

Building

Because southern Mesopotamia had few trees, people used the resource they had plenty of for building—mud. The Sumerians formed bricks out of mud, let them dry, and then used them to build everything from houses to large temples.

Most Sumerians lived in simple flat-roofed, mud-brick houses. Groups of houses were built close together, all facing an open court. Their thick walls kept them cool in summer and warm in winter.

Kings and other people of high rank lived in larger houses of two or more stories. Artists made beautiful clay-tile designs to decorate the walls of the houses.

The largest and tallest building in every city-state was the **ziggurat** (ZIH•guh•rat). This temple developed from the simple, one-room temples of the Ubaid culture.

In describing the city of Ur, archaeologist Leonard Woolley wrote,

“The outstanding feature of the city [Ur] was the Ziggurat. . . an artificial mountain”*

*C. Leonard Woolley. *The Sumerians*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1965.

Ziggurats grew as the wealth and power of cities grew. Builders constructed the mud-brick ziggurat in layers. Some temples stood as high as seven-story buildings. At the top of each ziggurat stood a shrine for the city’s special god. Palaces for kings and houses for priests often stood inside a wall that surrounded the ziggurat.

Over time, the Sumerians began building smaller buildings along the outside wall of the ziggurat. Some were shops, others were workshops, and still others were homes. Many city-states also placed parks near their ziggurat. Soon the ziggurat and the area around it became the busy center of the city. Today, wind-eroded ruins are all that is left of these ancient buildings.

READING CHECK ✪ SUMMARIZE

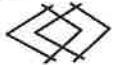














How do ziggurats show that religion was important to the Sumerians?

A Closer Look

Ziggurat

Analyze Illustrations Some historians believe that ziggurats were built to represent mountains. Others think that ziggurats were built as bridges between the heavens and Earth. These mud-brick structures towered over Sumerian cities. To build such a structure required teamwork and skills.

- 1 Builders constructed a ziggurat in layers, each one smaller than the one below it.
 - 2 At the top of a ziggurat stood a shrine to a god.
 - 3 Trees and bushes may have covered the ziggurat.
 - 4 Smaller buildings stood along the outside wall of the ziggurat.
- ◆ Why do you think ziggurats were built in layers?

Development of Cuneiform			
MEANING	PICTOGRAPH (About 3100 B.C.)	EARLY CUNEIFORM (About 1800 B.C.)	LATER CUNEIFORM (About 700 B.C.)
Sun			
Star			
Mountain			
Bird			
Grain			

ANALYZE SKILL Analyze Tables Cuneiform developed from an earlier system of pictographs. The illustration (right) shows a scribe writing cuneiform on a clay tablet.

❖ In which column in the chart above do the symbols look most like the objects they represent?



Transportation

Archaeologists found the world's oldest wheels in Mesopotamia, dating to about 3500 B.C. The Sumerians were the first to attach wheels to carts. They built two-wheeled and four-wheeled carts and chariots pulled by oxen or donkeys.

For long journeys over land, traders in Mesopotamia led caravans of donkeys. Following the same paths over and over again, they established trade routes.

For water travel, the Mesopotamians built various kinds of boats. Their earliest boat was shaped like a basket and built from reeds and covered by animal skins. A mast and sail were in the center of the boat, making it perhaps the world's first sailboat. People also built canoe-shaped boats that they guided with poles.

READING CHECK DRAW CONCLUSIONS
How did new forms of transportation change people's lives?

Writing and Literature

The Sumerians made the first known written records. The earliest known writing was found on a clay tablet in Kish that dates to about 3500 B.C. On the tablet are picture symbols that recorded trade.

Hundreds of clay tablets found at the city of Uruk provide evidence that by 3100 B.C., the Sumerians had developed a writing system. This system was based on cuneiform (kyoo•NEE•uh•fawrm), or wedge-shaped symbols. Each of the 700 symbols stood for a different syllable and was based on a spoken sound.

At that time, few people knew how to write. Because of this, scribes, or people who recorded things for others, became important. Scribes used sharpened reeds to write in cuneiform on soft clay.

Writing made developments of the Sumerian government, economy, and society possible. With writing, scribes

► This statue (right) is of the ancient Sumerian king Gilgamesh, who was known as the Lion Spirit. The artwork (far right) shows Gilgamesh crossing the Water of Death in search of answers.



recorded boundary lines, wars, lists of kings, and gifts to temples. They also kept records of trade and food supplies.

Later, scribes recorded literature, writing down songs and stories. The most famous tale is the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a story about legendary King Gilgamesh.

READING CHECK SUMMARIZE

How did writing help make the development of civilization possible?

Summary

People in Mesopotamia, especially the Sumerians, made many achievements. They created innovations in agriculture, measurements, building, and transportation. They were perhaps the first to use the wheel, the sailboat, and writing. These innovations helped the people of Mesopotamia build an early civilization.

REVIEW

- What were the achievements of people in Mesopotamia?
- Use the terms **scribe** and **cuneiform** in a sentence to describe how writing affected Sumerian society.
- Why was it important for the Sumerians to have food surpluses each year?

CRITICAL THINKING

- ANALYZE SKILL** How did importing metals affect life in Sumer?
- Which of the Sumerian innovations do you think was the most important? Why?

- Make a List** Using the information in this lesson, make a list of the information that scribes recorded.

FOCUS SKILL SUMMARIZE

On a separate sheet of paper, copy and complete the graphic organizer below.

Key Fact

The Mesopotamians made many innovations.

Key Fact

The Mesopotamians developed a civilization.

Summary

Lesson

4

Time

6000 B.C.

3000 B.C.

B.C./A.D.

2300s B.C.

A Sumerian city-state ruler creates laws to protect the poor

2000 B.C.

The oldest-known record of laws is made



WHAT TO KNOW

What was daily life like in a Sumerian city-state?

- ✓ Describe the role of government and religion in Sumerian daily life.
- ✓ Discuss the role of trade in Sumerian city-states.
- ✓ Describe the social order and roles of the Sumerian people.

