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Volume 1

World History:

The Ancient World to the Medieval Era

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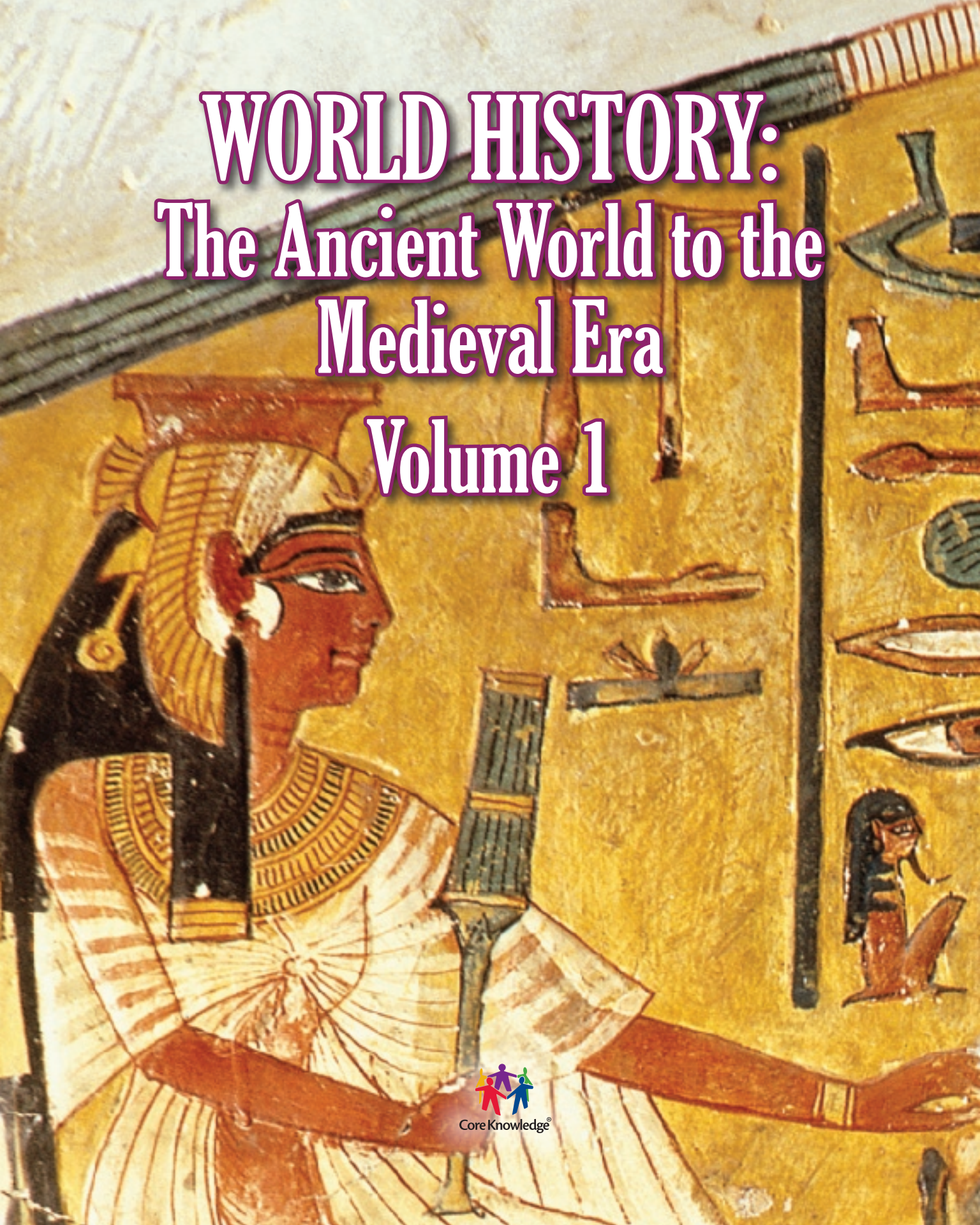
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WORLD HISTORY:

The Ancient World to the Medieval Era

Volume 1



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Foreword

*Let's try to enlighten ourselves together;
let's try to unearth a few precious
monuments from the ruins of the
centuries.*

Voltaire – French philosopher, 1700s

*In any age of any society the study of
history, like other social activities, is
governed by the dominant tendencies
of the time and place.*

Arnold Toynbee – British historian,
early 1900s

*No man can know where he is going
unless he knows exactly where he has
been and exactly how he arrived at his
present place.*

Maya Angelou – American author and
poet, 1900s to early 2000s



Studying World History

*Human history stretches back hundreds of thousands of years.
People and societies from the past are fascinating, and
some parts of the past are mysteries that scholars try to solve.
History also helps us understand the present—and consider
what it means to be human.*

We can better understand our own societies by learning about the many other societies that have existed at different times and in different places around the globe. Challenges that exist now are often rooted in the past—sometimes in the very distant past.

Understanding history can help us try to solve and prevent problems today. The study of history also allows us to understand and enjoy art, literature, and music. It teaches us about different perspectives and systems of belief.



This nineteenth-century CE mask was made by the Kongo people in West Africa.



The Historian's Task

To learn about past civilizations, historians study **primary sources** such as letters, official records, diaries, literature, newspapers, photographs, and other written materials. Primary sources can also be physical artifacts, including tools, architecture, clothing, pottery, artwork, decorations, jewelry, furniture, gravestones, and weapons. Writing is an important component of most civilizations, but historians “read” artifacts as well as printed words. That is, they interpret **artifacts** and sources to try to understand the past.

Historians interpret artifacts and primary sources by learning about the context in which they were created. Learning about the habits, values, and needs of a civilization gives historians information they can use to form an understanding of what the civilization was like.

Additionally, historians must also consider **historiography**. The Greek root *graph* means to write; *historiography* is literally writing about history. But historiography



Historians read and interpret documents written in the past.

Vocabulary

primary source, n. a firsthand account of a historical event

artifact, n. an object used during a past period in history

historiography, n. the methods historians use to study, interpret, and write about the past

is also how historians choose to research, interpret, and write about the past.

Scholars debate how to approach studying and writing about history. They don't always agree about how to interpret

an object, text, or event from the past. As you study world history, you will learn facts that most scholars agree on, as well as some debates and questions historians still have.



Think Twice

What do you think influences the choices historians make about what to research? What shapes how historians interpret information about the past?



What Is a Civilization?

