

CHAPTER 3: 7000 - 500BC

Mesopotamia and the geography of the Fertile Crescent

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

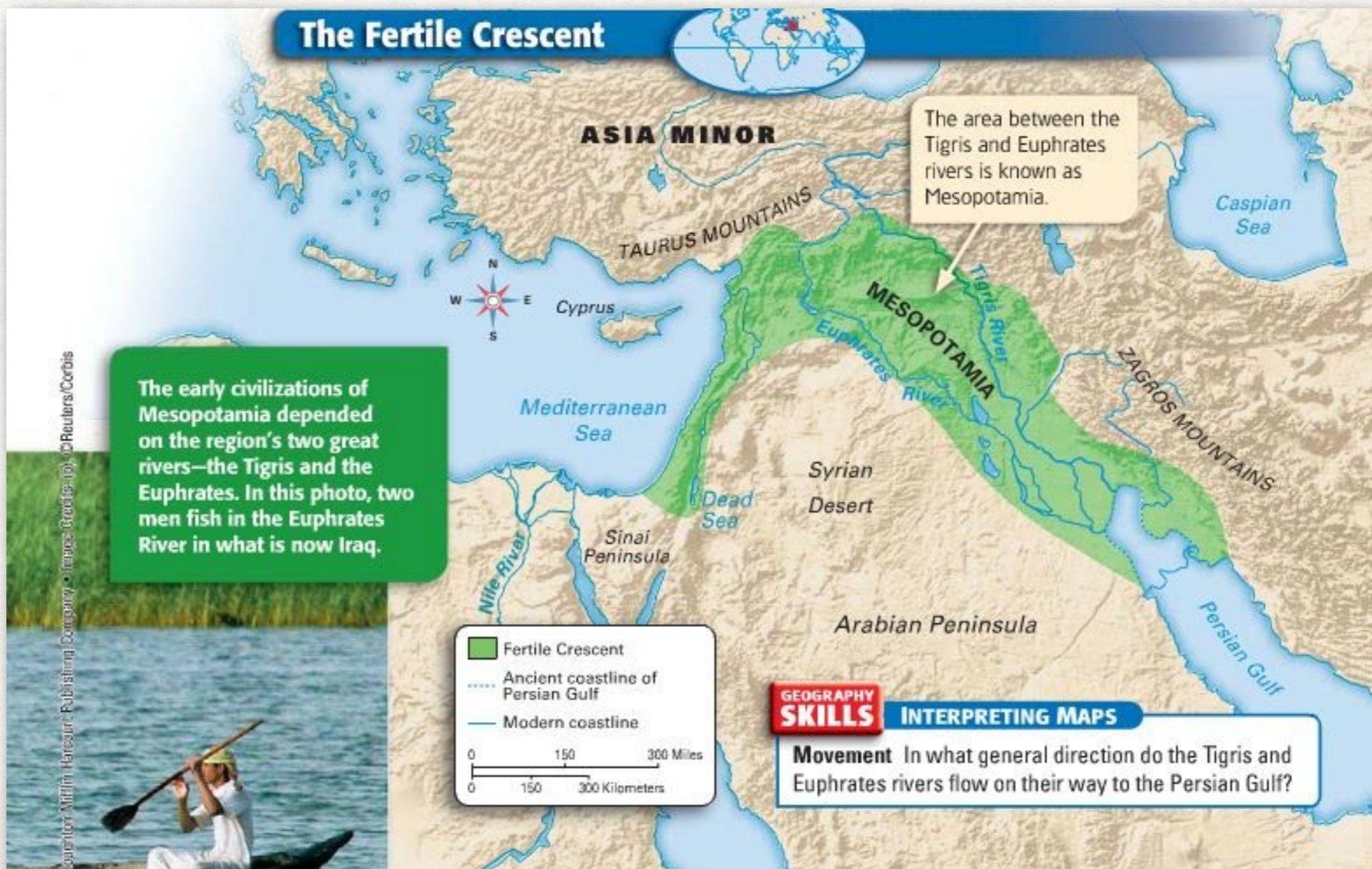
MAIN IDEAS

- The rivers of Southwest Asia supported the growth of civilization.
- New farming techniques led to the growth of cities.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

BIG IDEA

- The valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers were the site of the world's first civilizations.