VOCABULARY

deity p. 118

PEOPLE

Urukagina

Ur-Nammu

PLACES

Sumer

Lagash

Ur



SUMMARIZE

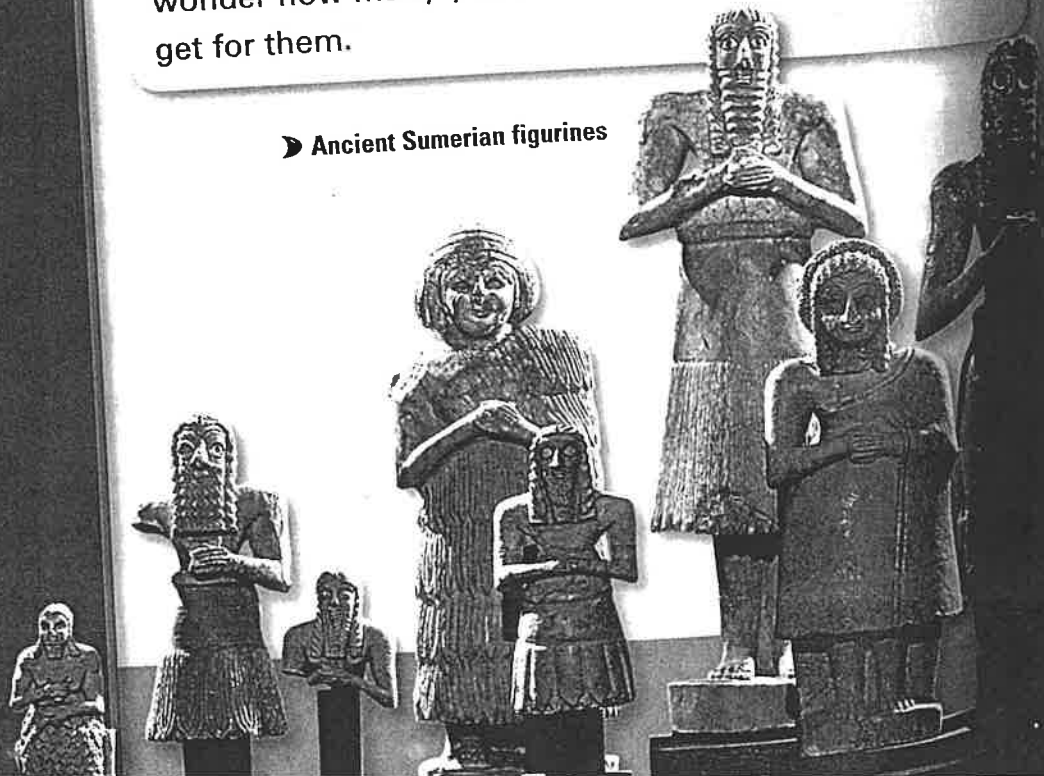
Daily Life in Sumer



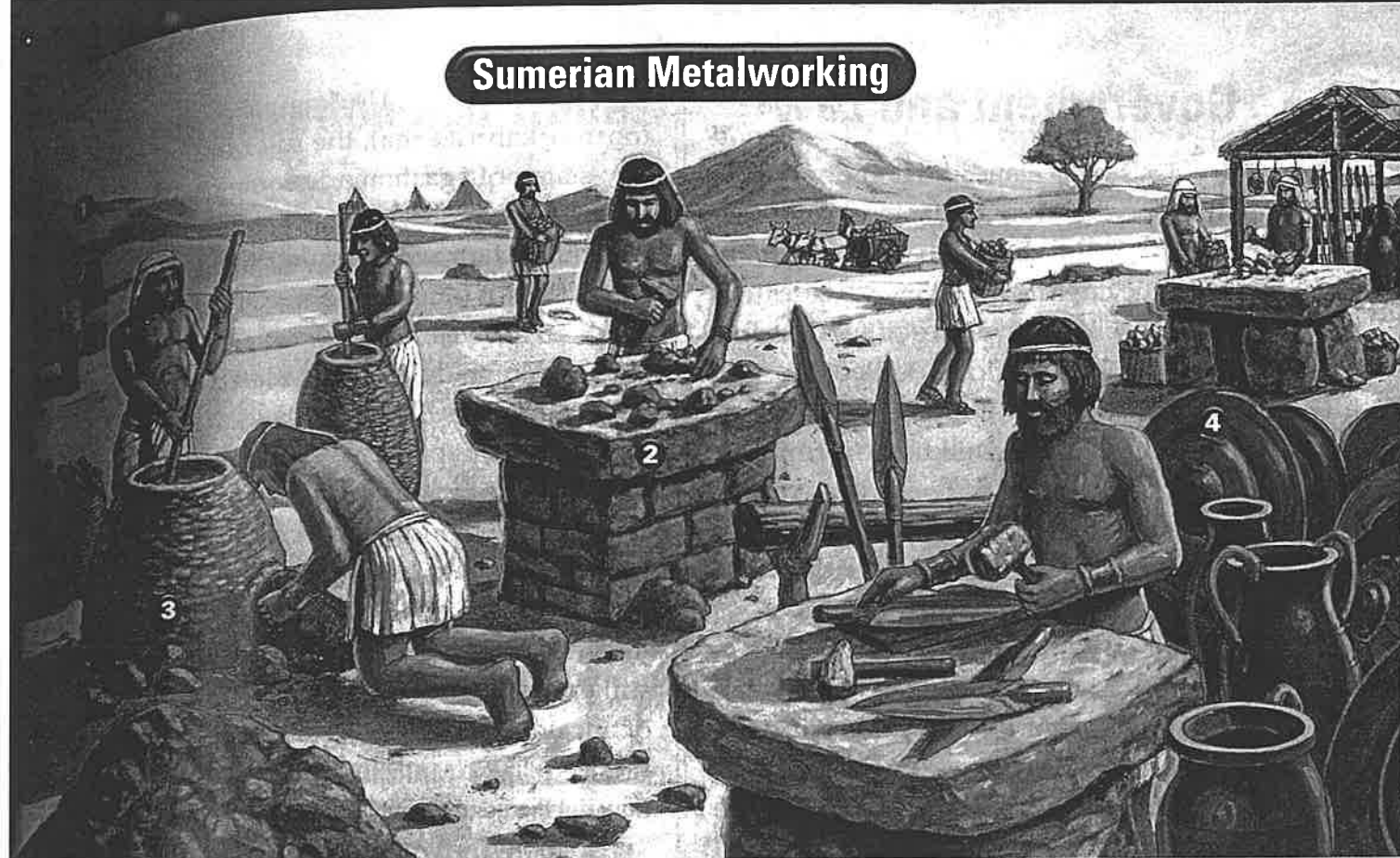
It's 2300 B.C. You've been learning metalworking from your father. You began by watching him carefully melt copper and tin together to make bronze. Then he showed you how to hammer the hot bronze into different shapes. You've practiced using his tools so much that they now seem like parts of your own hands. Finally, your father says that the bronze cups you've made are good enough to sell or trade.

