

Chapter 01 - Mesopotamia

Chapter 01
Mesopotamia

Multiple Choice Questions

1. The literal translation of Mesopotamia is "the land _____. "
A. amongst the sand
B. between two rivers
C. in the middle
D. where people gather

Learning Objective: Explain how the natural environment influenced Sumerian beliefs.
Topic: History

2. The first of Mesopotamia's many civilizations was the city of
A. Basra.
B. Mecca.
C. Babylon.
D. Sumer.

Topic: History

3. The world's first epic poem was
A. *Hammurabi's Code*.
B. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.
C. the Christian Bible.
D. None of these answers is correct.

Learning Objective: Recognize features of Mesopotamian culture in its literature and art.
Topic: History
Topic: Literature

4. Which of the following represents consolidation of the various tribal laws into one central legal plan?

- A. Hammurabi's Code
- B. The Epic of Gilgamesh
- C. the Christian Bible
- D. None of these answers is correct.

Learning Objective: Describe social effects of the shift from oral to written law in ancient Babylon.

Topic: History

Topic: Literature

Topic: Mesopotamian government

Topic: Mesopotamian social order

5. The massive, terraced towers of mud and brick constructed by the Mesopotamians are called

- A. shrines.
- B. ziggurats.
- C. babels.
- D. pyramids.

Topic: Art and Architecture

Topic: History

6. The developers of the basic alphabet that eventually morphed into the modern Western languages were the

- A. Phoenicians.
- B. Sumerians.
- C. Hittites.
- D. Persians.

Learning Objective: Recognize features of Mesopotamian culture in its literature and art.

Topic: Art and Architecture

Topic: History

Topic: Literature

Chapter 01 - Mesopotamia

7.

The beginning of the Hebrew history is personified by which of the following?

- A. Moses
- B. Jesus Christ
- C. Noah
- D.** Abraham

Topic: Literature

Topic: Philosophy and Religion

Topic: The Hebrew Bible

Topic: monotheism

8. Who of the following led the Hebrew people out of Egyptian slavery?

- A.** Moses
- B. Jesus Christ
- C. Noah
- D. Abraham

Topic: History

Topic: Literature

Topic: Philosophy and Religion

Topic: The Hebrew Bible

Topic: monotheism

9. Why did the Hebrews not go immediately to the promised land after leaving Egypt?

- A.** It was occupied by strong local tribes.
- B. It was denied to the generation that had disobeyed God in the desert.
- C. They went the wrong way.
- D. They were unsure which way to go.

Topic: History

Topic: Philosophy and Religion

Topic: The Hebrew Bible

Topic: monotheism

Chapter 01 - Mesopotamia

10. The Hebrew god is named

A. Gilgamesh.

B. Yahweh.

C. Torah.

D. Aten.

Topic: Literature

Topic: Philosophy and Religion

Topic: The Hebrew Bible

Topic: monotheism

11. Which of the following geological features forms Mesopotamia?

A.

the Nile and Euphrates rivers

B.

the Tigris and Euphrates rivers

C.

the Nile and Tigris rivers

D.

the Indus and Tigris rivers

Learning Objective: Explain how the natural environment influenced Sumerian beliefs.

Topic: History

12. The ancient capitol of the Persian Empire was

A. Persepolis.

B. Tehran.

C. Babylon.

D. Mecca.

Topic: History

Topic: Persian Empire

Chapter 01 - Mesopotamia

13. The introduction of iron-forging technology to Mesopotamia was by the
A. Hittites.
B. Phoenicians.
C. Hebrews.
D. Egyptians.

Learning Objective: Examine technology's role in the rise of empires in Mesopotamia.

Topic: History

Topic: Iron Age

14. The first five books of the Hebrew Bible are collectively called the
A. Decalogue.
B. Menorah.
C. Torah.
D. Vedas.

Topic: History

Topic: Literature

Topic: Philosophy and Religion

Topic: The Hebrew Bible

Topic: monotheism

15.

Which of the following Iron Age empires combined fighting techniques and engineering ingenuity to swallow up most of the land between the Persian Gulf and the Nile valley by 700 B.C.E.?

- A. the Egyptians
B. the Assyrians
C. the Chaldeans
D. the Persians

Learning Objective: Examine technology's role in the rise of empires in Mesopotamia.

Topic: Assyrian Empire

Topic: History

Topic: Iron Age

Essay Questions

16. Discuss the ways in which the natural environment influenced religious beliefs in Sumer.

Mesopotamia's gods and goddesses were associated with the forces of nature. Like its climate, its divinities were fierce and capricious, its mythology filled with physical and spiritual woe, and its cosmology based on the themes of chaos and conflict. The two rivers that surrounded Sumer—the Tigris and Euphrates—formed the basis of Sumerian life and the people of the region naturally saw the fertile cycles of flooding in a religious context. *The Babylonian Creation* states, "When sweet and bitter / mingled together, no reed was plaited, no rushes / muddied the water, / the gods were nameless, natureless, futureless, then / from Apsu and Tiamat / in the waters gods were created, in the waters / silt precipitated."