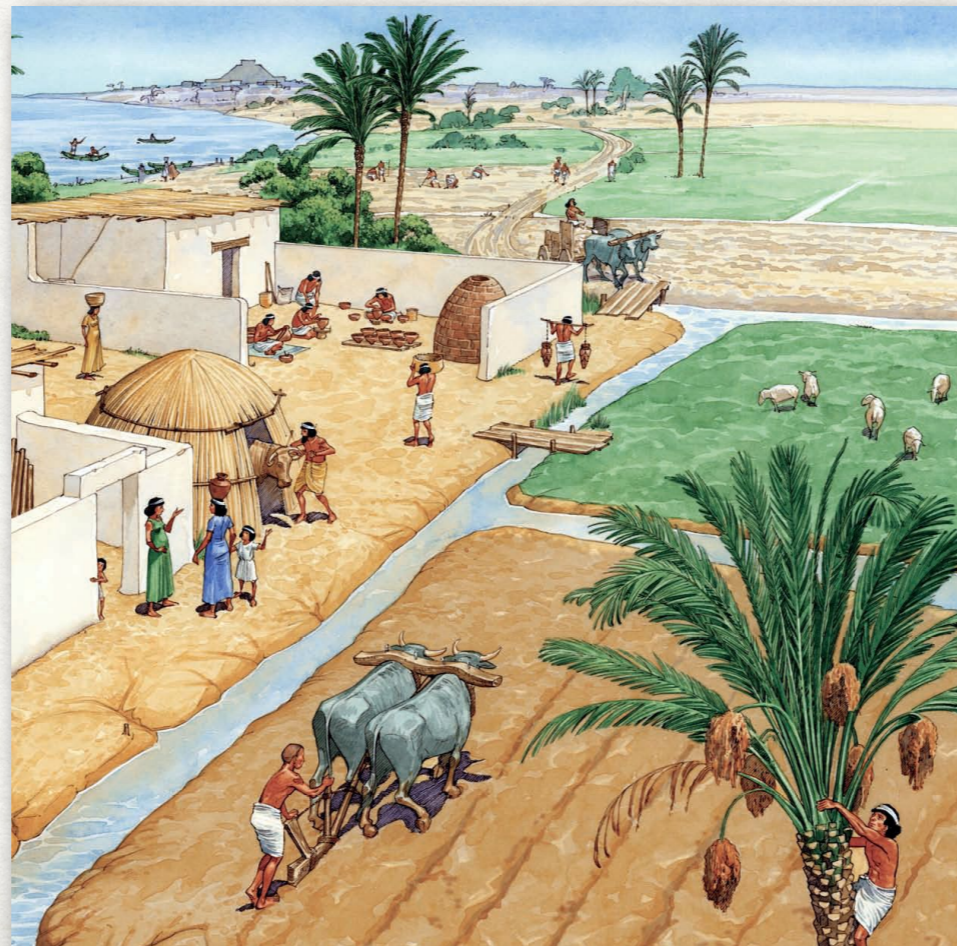


ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How did geography influence the development of civilization in Southwest Asia?

BUILDING BACKGROUND

- In several parts of the world, bands of hunter-gatherers began to settle down in farming settlements. They domesticated plants and animals. Gradually, their cultures became more complex. Most early civilizations grew up along rivers, where people learned to work together to control floods.