Humans have lived in social groups for 250,000 years. Researchers study prehistoric artifacts to learn about prehistoric societies. Historians mostly focus on societies from around 3000 BCE, when **civilizations** first emerged, to the present day.

It's important to understand that historians do not use the term *civilization* to mean that a society is advanced or better than another. Referring to societies as civilizations is not a value judgment. Rather, historians define

civilizations as cultures that include certain characteristics. Historians can study these characteristics to learn about a civilization.

Generally, civilizations are characterized by **settlements**, such as villages, towns and cities. They often include monumental architecture—large buildings that require complex efforts to construct. Other components of civilizations include a **division of labor**, a social class structure, and a political structure. Many, though not all, civilizations use a form of writing. Different civilizations exhibit each of these features to different degrees, and not every civilization includes every characteristic.

Vocabulary

civilization, n. a society, or group of people, with similar religious beliefs, customs, language, and form of government

settlement, n. a place where a group of people live together permanently or for extended periods of time

division of labor, n. the breakdown of work into specific tasks performed by different people, often considered a way to make workers more efficient



Early Civilizations

Many prehistoric societies included some of these features. However, most prehistoric societies lived as hunter-gatherers, moving from place to place to find food, shelter, and resources. About twelve thousand years ago, in different places around the world, some people began to farm and herd animals. The development of agriculture and the practice of keeping livestock allowed societies to develop a food **surplus**. It also led to the development of more complex social systems.

Vocabulary

surplus, n. an extra amount, beyond what is needed

Many of the earliest civilizations developed in river valleys. This happened in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus River Valley in modern-day Pakistan and India, and the Huang He valley in what is today eastern China. When spring rains and snowmelt caused these rivers to flood, the water that flowed over the land carried minerals and other nutrients



Over time, some civilizations grew into mighty powers. The Inca built Machu Picchu, in present-day Peru, in the fifteenth century CE.

that were left behind in the soil when the floodwaters receded. This made the soil in the valleys good for farming—especially once the inhabitants learned to control floodwaters with structures

such as dams and **canals**. By developing systems of **irrigation**, people were able to practice large-scale agriculture.

Vocabulary

canal, n. a channel dug by people, used by boats or for irrigation

irrigation, n. bringing water from a well, a river, or a lake to a place where it does not rain enough to grow crops

With the increased supply of food gained from agriculture, people needed vessels and storehouses to keep the surplus of food for later use. The surplus could also be used to trade with neighboring cultures for supplies that were not available in the region.

Over time, more and more specialized kinds of work developed. While most members of society specialized in producing food, some focused on building or making containers, cloth, tools, or weapons. Some people became merchants or traders. Others became religious or political leaders.

Eventually, some settlements developed into cities. With larger populations, more organized forms of government became necessary. The increasing division of labor also meant that people had more time for leisure activities.



Early civilizations developed musical instruments. This Mesopotamian figurine shows a harpist playing a harp.

As you study Mesopotamia, think about what caused early civilizations to flourish there. What challenges and advantages did people encounter? What were their values and interests? What were their lives like? What choices did they make, and why? Their pottery and weapons, art and architecture, jobs and leaders all help tell their story.

Chapter 1

Mesopotamia

The Big Question

Why is Mesopotamia called a “cradle of civilization”?

A Land Between Two Rivers

Over more than five thousand years, Mesopotamian peoples built several complex civilizations.

Located close to Africa, Europe, and central Asia, Mesopotamia was a crossroads of trade, culture, and conquest. From about 3000 BCE, different peoples who settled in this area began to build larger societies that were more permanent and complex than those that existed previously. Through innovation, they made their lives easier and more comfortable. They developed more elaborate ways to express their religious beliefs and began to discover key principles of astronomy, mathematics, physics, medicine, art, and architecture.

A carved stone from Mesopotamia records a gift of land from a king.





The Fertile Crescent

The **Fertile Crescent** is an arc of land that stretches from the Mediterranean Sea southward and eastward to the Persian Gulf. This land was home to several of the world's earliest civilizations.

A crescent is a curved shape. For example, a moon that is less than half full is called

a crescent moon. The *fertile crescent* refers to the region where today much of Iraq is located, as well as parts of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.

Vocabulary

Fertile Crescent, n. an arc of land stretching from the Nile River valley to southwestern Asia, characterized by rich soil and climate conditions that supported the development of early civilizations

Fertile Crescent



Today, several countries occupy the Fertile Crescent.



Think Twice

Today, the countries in the area of the Fertile Crescent are part of the political region sometimes called the Middle East. But all of them except Egypt lie in what geographers refer to as Southwest Asia. Why might political and geographic regions sometimes differ?

Mesopotamia refers to the large area within the Fertile Crescent located around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. People began to settle in this area around 7000 BCE, and civilizations began to develop around 3000 BCE. Thousands of years later, ancient Greek historians named this region *Mesopotamia*, meaning land between rivers. The Greek root *meso* means middle or in between; *potamus* means river. Today, the word *Mesopotamia* is still used to describe the **historical region** located around the Tigris-Euphrates river system that was home to several ancient societies, including Sumer, Assyria, and Babylon, among others.

Both the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers begin in the mountains of Turkey. They run southeastward across Syria and Iraq. In southern Iraq, they join together to form the Shatt al-Arab (the River of the Arabs),

which empties into the Persian Gulf. The Tigris and the Euphrates are an important part of why this land is so **fertile**, or able to produce many crops. The rivers also help explain why, in ancient times, this land was a fertile place, not just for farming but also for the growth of civilizations.

Vocabulary

Mesopotamia, n. historical region around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers where some of the earliest civilizations emerged

historical region, n. a geographical area that at some point in history shared a language or other cultural or political traits

fertile, adj. able to support the growth of many plants; capable of producing new life



Cradle of Civilization

Many early civilizations in different parts of the world first began in river valleys, where water and rich soil supported agriculture. Mesopotamia was one of these places. Over thousands of years, different groups settled in different areas around Mesopotamia and developed a way of life that was different from earlier hunter-gatherer societies. Eventually,

they built towns and cities that included large, complex buildings. They developed political systems, specialized professions, class structures, intricate art, and a form of writing and record keeping.

Historians sometimes use the term “cradle of civilization” to refer to areas such as Mesopotamia, where the first civilizations appeared. In the past, some historians called Mesopotamia “the cradle of civilization.” Now, researchers understand that several cradles of civilization developed independently in different locations around the globe.