At last, this is the day you've been waiting for! You're going to the marketplace to sell your very own cups. You wonder how many you'll sell and how much silver you'll get for them.

► Ancient Sumerian figurines



Sumerian Metalworking



ANALYZE SKILL Analyze Illustrations

Sumerian metalworkers discovered how to make bronze from tin and copper.

- 1 Workers bring tin ore and copper ore from mines.
 - 2 Workers separate the metals from the ore.
 - 3 Tin and copper are melted in furnaces to make bronze.
 - 4 Metalworkers hammer the bronze into shape.
- How does the illustration above show the idea of the division of labor?

Life in a City-State

Picture an ancient Sumerian city. Imagine the glistening ziggurat that stood in the center of the city. All around the ziggurat were temples and other buildings. The Sumerian cities were centers for trade, government, and religion, and the area around the ziggurat was where much of this happened.

Without agriculture, Sumerian city-states could not have survived or grown. People in the cities relied on the work of farmers, herders, and fishers, who lived in small villages or towns near the cities. Each day, they brought meat, fish, grain, and fruit to

city markets. They produced more than enough food for themselves and the growing populations in the cities.

City dwellers often lived in different parts of the city, depending on the kind of work they did. For example, craftworkers set up shop in a part of the city with others who did similar work. Their small shops lined the narrow streets, and often craftworkers and their families lived above or behind their shops. They passed their skills down from generation to generation. Some hardly ever left their part of the city.

READING CHECK SUMMARIZE

Why were many Sumerians able to do work other than farming?

Government and Law

The ruler's palace and the homes of important people were built close to the ziggurat. From the palace, officials governed the city's day-to-day activities. Besides controlling surpluses of food and collecting taxes, the officials settled disputes and took part in making new laws. They also oversaw the building of temples and monuments.

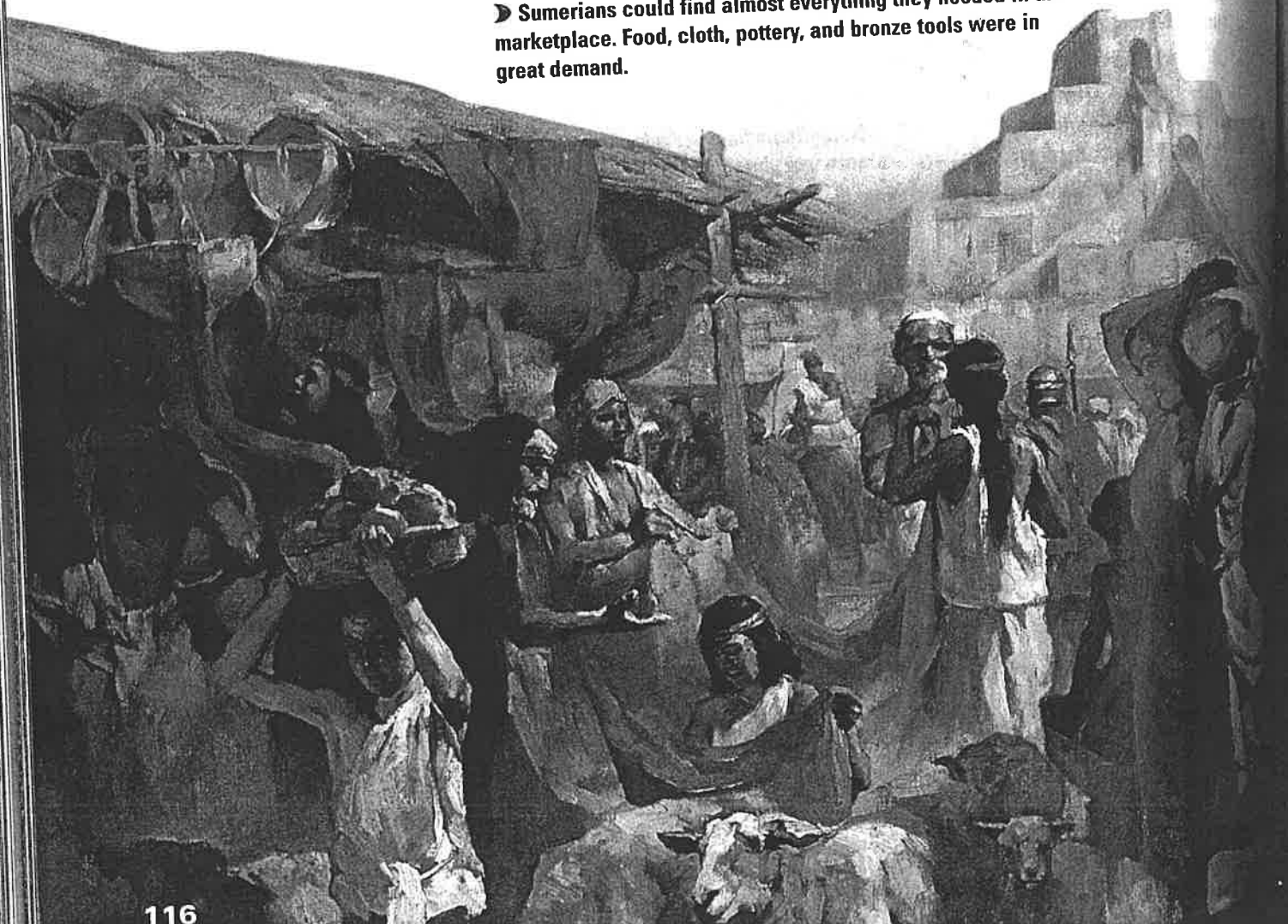
For the most part, everyone in Sumer had certain rights under the law. However, to pay for wars fought against other city-states, officials sometimes took away people's rights to their property. The officials claimed people's land, cattle, and boats and made people pay taxes on everything, including burials.