RIVERS SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF CIVILIZATION

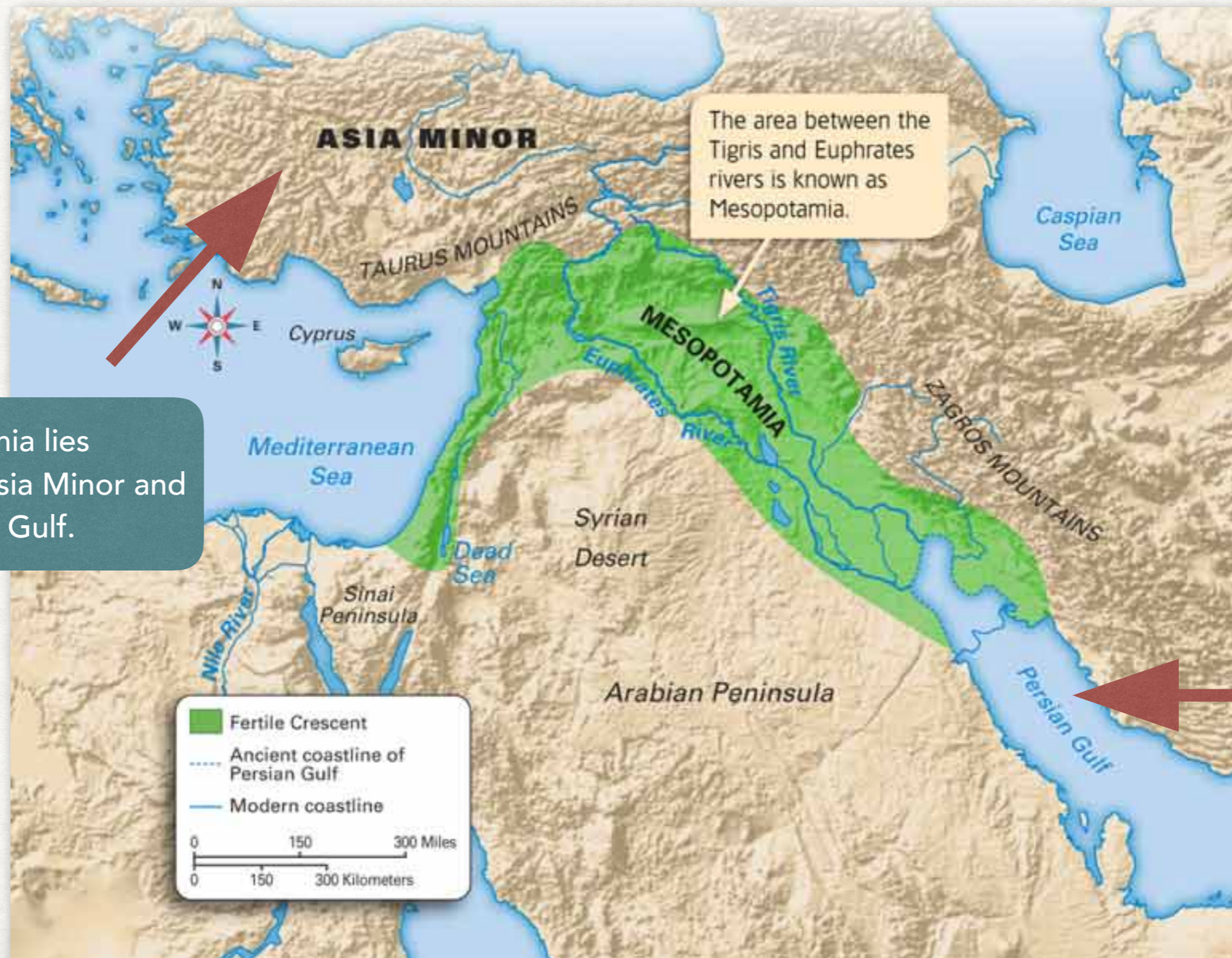
- Early people settled where crops would grow.
- Crops usually grew well near rivers, where water was available and regular floods made the soil rich.
- One region in Southwest Asia was especially good for farming. It lay between two rivers.

The early civilizations of Mesopotamia depended on the region's two great rivers - the Tigris and the Euphrates. In this photo, two men fish in the Euphrates River in what is now Iraq.



THE LAND BETWEEN THE RIVERS

MESOPOTAMIA (mes-uh-puh-tay-mee-uh)