Think Twice

How does knowing about the development of the idea of several “cradles of civilization” contribute to your understanding of what it means to study history?



The Power of Floods

Archaeological evidence indicates that people began to settle in Mesopotamia around 7000 BCE. Scholars hypothesize that the people probably found wild grains there and then gradually chose the grains that stayed on their stalks, such as wheat and barley. These early

Mesopotamian groups also fished and hunted and herded animals, including sheep and goats.

By about 4000 BCE, groups had settled in the plain around the Tigris and Euphrates and used water from the rivers for farming. These groups built small villages and developed strategies to better control the water and interact with the environment.

Hot, dry summers reduced the amount of water in the rivers, so there was not always enough water for farming and other needs. On the other hand, spring often brought too much water. Rain became more frequent, and melting snow in the mountains to the north ran down into the rivers. This caused flooding. Floods could destroy villages, crops, and livestock. However, this seasonal flooding had benefits as well. The floodwaters were filled with **silt**, or tiny bits of rocks,

Vocabulary

silt, n. small particles of rock, minerals, and soil carried in water

Think Twice

How did flooding of the rivers both help and hinder the development of civilizations?



minerals, and organic matter. When the flood ended and the water drained away, the silt was left behind. It made the soil rich for growing plants.



Innovation and Cooperation

People in Mesopotamia learned to use the rivers and the rich soil to their advantage. Not only did the floods enrich the soil, they also created clay that people used to make bricks for building and to create objects. Early Mesopotamians built **dikes** to hold back floodwaters and canals to direct water to their fields. With irrigation, people could grow more food and store it for later use. This made life more stable, but it had other impacts as well. People had to work together to build dikes, canals, and food storage systems. They had to cooperate and choose leaders to help them organize, not just within their own villages, but among different villages.

Vocabulary

dike, n. a wall or barrier built to prevent flooding and direct the flow of water

This social behavior was the beginning of a system of central authority, which led to the development of governments and political systems.

Irrigation and an increased food supply had other effects on early societies.

Gradually, more people began to do more specific kinds of jobs. As larger areas were planted with a single crop, some members of society focused on caring for these crops, while some did other work. The surplus of extra food needed to be stored in containers, leading to the development of new crafts, such as pottery. At first, people in Mesopotamia made pottery by hand, shaping wet clay and then using fire or the sun to dry and harden their creations. Later, they invented the potter's wheel to create bowls, jars, and other vessels. Often, they decorated these objects by marking the wet clay surface before letting it harden.

While some people specialized in farming or crafting objects, tools, or weapons, others became religious or political figures, guiding and protecting the community. Villages grew into small towns and cities.



This vase from an area in southern Iraq is inscribed with cuneiform writing.



The Sumerians

Sumer arose in the southern part of Mesopotamia. By around 3000 BCE, small cities had developed. Over time, several **city-states** developed, enclosed by protective walls made of bricks formed with mud and straw. Scholars have identified at least twelve Sumerian city-states, including Ur, Kish, and Uruk. Led by priest-kings, these city-states sometimes went to war; at other times, they traded with one another or formed **alliances**.



Think Twice

Why would people develop a system of more centralized authority as they started working together more?

Writers' Corner

What were some effects of people coming together to live in permanent settlements? Write a paragraph that explains what these effects were and why they occurred.



Vocabulary

city-state, n. a city that is an independent political state with its own government

alliance, n. a group that works together toward a common goal

A decorated box called the Standard of Ur, made around 2500 BCE, shows various aspects of Sumerian civilization. On one side, scenes reveal how armies attacked an enemy. On the other side, images show a king and his court dining and listening to the music of a lyre being played for their entertainment. Other illustrations



The Standard of Ur

show how taxation worked. Lines of people from lower, working classes bring offerings to the priest-king. The remaining sides of the box show animals and plants, part of the local resources. The box also reveals how trade developed, as some of the materials were not local but came from other regions. For example, the blue lapis lazuli came from Afghanistan.

Religion in Sumer

Like other ancient peoples, Sumerians worshipped many different **deities**, or gods and goddesses. This kind of religious belief system is called **polytheism**. Sumerians

believed that gods and goddesses had power over many parts of nature, such as rain, seasons, and the growth of crops. They also believed deities were involved with people's work and daily lives and with issues that affected the whole society, such as war, peace, and prosperity. Sumerians crafted figurines in honor of the gods and rulers, mainly from the clay that filled the river basins but also from materials that came from trading with neighboring cultures, such as lapis lazuli and gold.

Vocabulary

deity, n. a god, goddess, or similar being regarded as a supreme power

polytheism, n. belief in or worship of more than one deity

Each Sumerian city-state had its own main god, honored with a large temple called a **ziggurat**. These were impressive buildings, with several levels and grand exterior staircases. Ziggurats were part of complexes that included administrative centers and warehouses for food. At the top was a shrine to the god where priests made offerings and carried out other religious duties. Ziggurats became a feature of civilizations found throughout Mesopotamia.

Vocabulary

ziggurat, n. an ancient Mesopotamian temple with a pyramid shape, consisting of several levels and characterized by staircases on the outside walls



Ziggurats were built in the center of Sumerian cities, and later by other Mesopotamian peoples. The ziggurat in Ur was partially restored in the twentieth century CE.



Studying the Stars

Some ziggurats were used to observe stars and planets. Sumerians based many religious practices on their observations of the heavens. They also used what they saw to determine when to plant crops. Their sense that the skies held valuable information was likely tied to their religious ideas and a sense of wonder. However, it led them to uncover principles of what later became the science of astronomy and to develop mathematics.

Sumerians created a calendar based on the cycles of the moon and invented one of the first sundials. They developed complex

ways to measure time that are the basis of the modern system of dividing minutes into sixty seconds, hours into sixty minutes, and days into twenty-four hours. Sumerians and other Mesopotamian peoples made many impressive advancements in

mathematics, particularly in geometry. As astronomers tracked the movement of stars and planets and the phases of the moon, they created mathematical techniques to describe the patterns they observed and predict the motion of planets in the sky. They were some of the first to use a seven-day week. Over time, they shared their knowledge with other peoples, such as the ancient Greeks.



Find Out the Facts

Research to learn more about ziggurats in Mesopotamia.



Development of Writing

Sumerians created the earliest type of writing that historians have found. The method they invented, called **cuneiform**, was based on the resources in their environment. Sumerians did not have paper or ink. They made tablets from clay and sharpened **reeds** collected from riverbanks and marshes. They used the reeds to make marks in damp clay. The Sumerians developed a whole system of these marks, called characters.