Learning Objective: Explain how the natural environment influenced Sumerian beliefs.

Topic: History

Topic: Mesopotamian gods

Topic: Philosophy and Religion

17. Discuss the basic features of Mesopotamian culture as reflected in its literature and art.

Whereas many early cultures venerated female divinities, ancient civilizations gradually came to give primacy to male deities. In the Sumerian *The Babylonian Creation*, humankind's earliest cosmological myth, Marduk's destruction of the Great Mother Tiamat reflects the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy in the polytheistic history of the ancient world. Some of the earliest literature from Sumer celebrates the colorful "Queen of Heaven" known as Inanna (or Ishtar), goddess of chaos and love, associated with fertility, the moon, and the planet Venus, and we can see her in various ancient statues and figures from the area.

Human life was much more precarious in ancient times, and the theme of human vulnerability and the search for everlasting life are the central motifs in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the world's first epic.

When powerful Sumerians died, they were often buried with many carved figurines, which reveal the Sumerians sense of awe in the face of the divine. Carved out of soft stone, alabaster, and marble, some of these cult images may represent the gods, but it is more likely that they are votive (devotional) figures that represent the townspeople of Tell Asmar in the act of worshipping their local deities. Their enlarged eyes, inlaid with shell, lapis lazuli, and black limestone, convey the impression of dread and awe, visual testimony to the sense of human apprehension in the face of divine power. These images also express the insecurity of a people whose vulnerability was an ever-present fact of life.

Learning Objective: Recognize features of Mesopotamian culture in its literature and art.

Topic: Art and Architecture

Topic: Literature

Topic: Mesopotamian gods

Topic: Philosophy and Religion

18. Discuss the function of written law in ancient Babylon.

As the first Babylonian Empire politically united several regions, Babylon's sixth ruler, Hammurabi, called for a systematic codification of existing legal practices. Hammurabi's Code is the most extensive and comprehensive set of laws to survive from ancient times.

Hammurabi's Code covers a broad spectrum of moral, social, and commercial obligations. Its civil and criminal statutes specify penalties for murder, theft, incest, adultery, kidnapping, assault and battery, and many other crimes. It also documents the fact that under Babylonian law, individuals were not regarded as equals. Human worth was defined in terms of a person's wealth and status in society. Further clauses in the Code reveal how women were treated. They were considered intellectually and physically inferior to men, were regarded as the personal property of the male head of the household, and were expected to bear children (clause 138). However, they also enjoyed commercial freedom (clause 109) and considerable legal protection (clauses 134, 138, 209, and 210).

Written law represented a landmark advance in the development of human rights in that it protected the individual from the capricious decisions of monarchs. Although written law necessarily restricted individual freedom, it safeguarded the basic values of the community.

Learning Objective: Describe social effects of the shift from oral to written law in ancient Babylon.

Topic: History

Topic: Mesopotamian government

Topic: Mesopotamian social order

19. Discuss the nature and significance of Hebrew culture and belief.

In early Mesopotamia, Hebrews forged the fundamentals of their faith: monotheism, the belief in a single, all-powerful creator-god, and the renewal of the covenant binding them to their god in exchange for divine protection.

Although monotheism first appeared a bit earlier, in the worship of the sun god Aten as more powerful than all the other Egyptian gods, Hebrew monotheism differed in that the Hebrews perceived Yahweh as the one and *only* god. Moreover, as Supreme Creator, Yahweh did not descend from nature or from other gods, but preceded the physical universe. Unlike the Babylonian universe, described as spontaneously generated and perpetually chaotic, the Hebrew Creation was divinely planned and invested with moral order by a benevolent, all-knowing Being. Finally, in contrast to the Babylonian world, where squabbling gods made human beings their servants, the Hebrew universe was the gift given by its Creator to his supreme creation: humankind.

The Hebrew belief system stands apart from other ancient concepts of divine power in its focus on ethics and morals. Ethical monotheism, the veneration of a single god as moral monitor, was unique in the ancient world. Its practice dignified individual moral judgment and became the most lasting of the Hebrew contributions to world culture.

Learning Objective: Compare social obligation instilled by Hebrew law to that of Babylon.

Topic: History

Topic: Philosophy and Religion

Topic: The Hebrew Bible

Topic: monotheism

20. Discuss the role of technology in the rise of empires in Mesopotamia.

During the course of the second millennium B.C.E., all of Mesopotamia felt the effects of a new technology: iron. Cheaper to produce and more durable than bronze, iron represented new, superior technology. In addition to their iron weapons, the Hittites made active use of horse-drawn war chariots, which provided increased speed and mobility in battle. The combination of war chariots and iron weapons gave the Hittites clear military superiority over all of Mesopotamia.

As iron technology spread slowly throughout the Near East, it transformed the ancient world. Iron was used to build arched bridges, aqueducts, and other architecture necessary for good infrastructure. Iron tools also contributed to increased agricultural production, which in turn supported an increased population. In the wake of the Iron Age, numerous small states came to flower, bringing with them major cultural innovations.

Learning Objective: Examine technology's role in the rise of empires in Mesopotamia.

Topic: History

Topic: Iron Age