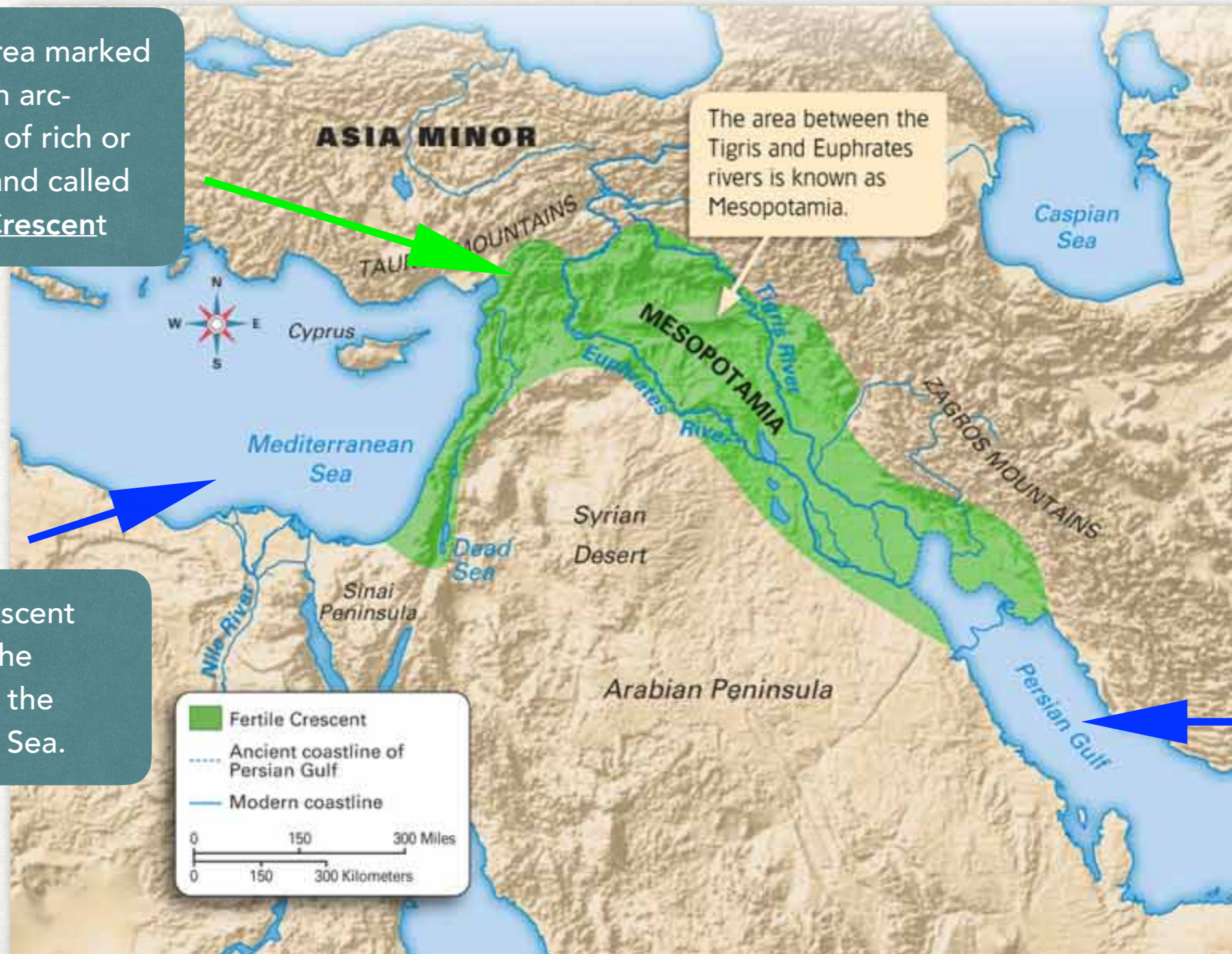
THE LAND BETWEEN THE RIVERS

MESOPOTAMIA (mes-uh-puh-tay-mee-uh)

The larger area marked in green is an arc-shaped area of rich or fertile farmland called the Fertile Crescent