Sumerians used cuneiform tablets such as this one to record business transactions and other important events.

The idea to use clay and reeds was creative and innovative, but even more extraordinary was the concept of using a system of symbols to keep records and pass along knowledge. Sumerians recorded their astrological observations as well as important events, court proceedings, contracts, lists of sales, and administrative tasks.

Vocabulary

cuneiform, n. an ancient form of writing that used a system of symbols carved into wet clay tablets

reed, n. a tall, thin grass that grows in wet areas



Many Inventions

Sumerians created technology that made life and work much easier. They invented wheels, which then allowed them to develop vehicles such as carts and **chariots** as well as their potter's wheels. They used wooden plows to break up soil before planting crops. They traveled along the rivers using sailboats and discovered how to use copper and tin to create a new, human-made metal: bronze. It was harder and stronger than metals found in the earth and could be used to make more durable tools, weapons, containers, jewelry, and other objects. The Sumerians also invented one of the world's first board games.

Vocabulary

chariot, n. a carriage with two wheels pulled by horses or other animals

sacred, adj. related to religion; holy

hereditary, adj. passed down from parent to child

civil servant, n. a person employed by the government; a public official

artisan, n. a person with a certain skill in making things



Social Classes

Sumerians belonged to different social classes, which developed and changed over time. At the top were kings, who claimed their power to rule came from the gods worshipped in their city-state. The earliest rulers were priest-kings; some entered into **sacred** marriages with priestesses. Over time, king and priest evolved into separate high-status occupations. The first kings probably rose to power through success and heroism in war. Eventually, their rule became **hereditary**, or inherited. Queens also helped rule.

Below the royal and priest class, government officials and soldiers occupied a privileged spot in Sumer. In the middle class were **civil servants**, **artisans**, or merchants. Most people were in the lower class and worked as farmers. Enslaved people worked for those in higher social classes. Many of these people had been captured in battle; others were enslaved as punishment for crimes or because they were in debt.



This headdress was made for a Sumerian queen.

Trade was an important part of the Sumerian economy and culture. Sumerians produced a surplus of valuable crops, but they needed wood, stone, and metals found in other regions. Sumerians crafted tools and jewelry from the materials they gained in trade; then, they were able to trade them for more materials. Merchants, traders, and artisans helped fuel this trade and continued to develop more specialized



Think Twice

What impact might trade have had on ancient civilizations?

occupations. A clay tablet from the city of Uruk provides a list of professions in the society, including stonecutters, weavers, gardeners, and potters.

The development of writing led to an important new profession: the **scribe**, who was able to read and write using the cuneiform system. Becoming a scribe required a long period of training. Scribes were generally from wealthy families who could afford this education for their children (probably mostly boys). Scribes worked as record keepers, creating legal and business documents. Eventually, scribes began to record the stories people told. Some may have created new stories.

Vocabulary

scribe, n. a person whose job is to write or make copies of written information



Rise of the Akkadians

The city-states of Sumer flourished in southern Mesopotamia for over a thousand years, but eventually this civilization was conquered. In the north,

a king known as Sargon ruled over Akkad. The Akkadian army was strong, and Sargon began conquering Sumerian city-states around 2340 BCE. In joining together Sumer and Akkad, Sargon created the first **empire**, ruling over a group of several different peoples and territories. He founded a **dynasty**, a powerful line of hereditary rulers, that reigned for two centuries. The Akkadian language came to dominate the region. Trade with other regions increased, and artifacts from this period suggest the development of new artistic styles.



Babylon

Around 1800 BCE, a new group known as the Amorites came to the banks of the Euphrates and founded the city of Babylon. A powerful king called Hammurabi ruled Babylon and soon began to conquer other cities. Soon, the Babylonian Empire controlled the whole region, from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. This empire only lasted about fifty years, fading away after the death of Hammurabi. However, Hammurabi left one particularly

important **legacy** that influenced the region and later civilizations.

Writers' Corner

Write a paragraph explaining the concept of an empire. How is an empire different from a kingdom? Why might a leader or a group seek to establish an empire?



The Code of Hammurabi

Hammurabi created a set of laws, known as the Code of Hammurabi. They were **inscribed** on stone and displayed in public. The laws cover all types of behavior, from theft, assault, and murder to debt, divorce, inheritance, conflicts over irrigation and livestock, and improper business practices.

Vocabulary

empire, n. a group of countries or territories under the control of one government or ruler

dynasty, n. a series of rulers who are all from the same family

legacy, n. something of value that is passed down from another person, generation, or civilization

inscribed, adj. etched or carved into a hard surface

Punishments were included for every type of crime.

In some ways, the laws were very strict. However, they also show an attempt to promote justice and fair treatment. The code required that if someone broke a law, the severity of the punishment should match the seriousness of the crime. In some cases, the punishments matched the crimes quite literally. For instance, if a man injured the eye of another person, his eye would be injured as punishment. If he knocked out someone's teeth, he would lose his own teeth. This standard is often described as "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

The Code of Hammurabi could be harsh, but it also attempted to provide stability and protection by preventing **feuds** and acts of vengeance by individuals. While the code generally reinforced the authority of the most privileged members of society, a few of the laws protected those who were less powerful, such as wives abused or abandoned by their husbands. The code uses the concept that a person is innocent until proven guilty. One of the first crimes listed is making false accusations. Another law imposes stiff penalties on judges who do wrong or make mistakes.

Perhaps the most important impact of the code was that it established a **uniform** system of law and justice throughout the empire. The legal systems of later civilizations, including ancient Greece and Rome, were influenced by the code.

Vocabulary

feud, n. a long conflict between two people or two groups of individuals, often involving violence and acts of revenge

uniform, adj. following one pattern; always having the same form or characteristics

Think Twice



What ideas about the Babylonian Empire are suggested by the Code of Hammurabi? How can studying the code help us learn about some of the values and beliefs Babylonians may have had? What challenges or worries does the code reflect?



The Assyrian Empire

Assyria was an area in the northern part of Mesopotamia. Around 900 BCE, the Assyrians began to expand their territory, eventually creating an empire. One key to Assyrian success was their military might. They developed iron weapons, including swords and spear-points, which were

stronger than the bronze weapons used by others. Their army included skilled engineers who built ladders, ramps, and tunnels and filled in **moats**, allowing soldiers to get into walled cities.