In the 2300s B.C., Urukagina (oo•roo•kah•GEE•na), the ruler of the city-state of Lagash, made some changes. He created laws to prevent government leaders or the wealthy from taking advantage of the poor.

About 300 years later, Ur-Nammu, the ruler of Ur, made changes related to that city-state's laws. All of the laws were written in the form of *if-then* statements. Ur-Nammu ordered his seven laws carved onto a stone monument for all to see. This informed the people of Ur of both the laws and the punishment for breaking the laws. Today Ur-Nammu's monument still exists. It is the oldest-known record of ancient laws.

READING CHECK MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS
How did the government officials pay for wars?

► Sumerians could find almost everything they needed in the marketplace. Food, cloth, pottery, and bronze tools were in great demand.



Specialization and Trade

As more people began living permanently in one place, they developed new ways of working together to make their lives easier. In Sumerian cities, this change happened, in part, by increased specialization in the division of labor. When people specialized, they learned all of the information and skills necessary to do one job well. Then, people traded their services or the goods that they made with others.

A few people studied to become priests, government officials, doctors, and scribes. Managers and government officials supervised the work of others. They oversaw irrigation, building projects, and the storage and distribution of food. They also were responsible for schools and tax collection.

Most officials were specially trained as scribes. Scribes kept records, wrote letters for others, and wrote down stories and

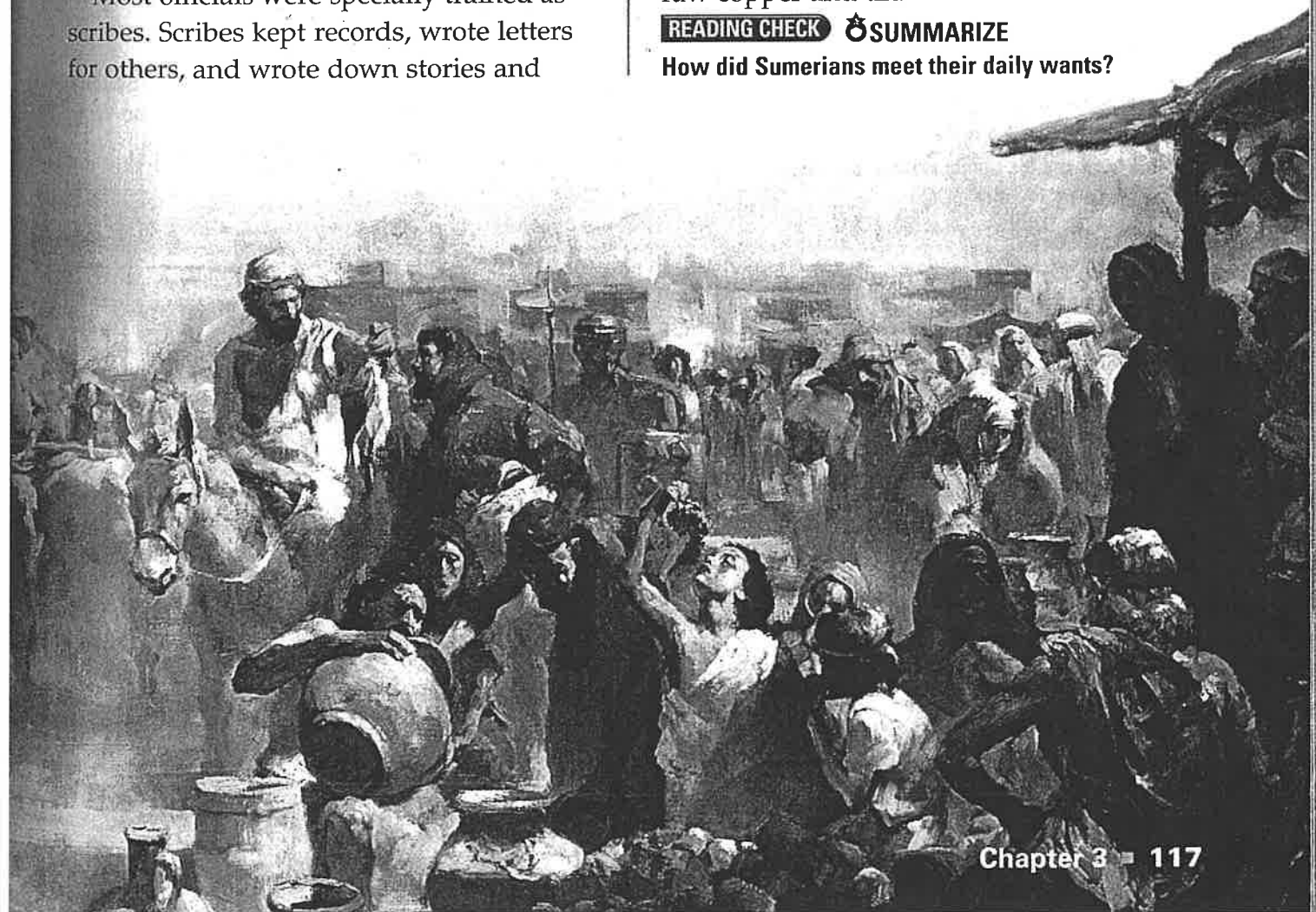
songs. Because scribes controlled information, they became very powerful.

Sumerian craftworkers used natural resources to make everyday objects and luxury goods. Jewelers used lapis lazuli (LAP•uhs LA•zuh•lee), a highly prized blue stone, to fashion necklaces. Carpenters built ships out of wood brought from other places. These ships then carried goods up and down the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Still others trained as weavers, potters, stonemasons, leatherworkers, bricklayers, and metalworkers.

Merchants bought and sold goods to make a living. Sumerian merchants traded within the Fertile Crescent and even as far away as the Mediterranean Sea. The Sumerians traded what they had in surplus—wheat, barley, and metal tools. In return, they got resources they wanted, including wood, salt, precious stones, and raw copper and tin.

READING CHECK ✶ SUMMARIZE

How did Sumerians meet their daily wants?



Pleasing the Gods

Sumerians did not know what caused events in nature. They could not predict dust storms, swarms of insects, or floods. However, they fully understood that when these forces of nature hit, they might lose their crops, their homes, or even their lives.

Sumerians worshipped gods, or **deities**, that they believed could control nature. In the hopes of avoiding natural disasters, they offered gifts of animals, fruits, and grain to the deities. They hoped their gifts would persuade the deities to protect them.

