

First Civilizations “Vetted” Internet

It Happened First in Ancient Mesopotamia

URL: <http://www-news.uchicago.edu/releases/03/oi/030715.oi-firsts.shtml>

Long before it was known as Iraq, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers was known as Mesopotamia. Five thousand years ago, it was one of the earliest great civilizations. The southern part was known as Sumeria and the northern part was called Assyria. Babylon was a city filled with splendor. The Sumerians invented an early writing system used for literature, astronomy, and medicine. The Mesopotamians developed place value and developed the number system we use for time. They invented the wheel and used it for pottery and transportation. They also invented sails for boats.

Who Wrote First?

URL: <http://whyfiles.org/079writing/index.html>

Visit this web site and learn how writing was invented. The people of Mesopotamia, where Iraq is today, are credited with inventing writing. Clay tablets, from around 3,000 BC, show signs of an early script. This early script was called cuneiform. Cuneiform recorded the affairs of the Babylonians. Visit this web site and learn more. You can even see a picture of one of the old tablets. This particular tablet was found in Egypt.

Hittite Art and Architecture: Art of the Hittite Empire

URL: <http://www.factmonster.com/encyclopedia/entertainment/hittite-art-architecture-art-hittite-empire.html>

The Hittites conquered many Mesopotamian and Middle Eastern cultures, assimilating the gods of the cultures they control into their vast pantheon. Gold and bronze ornamental art depicts their male gods with pointed hats, short robes, and boots with curled toes. The goddesses have longer robes and square hats. Skilled carvers and metalworkers, this culture adopted cuneiform and hieroglyphics. Most Hittite art depicted religious rituals and mythological scenes. Lions and sphinxes are seen together with gods. A few art works depict royal domestic life or hunting scenes.

Hittites

URL: <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/history/A0823837.html>

Explore the history of the Hittites, an ancient people group from Syria and Asia Minor. Learn about their neighbors 3,500 years ago. The Hittites made an unsuccessful attempt to invade Babylonia. A powerful people in West Asia, the Hittite Empire eventually broke up under numerous invasions in 1200 B.C. Hittite princes became vassals to the Assyrian king. Assyrian and Babylonian influences can be found in Hittite art but their law codes indicate an independence from other cultures of their day.

Linking Ancient Peoples

URL: <http://chronicle.uchicago.edu/960201/hittites.shtml>

Cuneiform tablets found in what was once the Hittite capital show similar views about releasing people from debt as those seen in the Hebrew Bible. Two very different cultures from the same period of history show some interconnection of beliefs. The Hurrians, another area tribe, shared similar problems and cultural values in ancient times. Redemption was a concept used in the Near East cultures to protect families and tribes from being devastated by debt. The Hebrew Scriptures instituted a year of Jubilee. The Hurrian god Tessub told them that they would be successful conquerors if they forgave debt.

Hittites

URL: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/cultures/middle_east/hittites.aspx

One of the great empires of the Ancient Middle East, the Hittites came to power more than 3,000 years ago. Their empire included parts of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Their language was Indo-European, but their writing system was the cuneiform clay tablets of Mesopotamia. The Hittites battled the Egyptians for control of the Mediterranean coast. Click on the basalt relief art to learn about one of their storm gods. Discover where it was found and what else was found in the temple. Hittite culture survived in Syria.

Gilgamesh

URL: <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/g/gilgamesh.html>

Gilgamesh was a great hero of Sumerian and Babylonian epic poetry. In the mythical world, his father in the King-List is described as 'lillu', which means fool or a demon of the vampire kind. Gilgamesh is fifth on the King-List. He lived in Uruk

around 2700 BCE. The Epic of Gilgamesh was written on clay tablets. The story was translated in the last century. The adventures of the story include a great King, search for immortality, and his friendship with Enkidu.