The Assyrian Empire lasted for three centuries. The Assyrians gained a reputation as ferocious, perhaps as a strategy to intimidate others. Assyrian artifacts show cruel treatment of enemies and prisoners. The peoples they conquered were forced to pay **tribute**, or payments that a group or nation sends to the group or nation that rules over it. While the Assyrians were not the only group in Mesopotamia that behaved harshly, they are remembered for being particularly brutal.

Vocabulary

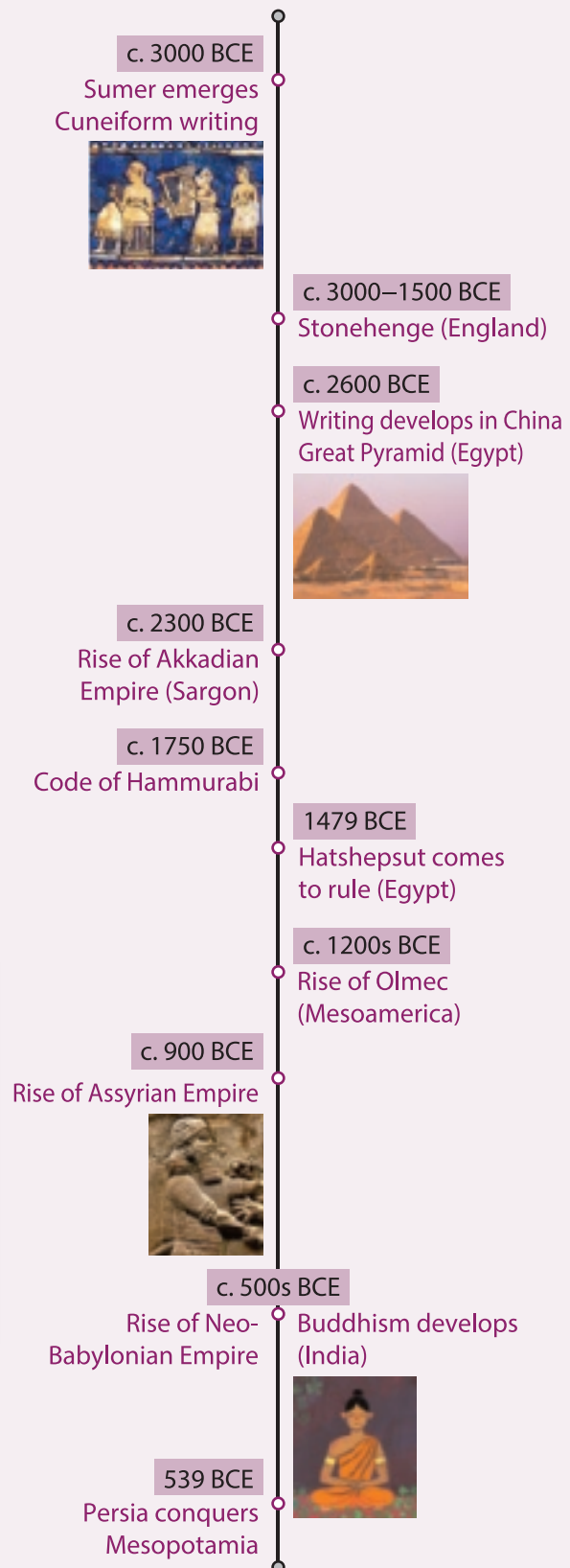
moat, n. a deep, wide ditch surrounding a town, castle, or fort, usually filled with water; its purpose is to defend against attack

tribute, n. payment of money or goods by a people or their ruler to another country or ruler that has conquered them, or in exchange for protection



Think Twice

Why might the victorious side in a conflict want the areas it conquered to pay tribute?





Assyrian Society

The Assyrian Empire extended westward all the way to the Nile River valley in Egypt, south and eastward down to the Persian Gulf, and northward into Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). The capital, Nineveh, was on the Tigris River, in the heart of the huge Assyrian territory.

To govern the areas under their control, the Assyrians divided the empire into **provinces**, or districts. Assyrian officials were placed in charge of each province to enforce laws and collect taxes. Roads were built to connect all these provinces, making travel and trade easier. The Assyrians built stations along the roads where travelers rested and could change horses, leaving tired horses and taking new ones. Soldiers were posted at these stations to help protect travelers from **bandits** and other dangers.

Vocabulary

province, n. an area or region; an administrative division of a country, kingdom, or empire

bandit, n. a robber who roams areas outside of cities and attacks and robs travelers



Ashurbanipal's Library

The city of Nineveh was the seat of Assyrian power and an important trade and religious center. It had multiple palaces and temples, enormous statues, and a complex system of canals. The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, whose rule began in 669 BCE, built one of the world's first libraries in Nineveh. It held more than thirty thousand clay tablets filled with court records, prayers, songs, literature, and history. Ashurbanipal seems to have valued reading, writing, and learning. Artifacts from this period celebrate his extensive knowledge. Many carvings portray him with a stylus, an instrument for writing on clay tablets. Ashurbanipal's library contained artifacts from earlier civilizations as well as from his own time. Researchers have learned much from these artifacts and continue to learn even more. It seems he wanted to collect all the knowledge of the world.

The tablets collected in the library at Nineveh contain a wealth of information about Mesopotamia and the ancient world. The library itself was destroyed in a fire when the Assyrian Empire was conquered. Because clay tablets do not



Ashurbanipal is shown with a stylus tucked into his belt.

burn, they survived the fire and left a trove of information for historians. However, they were buried for centuries in the ruins at Nineveh. In the 1840s, British researchers excavating the ruins began to find the tablets. Many were brought back to Britain for preservation and research and are still housed at the British Museum in London.

Writers' Corner

Using your research, write a report on Ashurbanipal's library. In your report, include a description of what you imagine this library was like.



Think Twice

Why do you think British researchers excavated the ruins at Nineveh?



Find Out the Facts

Research Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh. Learn more about how it was excavated and the artifacts it contained.



The Epic of Gilgamesh

One treasure from the library at Nineveh is a set of clay tablets containing the oldest example of written literature that has ever

been found, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. They tell the story of a great king, Gilgamesh. The tablets are written in the older Akkadian language, not in Assyrian. Created around 2000 BCE, they were already thirteen centuries old when Ashurbanipal put them in his library.