The Sumerians believed in thousands of gods. The most important were the air god, Enlil, and the water god, Enki, who was also the god of wisdom.

READING CHECK ✶ **SUMMARIZE**
Why did the Sumerians offer gifts to deities?

Social Structure

Over time, ancient Sumerian society became divided into social classes, or groups with different levels of importance. The highest social class in Sumer was made up of the king and his family, nobles, priests, and military leaders.

Most Sumerians were members of the middle class, which included merchants, scribes, craftworkers, and farmers. Sumerians were not locked into a certain class for their entire life. Instead, successful people could rise to a higher class.

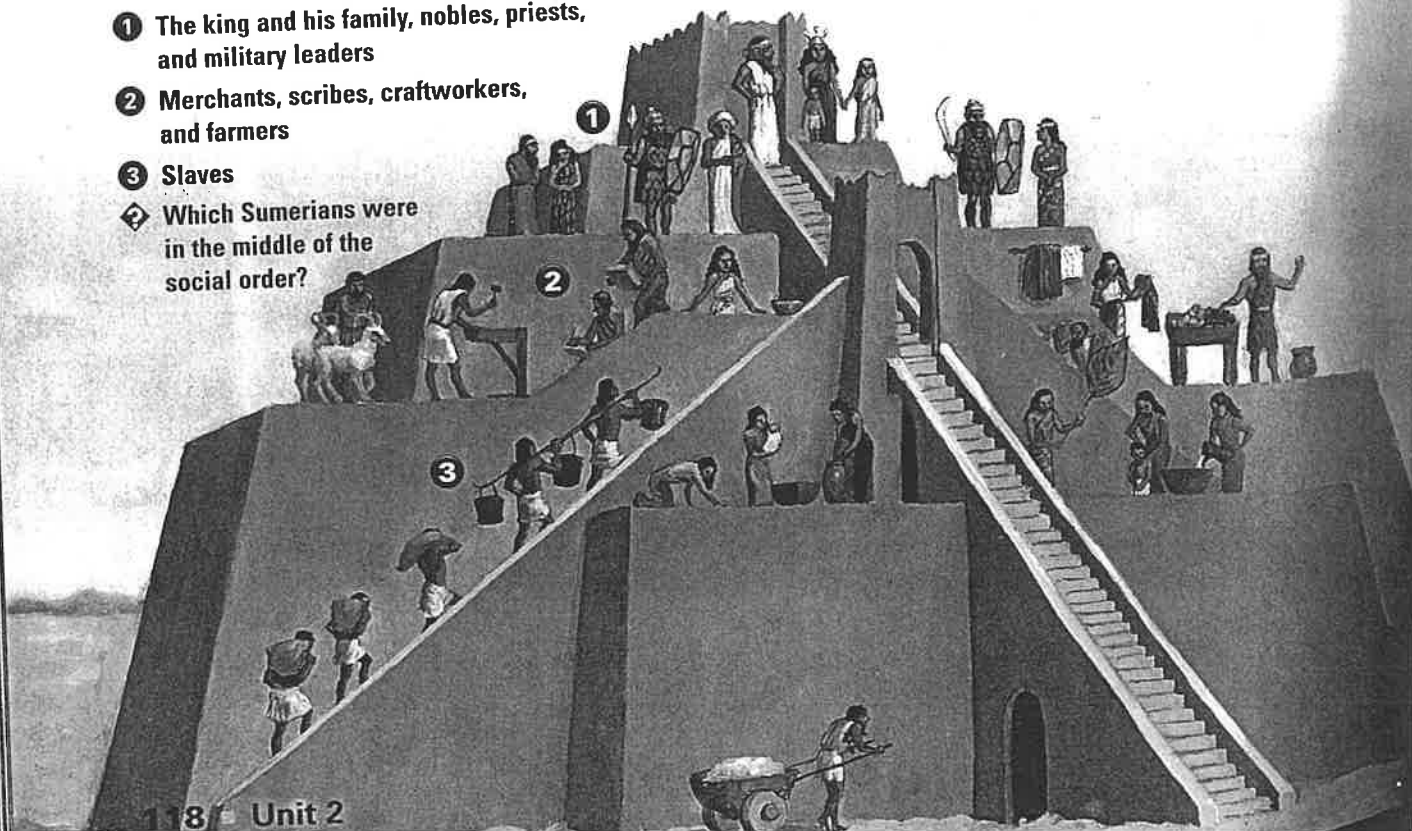
Slaves were at the bottom of Sumerian society. Often, enemies in battle became slaves. Also, Sumerians who owed money could sell themselves into slavery. After working off their debt, they could buy back their freedom.

Sumerian Social Structure

ANALYSIS SKILL Analyze Illustrations

This diagram uses a ziggurat to show the social order of classes in Sumerian society.

- ① The king and his family, nobles, priests, and military leaders
 - ② Merchants, scribes, craftworkers, and farmers
 - ③ Slaves
- ◆ Which Sumerians were in the middle of the social order?



Children IN HISTORY

Sumerian Children

Children in ancient Sumer enjoyed swimming in rivers and playing games. In the ruins of Sumer, archaeologists have even found a board game that they call the Royal Game of Ur.

Life for Sumerian children was not all fun and games. Before the age of ten, boys were usually sent to work with their fathers. Girls stayed home to help their mothers. In this way, they learned their adult roles.

Boys from wealthy families attended school to learn reading, writing, and math. Few girls from wealthy families attended school.



Sumerian women had more rights and freedoms than women in many other ancient civilizations. In addition to running their households, Sumerian women could own property, run businesses, divorce cruel husbands, and train to be priestesses or scribes.


READING CHECK SUMMARIZE

How could Sumerians change their social class?


Summary


The Sumerian cities were centers for trade, religion, and government. City life was supported by the food farmers provided and by the work done by government officials. Sumerians worshipped many gods that represented nature. Over time, social classes developed in Sumerian society.

REVIEW

-  What was daily life like in a Sumerian city-state?
- Use the term **deity** in a paragraph to describe Sumerian religious beliefs.
- What role did merchants play in the Sumerian economy?

CRITICAL THINKING

-  **ANALYZER SKILL** Why do you think city life contributed to new social roles?
- Make It Relevant** How are the roles of children in the present-day United States similar to and different from those in Sumerian society?