Gilgamesh

URL: <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/ent/A0820825.html>

Gilgamesh was the hero of the Gilgamesh epic, a story written on twelve tablets dated around 2000 B.C. The story is an adventure about the imperious Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu, who suddenly sickened and dies. A list is available of different translations of the epic work that contains 3,000 lines of story. Gilgamesh was the King of Uruk in Babylonian legend. The story tells about the wife of Gilgamesh, his ancestor Ut-napishtim, serpents, ghosts, floods, eternal life, death, and the afterlife. The tablets were discovered among the ruins of Nineveh.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

URL: <http://www.learner.org/courses/worldlit/gilgamesh/>

The ancient story, The Epic of Gilgamesh, is considered the earliest work of literature. Listen to experts describe Gilgamesh and its importance. They explore the themes in the story and discuss the character of Gilgamesh. Read an excerpt, explore a basic timeline and learn about the background of this epic. Each of the characters is introduced and there is a glossary with audio pronunciations. A map shows the world of Gilgamesh around 2800 BCE and a slideshow is also available.

The Rise of Sumer and the Akkadian Empire (4100 B.C. – 2000 B.C.)

URL: <http://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/iraq02-03enl.html>

Sumerian political and economic structure was focused around city-states, each with their own god and temple. Individual city-states were independent, alliances easily collapsed, and city-states resisted centralized control. Palaces were great households of nobility and administrators. Some commoners owned hereditary land, but there were also laborers on the estates of the ruling class and the temple. The Akkadian dynasty conquered many Sumerian city-states, but faced frequent rebellions. Through conquest, Sargon and his sons established the first empire. Sargon's grandson extended the empire and identified himself as a divine king.

Assyria and Babylonia (circa 2000-1157 BC)

URL: <http://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/iraq02-04enl.html>

Historical background on Assyria and Babylonia, two powerful kingdoms in the ancient Middle East, is presented in this study guide prepared by the United States Department of Defense. Illustrated with color photographs of relics from museum collections around the world, this chapter in the history of modern day Iraq describes the significance of monarchs and nomadic leaders that governed the Mesopotamian region between 2000 and 1157 BC. Information on the ruling dynasties includes their influence on the development of laws and governance as well as cultural and religious traditions.

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Exploring Ancient World Cultures

URL: <http://eawc.evansville.edu/nepage.htm>

Exploring Ancient World Cultures (EAWC) presents the wonders of the Near East. The Old Babylonian account of the life and death of Gilgamesh explains an interesting adventure. Learn about the exploits of this King that were preserved in the form of stories that circulated for many years. There is an additional report about the storytelling, and the meaning of life expressed in The Epic of Gilgamesh. In this story, it is said that Gilgamesh ordered the creation of the legendary walls of Uruk.

The Code of Hammurabi

URL: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/hammenu.asp

The Avalon Project from Yale Law School takes an in-depth look at the laws in the Code of Hammurabi. The introduction introduces the ruler who is described as establishing the greatness of Babylon. The Code of Hammurabi is a body of laws recorded on a black stone monument. Two additional essays at this site discuss ancient Babylonian law. Find out about the three classes of people during Hammurabi's rule and how the law was applied differently to those classes. There are laws dealing with trade, debtors, landowners and much more.

The Archaeology of the Ancient Near East

URL: <http://classics.unc.edu/courses/clar241/AssPics.html>

This collection of images representing the people and culture of the Assyrian Empire is from a study course on the archaeology of the Ancient Near East. Descriptive links, containing a brief caption and note on the time period, connect to black and white or color photographs showing artifacts, inscriptions, monuments, and other remains from antiquity. The content is divided into images of gods and kings from the Middle Assyrian Period, the tenth through the fifteenth centuries, and monarchs that governed the Assyrian Empire between the ninth and fifth centuries BC.

Unearthing Ancient Astronomy

URL: <http://www.sciencenewsforkids.org/2007/04/unearthing-ancient-astronomy-3/>

Buena Vista was an ancient village in Peru that was recently excavated by archaeologists. Find out why the archaeologists were so surprised to learn about how the residents of Buena Vista could track the seasons and predict the weather 4,000 years ago. You will see pictures of The Menacing Disk, a mud sculpture that was part of a solar observatory. You will also discover the importance of the Temple of the Fox to the ancient culture. Learn what the Buena Vista discovery teaches us about ancient astronomy.