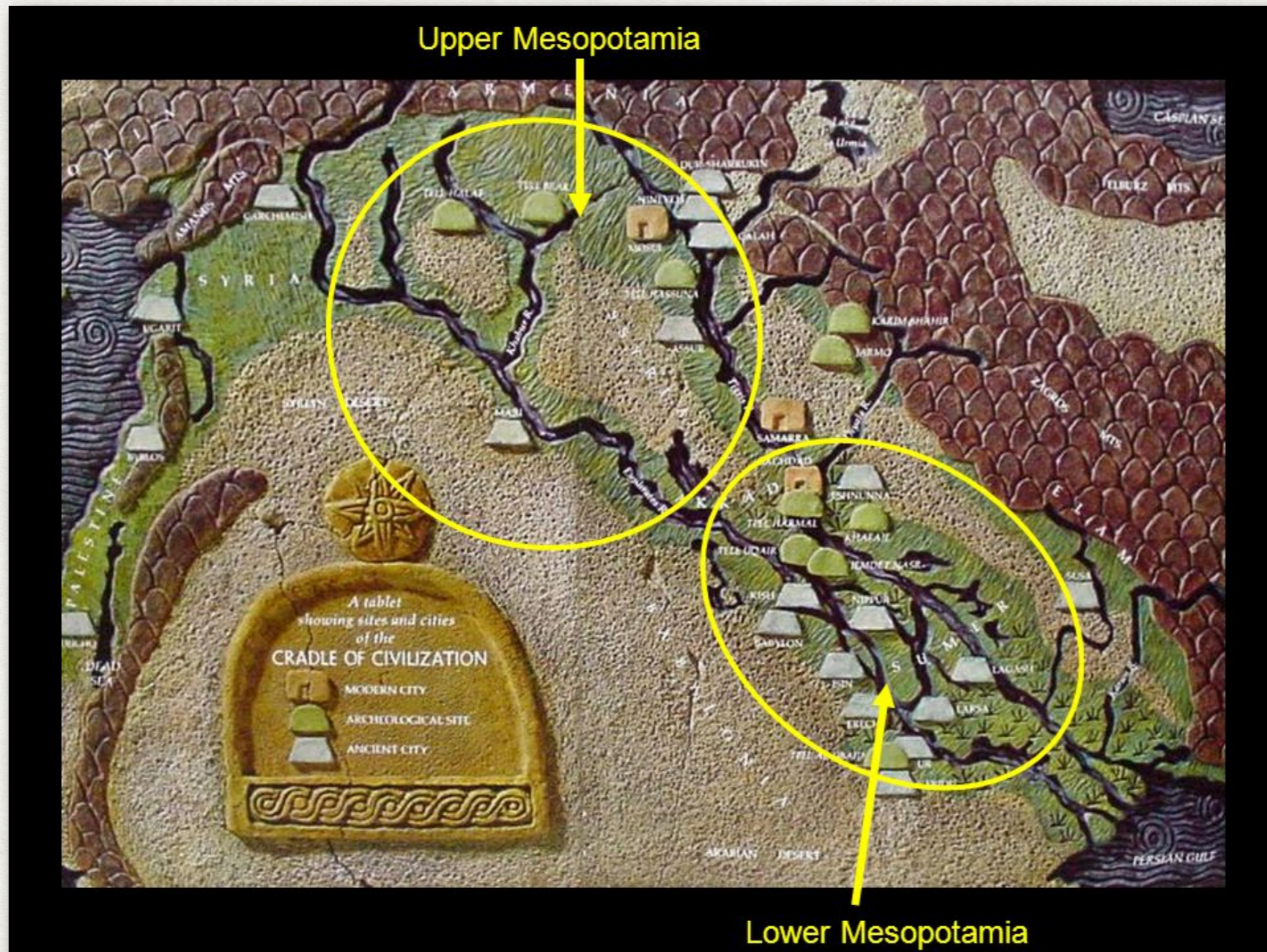
The area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is known as Mesopotamia.

The Fertile Crescent extends from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.



THE LAND BETWEEN THE RIVERS

MESOPOTAMIA (mes-uh-puh-tay-mee-uh)



In ancient times, Mesopotamia was divided into two parts - upper and lower Mesopotamia.

Northern (upper) Mesopotamia was a plateau bordered on the north and east by mountains.

Southern (lower) Mesopotamia was a flat plain.

The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flowed down from the hills into this low-lying plain.

THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION

- Hunter-gatherer groups first settled in Mesopotamia more than 12,000 years ago.
- Over time, these people learned how to plant crops to grow their own food.
- Every year, floods on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers brought silt, a mixture of rich soil and fine rocks, to the land making the land very fertile for farming.

