more famous ones were Kish, Nippur, and Ur. As the map on page 94 shows, most city-states were located near the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The land was especially fertile there. As a result, farmers grew more food. Food surpluses supported a larger population.

Ur was the hometown of Abraham, who is an important person in three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. You will read about Abraham in Chapter 10.

**Life in the City** The cities of Sumer grew gradually. Because of this, they did not look the way many U.S. cities look today. Instead of straight streets that cross at right angles, Sumerian cities had narrow, winding streets. As you learned in Lesson 1, protective walls surrounded the city. Gates in the wall allowed people to come and go.

People built their houses of mud walls that were several feet thick. Such thick walls helped to keep out heat. Narrow tunnels ran through the walls, carrying fresh air from the outside into the house. People first made the doorways by placing a horizontal beam over two vertical posts. Then they built the mud walls around the doorways.

A house consisted of a series of rooms arranged around a courtyard. The builders covered the courtyard with a loose roof of palm leaves over wooden planks. This roof helped protect people from the hot sun. The cooking area was usually located out in the courtyard so the smoke could escape through gaps in the roof.

**The Ziggurat: City Center** If you were to visit a Sumerian city, one building would stand out from all the rest. The largest and most important structure in a Sumerian city was the temple. It was called a **ziggurat** (ZIHG•uh•RAT). Ziggurats were first built about 2200 B.C.

The ziggurat was not just a temple; it was the center of city life. The ziggurat functioned as a sort of city hall. This was because the priests ran the irrigation systems. People came to the ziggurat to pay the priests for their services with grain and other items. As a result, the priests controlled the storage of surplus grain. The priests ended up controlling much of the wealth of the city-state.



**REVIEW** What was life like in Sumerian cities?

## Changes in Leadership

### 3 ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did the leadership of Sumer change?

As you just read, priests played an important political role in Sumer. People also went to them to ask the gods for help. The priests advised the people on how to act to please the gods.

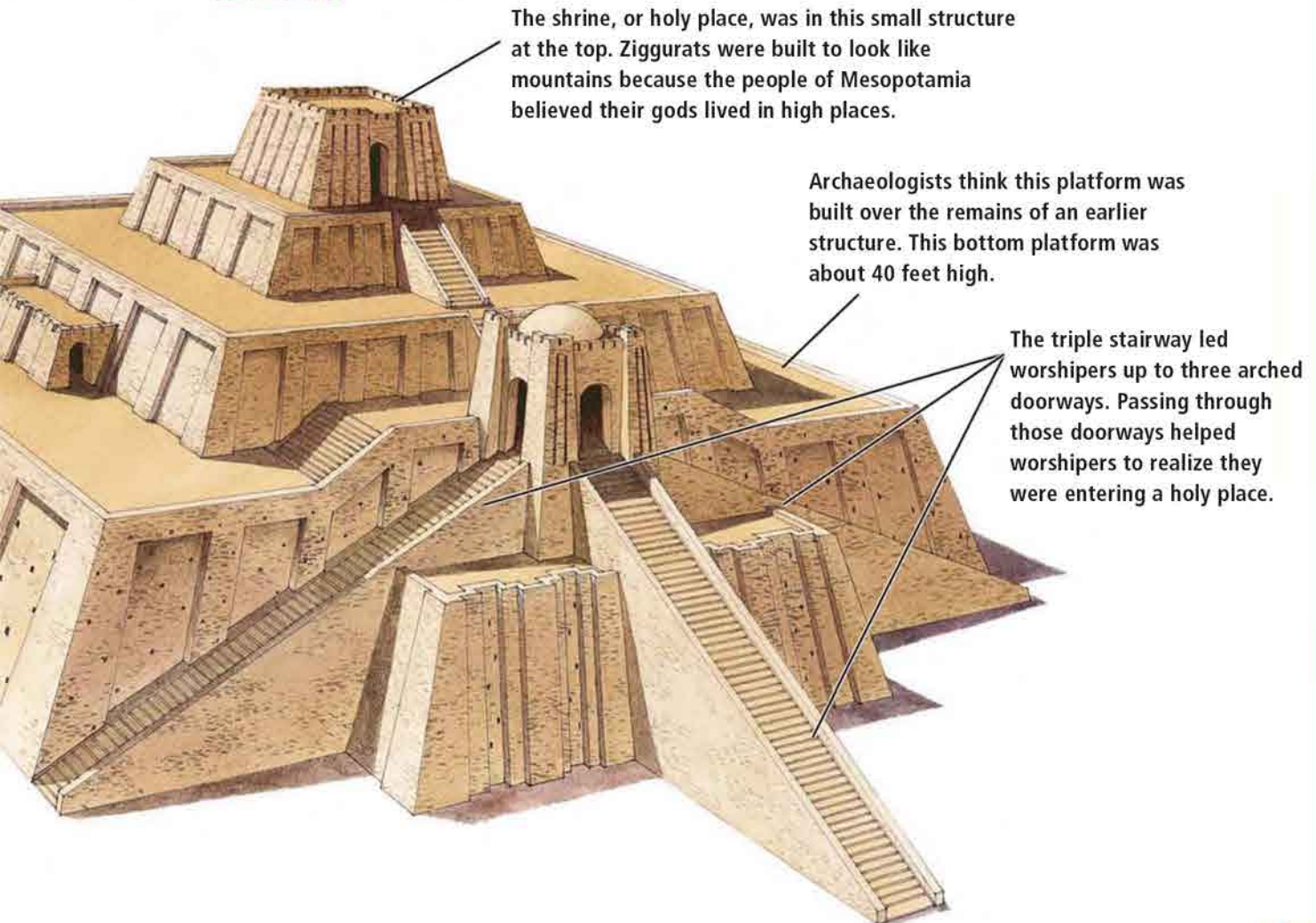
**Sumerian Religion** The Sumerians believed in many gods and goddesses. A belief in many gods and goddesses is called **polytheism**. Sumerians believed that four main gods created the world and ruled over it. These were the gods of sky, wind, foothills (hills that are near mountains), and fresh water. Each city-state worshiped its own god. In addition, Sumerians had thousands of lesser gods. The Sumerians believed their gods looked and acted like people.