Ancient Astronomy Calendars, Navigation, Predictions

URL: <http://www.spacetoday.org/SolSys/Earth/AncientAstronomy.html>

The stars in the sky have always fascinated human beings. Thousands of years ago, people in ancient civilizations made up stories about the stars and constellations and created calendars from changes they saw in the Moon and the Sun. Take a trip back through time on the Space Today web site to learn about what ancient peoples from around the world knew about astronomy. Find out about some of the most important discoveries of ancient astronomers.

Eclipses through Traditions and Cultures

URL: http://eclipse99.nasa.gov/pages/traditions_Calendars.html

Ancient civilizations studied the sun and moon and learned to predict lunar eclipses. An accurate calendar was helpful to ancient societies in knowing when to plant and harvest. Investigate why solar eclipses are more difficult to predict than lunar eclipses. Chinese astrologers began predicting eclipses in 2300 B.C., but they weren't always right and getting it wrong could get them beheaded. Babylonian records tell of eclipses that occurred in 1063 and 763 B.C. Egyptian astronomers built sundials, kept almanacs, and identified constellations. Learn about ancient Greek, Indian, Mayan, and Islamic astronomy.

The Arab Astronomers

URL: http://mensaforkids.com/fotm_template.cfm?showPage=fotm201012.cfm

The Three Wise Men you hear about at Christmastime were Arab astronomers. Also known as Magi, they were probably from Babylon or Iran. They were scholars but probably not kings, although they probably enjoyed the patronage of the rulers. We don't know how many there were, only that they brought three gifts. They had watched the starry skies, measuring angles with astrolabes and making calculations about the positions of the planets. They knew when the equinoxes would happen and determined the motions of stars. Learn about the ancient astronomers of Baghdad and Cairo.

Astronomy Throughout History

URL: http://www.windows2universe.org/the_universe/uts/ast_history.html

Thousands of years ago people were observing the stars, planets and galaxies. Journey through the history of astronomy as you explore the features at this web site. Take a look at the timeline to find out about important events in astronomical history. You can also journey by region and learn about people thousands of years ago who were studying astronomy in different parts of the world. The section about people has biographical information about astronomers, scientists and philosophers who had an impact on how astronomy has taken shape.

The Babylonian Creation Story (Enuma Elish)

URL: http://faculty.gvsu.edu/websterm/Enuma_Elish.html

Theogony is an ancient poem that describes the origins of the Greek gods. The Enuma Elish is a Babylonian creation story as well. These two myths are similar in that they both explain the creation of the universe from a shapeless form, to a male and female god. Apsu is the male god, and Tiamat is the female god in the Enuma Elish. The text of the Enuma Elish is in a poem format and can be hard to understand. The article on this Web page explains the Enuma Elish creation story in a simpler way, from beginning to end.

A Curse from the Gods? – The Akkadian Collapse

URL: <http://anthropology.msu.edu/anp363-ss13/2013/03/27/a-curse-from-the-gods-the-akkadian-collapse/>

Was the collapse of the Akkadian Empire due to foreign pressures or climate change? During the reigns of Sargon, his sons, and his grandson, the empire flourished. A decline into anarchy began after Naram-Sin's reign. Some called it a curse from the gods. The fields and orchards produced no food, the clouds produced no rain, and prices became so expensive that people starved. The lamentation was viewed as fiction, but a sediment layer devoid of human activity indicates a 300-year drought. Egyptian records show a similar catastrophe at the end of the Old Kingdom.

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Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions Project

URL: <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/ari/>

Visit this page to learn more about the Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions; a project sponsored by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. The goal of the project is to create an electronic study edition of the inscriptions of the Achaemenid Persian kings in all of their versions: Old Persian, Elamite, Akkadian, Aramaic, and Egyptian. You will find full text of the inscriptions, bibliography, photographs, and plans. A Web Site Navigation Aid link is located on the menu at the top of the page if help searching the site is necessary.

Sumerians

URL: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/cultures/middle_east/sumerians.aspx

Explore the culture of the Ancient Sumerians. Farmers and traders, they irrigated the land between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers to make the land fertile for agriculture. They were known as inventors, developing cuneiform script for a written language and keeping elaborate records of taxes and crops. They made board games, jewelry, and even musical instruments. The tombs of royals in Ur were filled with their treasures and court personnel. See a silver lyre and mosaic column from Ancient Sumer.