-  **Make a Chart** Make a chart to show the Sumerian social classes. Then use your chart to explain to a classmate the relationship between Sumerian religion and its society and government.

-  **FOCUS SKILL** **SUMMARIZE**

On a separate sheet of paper, copy and complete the graphic organizer below.

Key Fact

Key Fact

Summary

Sumerian society was divided into different social classes.

Lesson

5

Time

6000 B.C.

3000 B.C.

B.C./A.D.

2350 B.C.

Sargon rules Mesopotamia

1790 B.C.

Hammurabi rules the Babylonian Empire

609 B.C.

The Assyrian Empire falls



WHAT TO KNOW

How did the first empires develop in Mesopotamia?

- ✓ Describe how the first empires developed.
- ✓ Explain the significance of the Code of Hammurabi.
- ✓ Describe the accomplishments of the first empires.

VOCABULARY

conquer p. 121
 empire p. 121
 emperor p. 121
 standing army p. 121
 tribute p. 121
 Code of Hammurabi p. 122

PEOPLE

Hammurabi
 Sargon
 Nebuchadnezzar

PLACES

Kish
 Mesopotamia
 Akkad
 Babylon



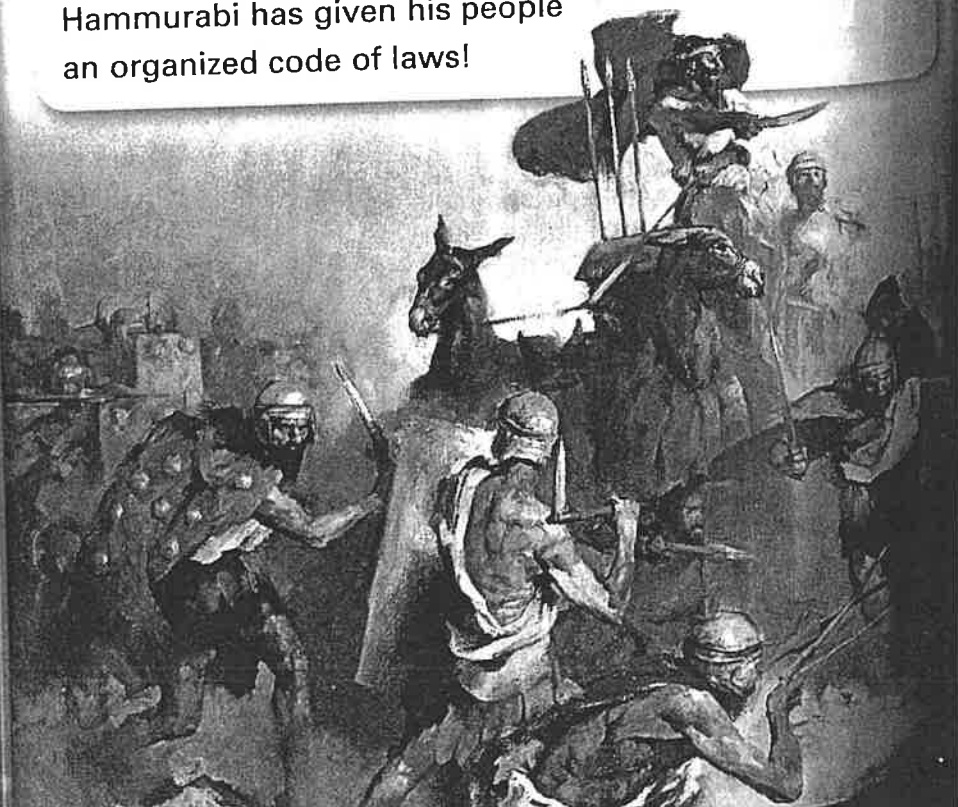
SUMMARIZE

The First Empires

YOU ARE THERE

It is 1775 B.C. You hurry toward the center of the city, following a rapidly growing crowd. A new stone marker, or stela, is being put in place. Like everyone else, you want to see what the stela shows.

As you push your way to the front of the crowd, you can see a carving at the top of the stela. It shows the noble king, **Hammurabi**, standing before the sun god, Shamash. The rest of the stela is covered with words describing laws. Some are new, but you recognize others from the old tablets that you've read in school. Hammurabi has given his people an organized code of laws!



The Akkadian Empire

TIME 2350 B.C.

PLACE Mesopotamia

The Sumerian city-states wanted the wealth that came from controlling land and water. Because of this, they were often at war with one another.

Eventually, an enemy army did come to **conquer** the Sumerians. The leader of the army that attacked the Sumerian city-states was **Sargon** (SAR•gahn).

Sargon was not a Sumerian, but he had served in the army of the Sumerian king of **Kish**. Around 2350 B.C., Sargon rebelled against the king and defeated him. Then, Sargon marched his army across **Mesopotamia**, conquering one Sumerian city-state at a time. In doing so, he created the world's first **empire**, bringing vast lands and varied peoples under his control.

Sargon set up his capital at the city of **Akkad** (A•kad), in central Mesopotamia. For 55 years, Sargon ruled as **emperor** of what became known as the Akkadian

(uh•KAY•dee•uhn) Empire. Akkad became the most splendid city in all of Mesopotamia.

Sargon used force and an organized government to maintain control over his empire. He was one of the first rulers to keep a **standing army**, a permanent army of paid soldiers. Sargon chose officials who he knew would remain faithful and appointed loyal nobles as governors to control conquered cities.

Each governor provided Sargon with tribute collected from the conquered people. **Tribute** is a required payment from one ruler to a more powerful ruler. This tribute brought much wealth under Sargon's control.

The Akkadian Empire lasted for more than 200 years after Sargon's death. In about 2300 B.C., the empire stretched from what is now Iran to the Mediterranean Sea. It eventually fell, and Sumer's city-states once again became independent.

READING CHECK SUMMARIZE

How did Sargon maintain control over his empire?

► Sargon (left) leads his army into battle. Through conquest, he brought new lands and people under his control.



CITIZENSHIP

Equal Justice

In addition to putting together a code of laws, Hammurabi introduced the idea of equal justice, or fair treatment, under the laws. His equal justice, however, was limited to equality within each social class. Under the Code of Hammurabi, members of the ruling class were favored over people of other classes. The punishments they received were often lighter than those received by other people. At that time, this was considered fair and just. Today, the United States Constitution provides for equal treatment for all people without regard for a person's position in our society.