#### Vocabulary Strategy

The **prefix** *poly-* means "many," and the **root word** *theism* means "belief in a god."

### Ziggurat

INTERACTIVE







**Priests Become Leaders** Life in Sumer had many dangers, such as floods, droughts, and invasions. The Sumerians believed the gods could prevent these troubles. To protect their cities, people tried to please the gods. Each god had many priests. The priests worked to satisfy the gods and claimed to have influence with them. Because of that claim, people accepted the priests as leaders.

**Service to the Gods** Sumerians thought of the gods as rich landowners who created humans to work for them. Priests, ordinary people, and even rulers said prayers and made offerings to the gods. Everyone took part in rituals and followed religious rules. Many of those rituals took place at the ziggurat.

Sumerians believed that the souls of dead people went to the land of no return. It was a gloomy place that was also called the underworld. Some scholars think the hardships of Sumerian life caused Sumerians to expect continued unhappiness after death.

**New Leaders in Sumer** Around 3000 B.C., as city-states became richer, other groups of people began to attack them to take their wealth. Some attackers came from other regions. Others came from rival city-states. In such dangerous times, the people of the city-state often asked a powerful man to rule them and protect the city.

At first, such leaders led the city-states only during wars. Eventually, they took control of the cities full-time. These new leaders took over some of the priests' jobs. They maintained the canals, managed the surplus grain, and acted as judges.

In time, this new type of ruler became a **king**, who is the highest-ranked leader of a group of people. The area a king ruled was called a kingdom. Sumer became a kingdom under one king by 2375 B.C.

The priests still remained important because their job was to keep the gods happy and keep evil away. The people believed that the gods let the kings rule.

**REVIEW** How did kings take over as rulers of Sumer?

### Lesson Summary

- Sumer had a complex society and culture. Historians consider it the first civilization.
- Sumerian city-states were a form of government that included cities and the land around them.
- Priests were the first leaders in Sumer, but kings became leaders when the need for defense grew.

### Why It Matters Now . . .

Cities first became important in Sumer. People today still move to cities to find jobs, education, and culture.



▲ Ring A Sumerian artisan created this ring about 3000 B.C.

## 2 Lesson Review

### Terms & Names

1. Explain the importance of

civilization	city-state	polytheism
Sumer	ziggurat	king

### Using Your Notes

**Making Generalizations** Use your completed chart to answer the following question:

2. What is the relationship between

specialized workers and complex institutions? State your answer as a generalization.

Civilization in Sumer	
Advanced cities	
Specialized workers	
Complex institutions	
Record keeping	
Advanced technology	

### Main Ideas

3. Why are food surpluses necessary for civilization to develop?
4. In what way did the ziggurat function like a city hall?
5. What did people in Sumer think their gods were like?

### Critical Thinking

6. **Making Inferences** Why was a priest's job so important in Sumer?
7. **Understanding Cause and Effect** How did warfare change the government in Sumer?

### Activity

**Making a Poster** Create a poster listing the five traits of civilization and giving examples from a modern society, such as the United States.