Hieroglyphic

URL: <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/society/A0823672.html>

This is an excellent encyclopedia article if you are looking for basic information about hieroglyphics. These are pictures used by ancient Egyptians to mean an idea that might not easily be understood. They developed over several thousands of years, and were used until about 500 B.C. They changed throughout this time period and stopped being used because they were not well understood. They could be used as ideograms, phonograms, or a determinative, and those uses are explained.

Egypt Fun Guide: Hieroglyphics

URL: <http://www.seaworld.org/fun-zone/fun-guides/egypt/hieroglyphics.htm>

Hieroglyphics is the name for the written Egyptian language. It is made up of three types of symbols: alphabetic signs, syllabic symbols, and determinative signs. They all relate to different pronunciations and meanings. The language can be

read any way: from left to right, right to left, or top to bottom, depending on the direction the symbols are facing. This web page features great representations of the symbols, along with their translations.

Hieroglyphics Uncovered

URL: http://www.ngkids.co.uk/cool_stories/1036/hieroglyphics_uncovered

In Ancient Egypt, names were seen as powerful. They thought that a person would survive in the afterlife if people remembered their name. Hieroglyphics or holy writings used pictures to write a name on a tomb. From vultures to rectangles, different pictures could be used to represent sounds like letters do today. Try writing your name using the hieroglyphic alphabet. It's easy to tell what some of the pictures represent but harder to figure others out.

Ancient Scripts: Egyptian

URL: <http://www.ancientscripts.com/egyptian.html>

One of the earliest writing systems in the world, Egyptian Hieroglyphs, is the main focus of this article. Find out how this ancient writing system operates while viewing charts and graphs that demonstrate the alphabet, words, and numbers. Three important types of Ancient Egyptian languages are covered with many translations. You will even see actual pictures of ancient hieroglyphs. The New York Times, Archaeology Magazine, and the BBC Online also provide links to related articles.

Egypt - Pyramids of Giza

URL: http://www.culturefocus.com/egypt_pyramids.htm

The Pyramids of Giza are amazing stone structures that are filled with many mysteries. It is hard to imagine how these pyramids were built during a time with no motorized machinery. Learn what we do know about the pyramids including their size and the materials they are made of. Information about the Great Pyramid is also on this site with several photographs. Read about the ancient Gods that these pyramids were believed to be built for and see amazing photographs of the tunnels inside the Great Pyramids.

The Egyptian Pyramid

URL: http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/nmnh/pyramid.htm

The Smithsonian Institution is a good place to visit if you are looking for information on the Egyptian pyramids. They will tell you details about the evolution of these buildings, beginning with the first step pyramids to the more evolved smooth sided pyramids. Discover what some of the most famous Egyptian pyramids are and where they are located. The information will also give you some insight into why Egyptians built these pyramids and what significance they had in this ancient society.

The Great Pyramid of Giza

URL: http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/nmnh/pyramid.htm

There are many questions surrounding the building of the Great Pyramid. This site takes a look at some of the theories that try to answer these questions. You will learn about the history of ancient Egypt and the Kings that ruled during this time. There are facts about the Great Pyramid's measurements and the interior passageways. The author of this page includes some of the theories developed by historians and scientists about why this structure was build as well as how.

Pyramid

URL: <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/world/A0840626.html>

Did you know that the Egyptians were not the only ones to build pyramids? This article from the Fact Monster encyclopedia discusses not only the true pyramids that exist only in Egypt, but it also covers similar structures in other countries. Who built the pyramids? When? And what became of them? Learn all about these mysterious and fascinating buildings at this web site.

Giza Pyramids Hold Pharaohs' Ancient Secrets

URL: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/ancient/giza-pyramids.html>

The Pyramids of Giza, Egypt were erected to entomb Egyptian rulers. The first, and largest, pyramid was erected some 4,500 years ago. Learn about the process of constructing the pyramids, and what they can teach us about ancient Egyptian life. After reading about the size and dimensions of Giza's three pyramids, learn about the workers who constructed them. Continue reading to discover how these structures provide an invaluable snapshot of ancient Egypt, with their extensive tomb art, inscriptions, and texts.