► Emperor Hammurabi in prayer

Hammurabi and the Babylonian Empire

TIME 1790 B.C.

PLACE Mesopotamia

Between 1790 B.C. and 1750 B.C., Hammurabi (ha•muh•RAH•bee), the king of the city-state of **Babylon**, conquered and united most of Mesopotamia under his rule. In this way, he formed a large empire that became known as the Babylonian Empire.

As emperor, Hammurabi both encouraged trade and oversaw agriculture, irrigation, and building projects. In addition, he changed the tax system so that all people in the empire paid a fair share.

Hammurabi is perhaps best remembered for organizing the laws of his land. Each city-state had long had its own laws. Hammurabi collected all these laws, sorted them, and came up with one collection of laws known as the **Code of Hammurabi**.

The Code of Hammurabi consisted of 282 laws. They covered such matters as

family relationships, taxes, land and business deals, trade, loans, debts, wages, and crime.

Hammurabi changed the old laws that were unfair and made clear those that were confusing. He had the code carved into stone and placed in a public place for everyone to see. To Hammurabi, the code represented a way to rule

“so that the strong should not harm the weak.”*

Some of the laws followed the idea of “an eye for an eye.” These laws called for punishments that matched the crimes that had been committed. For example, a person who broke someone's arm in a fight would be punished by having his or her arm broken. Hammurabi's code lasted over the years, but his empire did not. By about 1600 B.C., the Babylonian Empire had fallen.

READING CHECK ✨ **SUMMARIZE**

How did Hammurabi organize the laws of Babylon?

*Hammurabi. *The Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi, King of Babylon*. L.W. King, ed., trans. AMS Press, 1976.

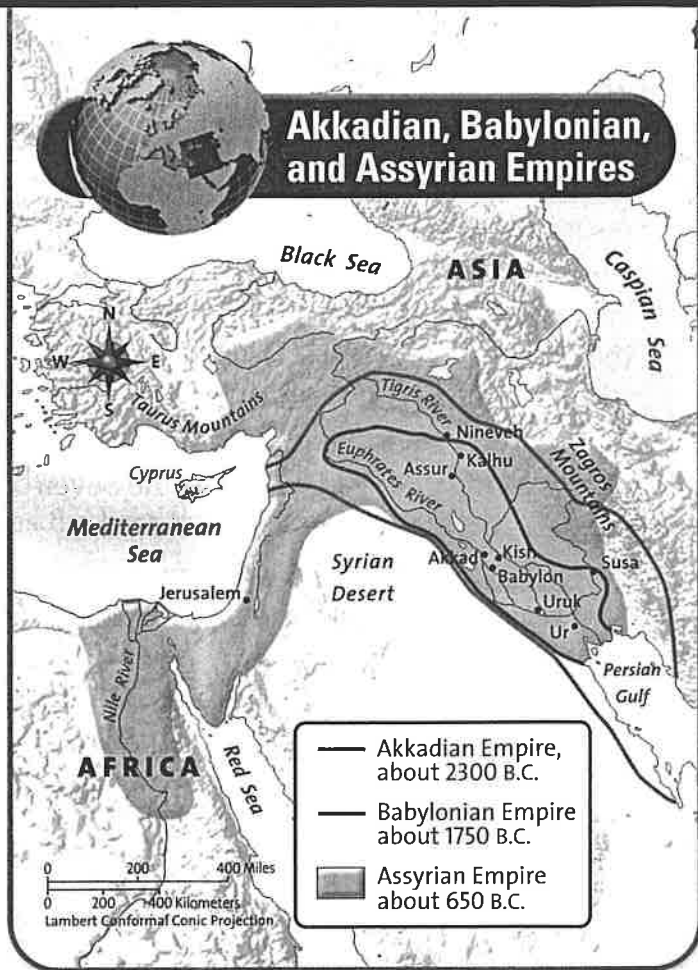
Kassite and Assyrian Rule

After the fall of the Babylonian Empire, several different groups invaded and ruled Mesopotamia. In the 1600s B.C., the Hittites, armed with war chariots and iron weapons, captured and looted Babylon.

The Hittites soon returned to their homeland, and their neighbors, the Kassites, moved in and conquered Babylon. They ruled the city for more than 500 years. The Kassites adopted Babylonian laws, religion, and literature, which helped Babylonian culture live on.

In time, the Assyrian Empire gained control of the region. The Assyrians had a great desire to control the trade routes in southwestern Asia. Their mastery over powerful new weapons helped them meet this goal. From the Hittites, they had learned how to make and use iron weapons and war chariots. The Assyrian army introduced the battering ram, a heavy wooden beam used to break down walls. They were also among the first to use the lance, a spear attached to a long handle.

One by one, the Assyrians conquered their neighbors. By the 700s B.C., the Assyrians ruled the largest empire in the world. They controlled all of Mesopotamia, as well as lands in present-day Turkey, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf.