The story of Gilgamesh is called an **epic** because it is a long, complex tale that recounts the adventures of a great hero. Some scholars think that Gilgamesh was based on a real figure, perhaps a king of the Sumerian city-state Uruk, but this is not certain. The significance of this work is not that it tells about a ruler, but that it reflects the imagination, creativity, values, and concerns of an ancient civilization. It was likely based on tales people had told orally long before the tablets were made.

The character Gilgamesh is a demigod, or half-divine and half-human. A great ruler and warrior, he wields power but is a harsh leader. A god sends Enkidu, a wild man, who challenges Gilgamesh, then becomes his faithful friend.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu set out on a series of adventures, battling monsters and tangling with gods and goddesses. Gilgamesh wants to become **immortal**, but in the end, Enkidu dies and Gilgamesh comes to accept his mortal condition.

The epic includes a story about a great flood, in which a god directs one of the characters to make an ark and fill it with two animals of every kind. This tale is strikingly similar to the story of Noah's ark in the Hebrew Bible. It's not clear whether a huge flood really occurred, but this similarity does suggest that groups in this region shared stories.

Vocabulary

epic, n. a long, complex tale that tells the story of a hero's adventures

immortal, adj. able to live forever; not able to die

Think Twice



How does the existence of two written accounts of a great flood suggest the possibility of an actual event?

Find Out the Facts



In 2019, the Department of Justice seized an ancient clay tablet from the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. It had been stolen from a museum in Iraq. The museum didn't know the tablet had been stolen and had paid over a million dollars for it. Find out more about the Gilgamesh Dream Tablet.

What Is an Epic?

An epic is a literary genre. A traditional epic is a long **narrative poem** centered on a great hero, who often is partly divine or has a special relationship with the gods. Epics usually tell of the feats of the hero, whose adventures involve a series of obstacles to overcome. The hero's actions often affect the destiny of their society or humankind in general. The story also includes the emotions and thoughts of the characters and often explores the consequences of their actions.

Scholars think that the earliest written epics came from stories, poems, and songs that were often told in a live performance. People may have created this early oral literature using **verse** because it was entertaining to audiences and because the rhythms and rhymes helped storytellers remember long, complex tales.

Other examples of epics include Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, from Greece; the *Mahabharata*, from India; *Beowulf*, written in Old English about a Scandinavian hero; *The Divine Comedy*, by Italy's Dante Alighieri; and *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton.



The Neo-Babylonian Empire

By around 650 BCE, the Assyrian Empire was facing many **revolts** from subjects who wanted to break away, and they were also fighting among themselves. In the city of Uruk, a king called Nabopolassar led a successful revolt and became king of **Babylonia**. After capturing Nineveh, the Babylonians burned down the whole city, destroying it completely and ending the Assyrian Empire.

Vocabulary

narrative poem, n. a poem that tells a story

verse, n. writing arranged with a specific structure and rhythm; poetry

revolt, n. a rebellion; a rejection of authority

Babylonia, n. an ancient historical region in Mesopotamia that included the city of Babylon

Nabopolassar established a new empire with its capital at Babylon. His son Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt Babylon into a glorious city with an enormous stepped ziggurat at the center, capped by a gold roof. The city had grand palaces and



Think Twice

How can harsh rule help an empire succeed? How can it weaken an empire?

temples, and at the main entrance to the city stood the magnificent Ishtar Gate, dedicated to the goddess Ishtar and honoring other Babylonian deities including Marduk, the patron god of the city. The exterior of the gate was covered in beautiful blue glazed bricks inlaid with red, yellow, and green patterns and figures of bulls and dragons.



The Ishtar Gate was the main entrance to Babylon.

Later Greek writers described Nebuchadnezzar's glorious Hanging Gardens, but this was likely a

Wonders of the Ancient World

Around 250 BCE, an engineer called Philo of Byzantium proposed a list that came to be known as the Seven Wonders of the World. It included the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. The list mentioned two Egyptian sites: the Great Pyramids and the Lighthouse of Alexandria.

There were also two Greek wonders: the massive statue of Zeus at Olympus (in the southern mainland Greece) and a gigantic statue called the Colossus of Rhodes (a Greek island). Two sites in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) were also listed: the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus and the Greek Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

Philo was Greek and was likely influenced by Greek scholars who had written about magnificent sites in the world they knew. These texts celebrate human achievements, designating massive works of art and architecture as marvels worthy of respect and praise. Of the seven wonders on Philo's list, only the Great Pyramids survive today.

misunderstanding. Modern scholars think the famed gardens mentioned in ancient texts were likely in Nineveh, not Babylon. However, Babylon was a grand city, with an impressive network of canals, strong fortifications, and a beautiful avenue running between richly decorated walls where people gathered for festivals and parades.

After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the Neo-Babylonian Empire grew weaker. The Persian Empire had risen to the east of Mesopotamia. In 539 BCE, the Persians captured Babylon, and all of Mesopotamia came under Persian rule. But the Persians allowed Babylonian culture to continue. So did the next conqueror of the region, Alexander the Great, who spread Greek culture to Mesopotamia.

Though their most glorious days were behind them, Mesopotamians continued to thrive in many ways. For example, a clay tablet made sometime between 350 and 50 BCE shows that Mesopotamians kept making important advances in mathematics and astronomy. They devised an extremely sophisticated calculation of the position of Jupiter, using a method that was not discovered by other peoples for another fourteen centuries.

Another interesting tablet, made in Babylon around 177 BCE, explains the rules for a popular board game known as the Royal Game of Ur. The tablet is the oldest known set of board game rules in the world. The earliest examples of the game are from Sumer and were made more than two thousand years before the Babylonian tablet was created. The tablet and the game are reminders of how long Mesopotamian civilizations thrived.



An Ever-Changing Region

After the Persians and the Greeks, other conquerors took power in the region. Hundreds of years later, Islamic conquerors arrived around 637 CE. The region that we now call Mesopotamia continued to be affected by the growth of trade routes that passed through the area, including the Silk Road that connected the region to China. Mesopotamia's art, architecture, and literature and its contributions to science, mathematics, and technology were adopted by many other civilizations. Today, archaeologists and historians continue to discover intriguing artifacts and learn even more about the civilizations of the land between the rivers.

Chapter 2

Ancient Egypt and Kush

Land of the Pyramids

Like the area around the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, the Nile River valley was another “cradle of civilization.” It was here that the civilizations of ancient Egypt and Kush developed. They left behind pyramids, writing systems, and artifacts that reveal complex, thriving societies.