The Oriental Institute Museum

URL: http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/OI_Museum.html

Note: Take a virtual tour of the galleries on history, art, and archaeology of the ancient Middle East. The site includes a selection of highlights from the collection, organized by region and by subject, and exhibitions and catalogs of their photograph archives, with selected images available from archaeological and survey expeditions from 1892 to the present. The Teacher Resource Center (TRC) features lesson plans, activities, and artifacts on the ancient Near East for middle school educators.

Secrets of Lost Empires: Pharaoh's Obelisk

URL: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/lostempires/obelisk/>

Note: Another wonderful NOVA site, dealing with the question of how the Egyptians quarried, moved, and raised their obelisks. This site includes good information about levers, with an animated sketch of how one functioned in the raising of an obelisk.

Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs

URL: <http://www.kingtut.org>

Note: A companion to an "exhibition of more than 130 treasures from the tomb of the celebrated pharaoh Tutankhamun (King Tut), other Valley of the Kings tombs and additional ancient sites," which will tour the United States in 2005-2006. The site features a timeline, information about Thebes (modern day Luxor, called the Valley of the Kings), King Tut, the discovery of his tomb in 1922, and the alleged curse. Also includes a bibliography and selected images.

Archaeology: An Introduction

URL: <http://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/kevin.greene/wintro/>

An "electronic companion to Archaeology: An Introduction - an introductory book about archaeology for students, or anyone else who would like to start learning about the subject. The book is by Kevin Greene, a senior lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Newcastle in the UK." This site is full of excellent links to academic resources and includes a glossary

Archaeology in-depth

URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/archaeology/>

Are you learning about archaeology? How does archaeology help us learn about ancient civilizations? If you would like to learn more about archaeology, visit this web page. You can learn about different archaeological digs, as well as famous excavations. You can also go on an archaeological history tour. What do you know about marine archaeology? From this web page, you can also explore the different techniques used to find deep-sea treasures.

Archaeology's Interactive Dig

URL: <http://www.archaeology.org/interactive/>

Are you looking for an interactive and fun way to learn about archaeology and archaeological expeditions? Then join this interactive dig sponsored by Archaeology Magazine. Here you will join archaeologists on a current dig of an ancient Egyptian civilization known as Hierakonpolis and recent digs of other locations. Your adventure lets you follow along as these expeditions progress and you will be able to look at field notes, question and answer sessions with archaeologists, journals, and other things!

Archaeology: Excavations and Techniques

URL: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/archaeology/excavations_techniques/

On this site you will be introduced to the work of the archaeologist. They are considered to be history's "forensic experts". An archaeologist that excavates human remains must be very skilled. There are certain procedures required in order to preserve the bones and analyze the clues about who the person was. Here you can read articles about archaeological procedures, artifacts, excavations, reconstructions and more. You can also read a story about carbon dating and how it is used to determine the age of an artifact.

Archaeology Magazine

URL: <http://www.archaeology.org/>

The Archeological Institute of America's official publication, Archeology, can be researched here. Subscriptions to the magazine can be purchased. Current articles and exclusive online features are available. An online shop has t-shirts, totes, books, and back issues. An online archive and an index of articles can be searched. Information is provided on events including museum exhibitions, lectures and conferences, and archeology on television. Travel information includes site guides, AIA tours, and travel links. A bazaar has products, services, and free information.

Cuneiform

URL: <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/CUNEI.HTM>

A written language was developed in Mesopotamia. The language began as a picture language. Using reeds, pictures were written on small clay tablets. The Mesopotamians wrote on the clay tablets while the clay was still wet. Then, when the clay dried, they had a written record. The word "cuneiform" comes from two Latin words, "cuneus" which means "wedge" and "forma" which means "shape." This language was similar to Egyptian hieroglyphics. Log onto this web site and learn more about cuneiform.

Art of the First Cities

URL: http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/First_Cities/firstcities_splash.htm

Ancient art from the earliest civilizations of the Mesopotamia area is featured in this online exhibition from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Choose a city from the map to view masterpieces. Each artifact has an image that can be enlarged, and has descriptive information. You can also see artifacts from specific cities. View art objects that are related to clothes and personal adornment, writing, the divine world, and more. History of these early civilizations is shared.