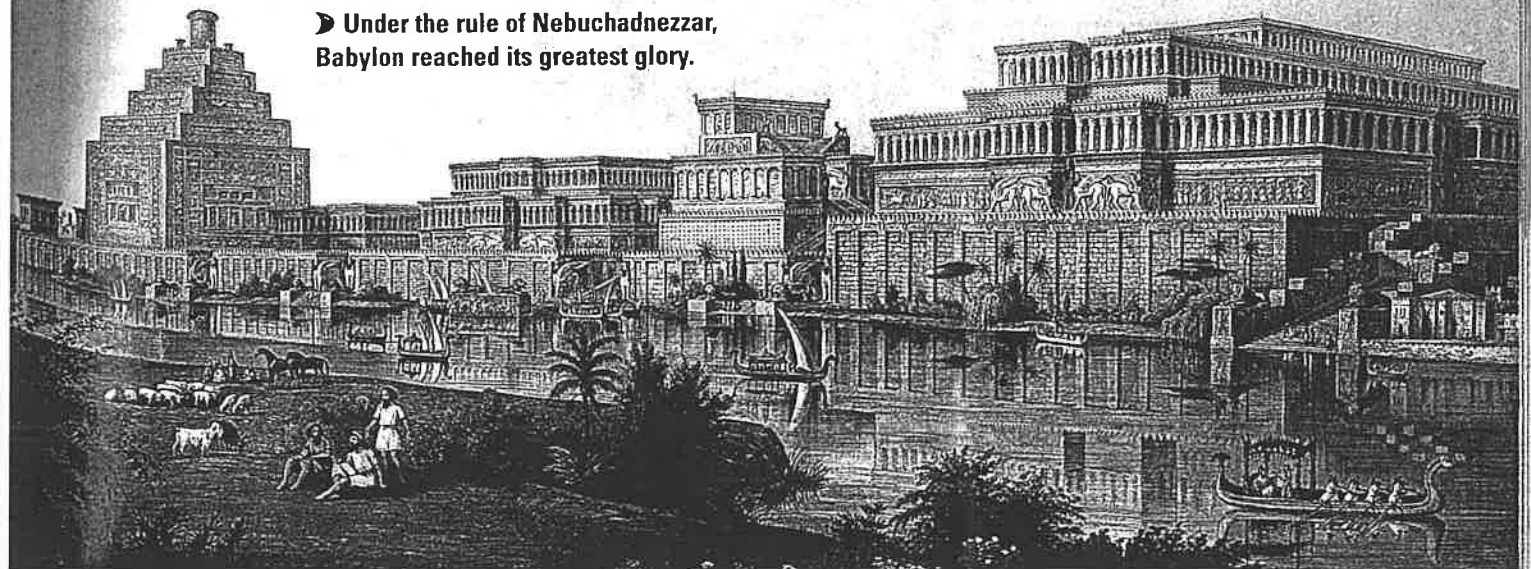


ANALYZE SKILL Analyze Maps At its peak, the Assyrian Empire stretched more than 1,500 miles.

◆ **Regions** What geographic feature may have stopped the Assyrians from expanding southward?

The Assyrians were great innovators. Assyrian kings united their huge empire by building the world's first system of paved roads and developing a postal system. The Assyrians were the first to make locks that opened with keys.

► Under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon reached its greatest glory.



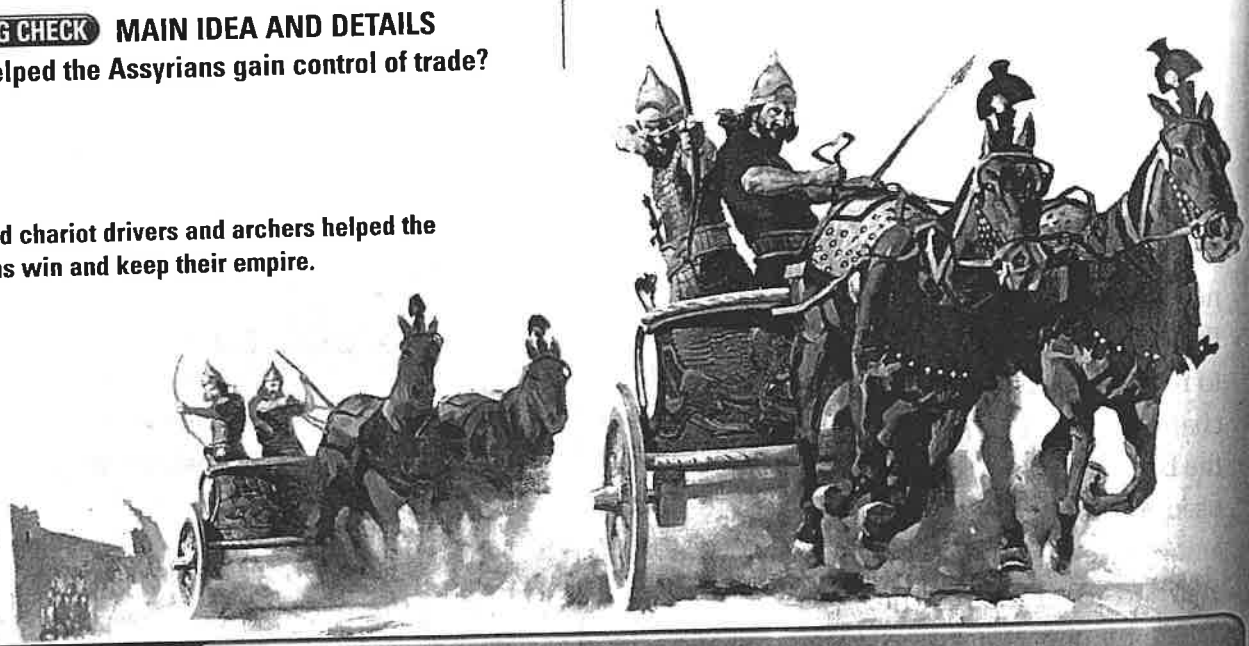
They also invented the magnifying glass and built the first libraries.

In 609 B.C., the Assyrian Empire fell to its enemies, and the New Babylonian Empire rose in its place. One of this empire's best-known rulers was **Nebuchadnezzar** (neb•uh•kuhd•NEZ•er). He is believed to have built the terraced garden known as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. This garden is remembered as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

READING CHECK MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS

What helped the Assyrians gain control of trade?


► Skilled chariot drivers and archers helped the Assyrians win and keep their empire.




Summary


Competition for resources gave rise to early empires in Mesopotamia. Sargon built the region's first empire, the Akkadian Empire. The Babylonian Empire grew under Hammurabi, who is remembered for his code of laws. Over time, the Kassites and the Assyrians also built empires in the region.

REVIEW

1.  How did the first empires develop in Mesopotamia?
2. Use the terms **conquer** and **empire** to describe an **emperor**.
3. What were the major accomplishments of the Assyrian Empire?

CRITICAL THINKING

4.  **ANALYSIS SKILL** Why do you think early empires needed a standing army?
5. **Make It Relevant** Hammurabi had laws written down and made open to the public, just as many governments do today. How is this practice important to maintaining equality and justice?

6.  **Write a Classroom Code** With a group of classmates, come up with a code of classroom rules. First, make a list of rules with your group. Then, pick the five most important rules, and display them in your classroom.

7.  **FOCUS SKILL SUMMARIZE**

On a separate sheet of paper, copy and complete this graphic organizer.

Key Fact

Key Fact

Summary

Mesopotamia was the home of many early empires.