Early civilizations developed around the Nile about the same time that early Mesopotamian civilizations emerged. Egypt was the largest and most enduring of these civilizations. While there are some similarities between Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations, there are also important differences. Egyptian geography meant its civilization developed in relative isolation. This helps

The Big Question

What do artifacts from ancient Egypt and Kush reveal about these civilizations?



A tomb painting shows a queen playing a board game.



explain why some elements of Egyptian civilization were different from those in neighboring regions.



Think Twice

What kinds of geographical features can isolate a civilization? Why?



River and Desert

The great Sahara desert stretches across all of North Africa. In the northeastern corner of the Sahara, the Nile carves out a ribbon of lush land with desert on each side. To the east lies the Sinai **Peninsula**, another huge expanse of desert.

At a length of over four thousand miles, the Nile is one of the two longest rivers in the world. (The Amazon, in South America, is the other.) It begins as two separate rivers—the White Nile and the Blue Nile. The White Nile flows north from present-day Tanzania. The Blue Nile begins in present-day Ethiopia, in eastern Africa. The two rivers meet in what is today Sudan. At the point where they join, the water is shallow and flows quickly over great boulders and steep cliffs. This forms **cataracts**, or areas of bumpy, turbulent water. There are six

cataracts along the Nile between what is today the city of Khartoum (in Sudan) and Aswan, in the modern country of Egypt. These make boat travel on this stretch of the river difficult. Above the cataracts, it is easy to sail on the Nile. Ancient Egyptians used this part of the river like a road.

At its northern end, where the Nile meets the Mediterranean, the river branches out into a **delta**, an area of fertile marshland that leads into the Mediterranean Sea.

With vast deserts all around it and a hot, dry climate, the Nile was a vital source of water. As in Mesopotamia, flooding brought silt to the soil of the river valley. However, floods

Vocabulary

peninsula, n. a piece of land sticking out into a body of water so that it is almost surrounded by water

cataract, n. a shallow area of a river where the water moves fast over rocks or other obstacles

delta, n. land created by silt deposits at the mouth of a river

Think Twice

What geographic features would support connections between Egypt and other regions?





The Nile River valley in Egypt

in Egypt were somewhat more predictable than in Mesopotamia. Most years, between April and October, rain and snowmelt from far-off mountains caused the Nile to flood. About once every four years, flooding was very bad. This shaped Egyptian ideas about order and chaos in the universe. The relatively steady pattern of flooding also helped Egyptians plan and organize. After the flooding season came a planting season, followed by a harvesting season.

The Gifts of the Nile

Egypt was the largest, most powerful of the two great ancient civilizations that arose in the Nile River valley. Though Egypt's might waxed and waned, it was a



A tomb painting shows farmers using a plow pulled by oxen.

major power in the region for more than three thousand years.

The Egyptians named their territory *Kemet*, or black land, for the dark, rich soil the river deposited on its banks. But the abundance of the Nile valley region was not the product of nature alone. It was also the product of the Egyptians themselves, who used the regular flooding of the Nile to produce a huge amount of food, resources, and wealth.

Writers' Corner



Write a paragraph explaining how geography and climate helped shape ancient Egyptian civilization.

Intensive agriculture in Egypt began after about 6000 BCE. Egyptian farmers grew crops such as wheat, barley, and flax. They used larger tools such as plows pulled by oxen and smaller wooden tools such as hoes. Water for growing crops came from the Nile itself or from irrigation canals. In the Nile delta of Lower Egypt, it was relatively easy to access water because of the way the Nile spread out into multiple channels at the delta. In Upper Egypt, however, human-made canals carried water from the river and supplied farms

with irrigation. Egyptian farmers also developed the **shadoof**, a bucket attached to a long pole, which worked like a crane to scoop up water and transfer it to crops.

Egyptians also grew fruits, vegetables, and **legumes**. They were mostly vegetarian, with meat and fish for special occasions.

Vocabulary

shadoof, n. a crane-like tool that uses a pole and bucket to lift water

legume, n. a type of seed, usually softened by cooking in hot water, such as lentils and chickpeas



Shadoofs on the banks of the Nile

Some Egyptians raised livestock such as cattle, oxen, and goats for use as work animals or as food sources. Ancient Egyptians also hunted wild animals, especially small birds. The wealthiest and most powerful Egyptians hunted larger animals in the desert, such as ibex; royalty even hunted lions.



Find Out the Facts

How does a shadoof work?
Research the use of the shadoof in ancient times and today.



United Egypt

From about 5000 BCE, groups moved into the Nile River valley and began to establish permanent settlements. By around 4000 BCE, Egypt had two large areas, Upper Egypt (to the south) and Lower Egypt (to the north). Sometime after 3000 BCE, a ruler from Upper Egypt named Narmer conquered Lower Egypt, bringing the two areas together. The capital of the unified kingdom was the city of Memphis, near the border of Upper and Lower Egypt. Today, Egypt's capital city, Cairo, is located in this area.

After unification, Egypt was ruled by a single royal ruler, who would later

c. 3000 BCE

Sumer emerges



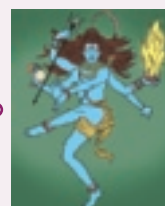
c. 2550 BCE

Great Pyramid (Egypt)



1479 BCE

Hatshepsut comes to rule



Hinduism emerges (India)

c. 1200s BCE

Ramses II

Rise of Olmec (Mesoamerica)

c. 900 BCE

Rise of Assyrian Empire

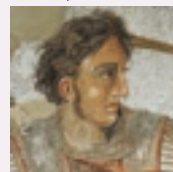
c. 745 BCE

Kush conquers Egypt



c. 330s BCE

Alexander conquers many lands



come to be known as the **pharaoh**. The term *pharaoh* comes from a word that means great house and refers to the palace of the ruler. Narmer was the first ruler of a mighty dynasty that lasted for hundreds of years. Over almost three thousand years, a series of dynasties rose and fell. Historians group them into three major periods: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom.

Vocabulary

pharaoh, n. a political and religious leader of ancient Egypt

Pharaohs

As in most early civilizations, ancient Egyptian rulers had a dual role as political and religious figures. Pharaohs were the rulers of a united Egypt, the commanders of its armies, and the masters of all its people. The pharaoh was the head of the Egyptian religion, seen as a point of contact between the gods and the ruler's mortal subjects.