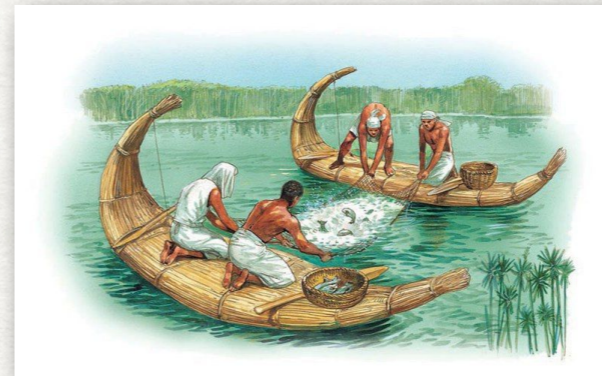


THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION

- The first farm settlements formed in Mesopotamia as early as 7000 BC.
- Farmers grew wheat, barley, and other types of grain.



- Livestock, birds, and fish were also good sources of food.



- Plentiful food led to population growth, and villages formed.
- These early villages developed into the world's first civilizations.

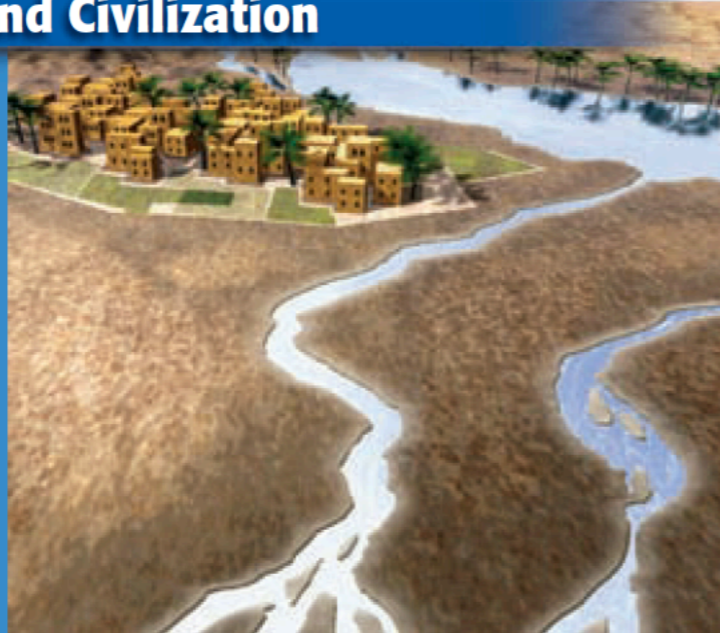
FARMING AND CITIES

- Even though Mesopotamia had fertile soil, farming wasn't easy there.
- Because the region received little rain, the water levels in the rivers could not be relied upon.
- When the region received a lot of rain, water levels got very high, causing floods that killed livestock and washed away crops and homes.
- When little rain fell, water levels got too low, causing crops to dry up.
- Farmers knew they needed a way to control the rivers' flow of water.

IRRIGATION AND CIVILIZATION

Irrigation and Civilization

Early farmers faced the challenge of learning how to control the flow of river water to their fields in both rainy and dry seasons.



Early settlements in Mesopotamia were located near rivers. Water was not controlled, and flooding was a major problem.

Later, people built canals to protect houses from flooding and move water to their fields.



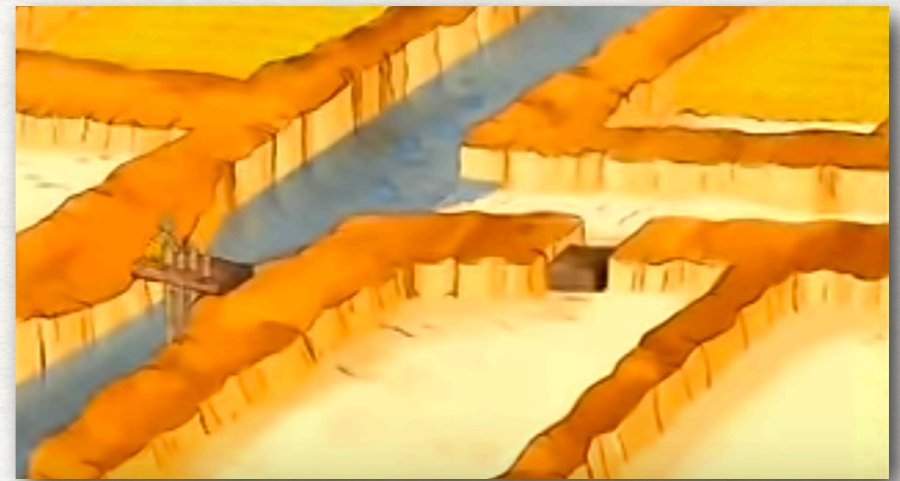
With irrigation, the people of Mesopotamia were able to grow more food.



