

Key Learning

The very first remains of human writing was found by archaeologists on clay tablets. They were found in Iraq, Around 3000 BC, this ancient place was called **Sumer**. The land of Sumer was where two rivers flowed into the sea. The rivers were the **Tigris** (*tie-griss*) and **Euphrates** (*you-fray-tees*). Sumer was just one place in the region called **Mesopotamia** (*mess-o-pot-ay-mee-ah*). The land from Mesopotamia all the way down to the river Nile in Egypt was known as the Fertile Crescent.

The fertile land meant that the ancient Sumerians could stay in one place, farm and grow crops. The ancient Sumerians grew so much food that they could **trade**. They also **wove cloth**. Sumerians were religious. They built ziggurats.

The ancient Sumerians loved listening to stories. They liked stories about great heroes who went on adventures and faced monsters and gods. One of the oldest stories in the world is the **Epic of Gilgamesh**. Gilgamesh is the hero of the story but he was cruel.

Early civilisations arose when people stopped being nomadic, they stopped wandering around and settled in one place. There were ancient civilisations across the world, the Indus Valley (India), the Shang civilization (China) as well as Ancient Sumer and Ancient Egypt. They are known as the cradles of civilization.

All the cradles of civilization had things in common. They built religious buildings but they worshipped different gods. They all settled by a river and built permanent places to live.

All civilisations had their own art. One common form of art was to make special masks. All ancient civilisations also made sculptures, sometimes from stone and sometimes from clay. Some started to make things from bronze.

Cradles of Civilisations



A head of a ram from ancient Sumer.



A taotie mask from the Shang civilisation.



Vocabulary

tablets	A flat surface made of clay used for the earliest form of writing
cradle	A cradle of a human civilisation is a place where the earliest humans began to settle
trade	The buying and selling of things that people need or want.
weaving	Weaving is an ancient textile craft that involves placing two threads into a loom and turning them into cloth.
herding	Caring for groups of animals over a large area of land
cuneiform	It is one of the earliest systems of writing made with a wedged stick on clay tablets
ziggurat	A place of worship built on many levels with steps all around it.
epic	A very long poem
nomadic	People who move from one place to another and do not live in one place
bronze	A hard, yellowish alloy or mixture of metals
altar	A place, often a table, where a religious event happens.
sacrifice	The gift of something to a god as an act of worship
mythical	Something in a myth, that is not based on fact.
decipher	To work out the meaning of a language.

Cradles of Civilisation Timeline

3500-550 BC
Mesopotamian
Civilisation

3000-550 BC
Egyptian
Civilisation

2500-1500 BC
Indus
Civilisation

2500 BC - 500 AD
Shang
Civilisation

2000-1200 BC
Agean
Civilisation

1500 BC - 100 AD
Shang
Civilisation

Prior Learning

Map work (KS1)	Locating countries
Communication Y2	Hieroglyphics and cuneiform
Timeline (KS1/2)	Chronological understanding
Ancient Egypt Y3	
River Indus Y3	

Big Idea

Similarity and difference



Clay tablets found in Iraq.



This picture comes from a Sumerian city called Ur. It shows people weaving, herding and farming.



Cuneiform on a clay tablet written in Sumer.



Bronze pots and jars were made by the Shang people.



A ziggurat built in by the ancient Sumerians.



Stone altar built by the Shang people.



Gilgamesh

National Treasures

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Rights and Global Goals

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