Food surpluses allowed some people to stop farming and concentrate on other jobs, like making clay pots or tools..

CONTROLLING WATER

- Mesopotamians used irrigation, a way of redirecting water to an area of drier land.
- To irrigate their land, Mesopotamians dug out large storage basins to hold water supplies.



- They then dug canals, human-made waterways, that connected these basins to a network of ditches. These ditches brought water to the fields.
- To protect the fields from flooding, farmers built up the banks (created levees) of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. These banks held back flood waters even when river water levels were high.

FOOD SURPLUSES

- Irrigation increased the amount of food farmers were able to grow, allowing them to produce food surpluses (more than they need).



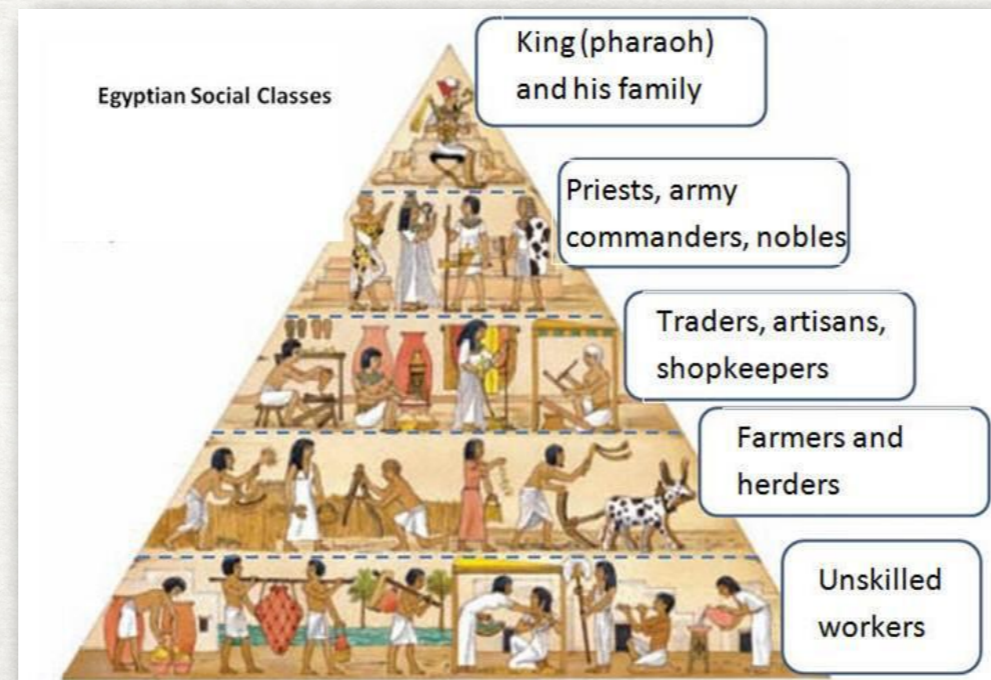
- Farmers also used irrigation to water grazing areas for cattle and sheep.



- As a result, Mesopotamians ate a variety of foods including fish, meat, wheat, barley, and dates.

FOOD SURPLUSES

- Because irrigation made farmers more productive, fewer people needed to farm.
- Some people became free to do other jobs such as becoming crafters, religious leaders, and government workers.
- When workers specialize in a particular task or job that helps to further develop the community, it is called a division of labor.



FOOD SURPLUSES

- Having people available to work on different jobs meant that society could accomplish more.
- Large projects, such as constructing buildings and digging irrigation systems, required specialized workers, managers, and organization.
- Mesopotamians now needed structure and rules. Structure and rules could be provided by laws and government.

THE APPEARANCE OF CITIES

- Mesopotamian settlements began to grow and gradually developed into cities between 4000 and 3000 BC.
- Even with this growth, society in Mesopotamia was still based on agriculture (most people still worked in farming jobs).
- Still, cities were becoming important places. They were political, religious, cultural, and economic centers of civilization where trade developed and some people became important leaders.