As head of the Egyptian religion, the pharaoh was expected to honor the gods by overseeing religious rituals and



Gigantic statues honoring the gods and pharaohs

constructing temples. Egyptians believed the gods had chosen their ruler and that a key duty of the pharaoh was to help the gods take care of Egypt. The Egyptians believed that the gods had designed the world to be structured, orderly, and just. They called this concept *ma'at*. It was the role of the king to uphold *ma'at* by ensuring that the realm of Egypt was orderly, peaceful, and just.

Think Twice



What might be some reasons that many early civilizations were led by rulers who were also religious leaders or divine figures?

Pharaoh was a hereditary title, and most pharaohs were part of long-lasting dynasties. Pharaohs usually had one main wife and a number of other wives. These multiple marriages helped secure alliances with powerful families or with territories outside Egypt. They also helped ensure the royal family would produce a suitable **heir** to inherit the throne. The pharaoh's main wife, called the Great Royal Wife, played an important role in religious rituals and at the court.

Vocabulary

heir, n. a person who will legally receive the property of someone who dies; the person who will become king or queen after the current king or queen dies or steps down

Egyptian Society

Most people in ancient Egypt lived spread out along the Nile, either in one of many small communities or in one of the few large cities. Over time, a social structure developed, with a powerful ruling class, merchants, artisans, servants, farmers, and enslaved workers.

Pharaohs and their families were royalty. Priests were also part of Egypt's most

powerful class. They maintained the temples to the gods, oversaw ceremonies, and sometimes also worked as doctors and dentists. People from powerful families or who had specialized or useful skills also had power and privilege. Some were scribes. Others were royal advisors and military leaders. Pharaohs gave land to the privileged families, but it was ordinary people who did the hard work of farming the land. Farmers kept some of what they produced and gave part of what they grew to the family whose land they worked.

As in most societies, most people in ancient Egypt were not powerful or privileged. In most households, people, especially women, made cloth and other items for themselves and for trade. They gardened to supply themselves with extra food. Ordinary people also did vital everyday jobs such as building, navigating



Scribes at work

the river, hunting, repairing equipment, and serving in the army when they were called to do so.

Life was structured by the flooding of the Nile. In summer and early fall, when the Nile flooded, it was not possible to work on the farms until the waters **receded**.

Farmers and others used this time to seek other forms of work to earn income.

It was very hard for ordinary people in Egypt to rise in **status**. The Egyptians believed that their gods had made a perfect social system for them to live in, and this belief was reinforced by those in power. One route for advancement, however, did exist. Some people skilled in crafts, the arts, or construction could earn their own wealth by performing special services for their lord or the king. The wealthy of Egypt wanted to surround themselves with beautiful and well-made

things—furniture, jewelry, tools, tombs, and monuments. People skilled at making those things could prosper by doing so.

Other people gained wealth as merchants and traders.

Vocabulary

recede, v. to slowly move back or away

status, n. one's position or rank within a group

At the bottom of the social structure were enslaved people. The enslaved did work that was physically hard, messy, and unpleasant. They were not paid and did not have freedom. While slavery was not as common in ancient Egypt as it was in some other societies, it was a part of life. Like other ancient peoples, the Egyptians enslaved people who committed crimes and foreigners they captured in battle.



Tomb paintings show Egyptian workers.

Enslaved people were also a **commodity** in regional trade. Sometimes these enslaved people could regain their freedom after a period of time.

Vocabulary

commodity, n. something that is bought or sold



Find Out the Facts

Learn more about artisans in ancient Egypt. Find out how they made linen, jewelry, sculptures, tools, or another product.



Life in Ancient Egypt

Most Egyptians could not afford the luxuries that the wealthiest in society possessed. Many people lived in simple homes made of mud bricks. The upper classes lived in large, well-made stone houses and palaces.

But there were many things in Egypt that everyone could enjoy. Ceremonies to honor the gods were accompanied by public feasts and celebrations. Egyptians of all ages and statuses both made and enjoyed toys and board games. Egyptians



A painting of Egyptian women at a banquet

had comfortable clothing made of linen, a cloth made from the flax they grew. Some Egyptians used green and black makeup around their eyes. This was for beauty and fashion but may also have provided protection from the sun and from the bothersome little flies that thrived around the banks of the Nile.

Women in ancient Egypt were not considered equal to men, but they had more rights than women in many other ancient civilizations. They could own property, make contracts, control their own money, marry who they wanted, divorce, and bring lawsuits. However, they usually could not be the head of the household, serve in the army, or govern provinces. Ancient Egyptians considered

many goddesses to be powerful. Women could become priests—especially of goddesses. Most upper-class women managed their households. Women contributed to household income by producing food and goods to sell. Less wealthy women worked in the fields or as servants. Some women worked as musicians or dancers at banquets.

Writers' Corner



Write a detailed paragraph describing ancient Egyptian society.

Religion: The Principle of Ma'at

As in other civilizations, religion in ancient Egypt reflected a complex set of beliefs about society and the human condition. The most basic principle of the Egyptian religion was that the world, the center of which was Egypt, had been created by the gods as a place of order and harmony. This harmony was called *ma'at*.

Ma'at was both the principle of harmony and justice and the name of the goddess who personified and oversaw this principle. The concept of ma'at was that

because the gods had created an orderly and just place for humans to live in, then humans themselves should act in an orderly and just way. Everyone who lived by the principle of ma'at knew that they had a duty to treat others in a fair and just manner to contribute to the harmony of the world.

Egyptians believed that when they died, they would be judged according to their deeds in life. They believed that a dead person's heart would be weighed on a golden scale against the goddess Ma'at's



Ma'at



An ancient text illustrates the weighing of the heart.

white feather of truth. If the person's heart weighed less than the feather, then that person was judged to have lived harmoniously. This would help the person go on to a good afterlife.

If, on the other hand, the dead person's heart was weighed down by evil and unharmonious deeds, then the heart would be thrown from the scale and eaten by a monster-god with the head of a crocodile, the arms of a lion, and the legs of a hippopotamus: Ammit the Devourer. The person's soul would then cease to exist.

Egyptian Deities and Myths

Ancient Egyptians were polytheists. They believed that the gods were active in the human world. It was important to show respect to the gods, who could sometimes be asked for favors. Gods were often depicted with human bodies and animal heads. For example, the god Horus had the head of a hawk, while the goddess Bastet was depicted either as a cat or as a woman with the head of a cat. Other gods

appeared as **hybrids** of animals, like Ammit. Each had certain roles and powers. Bastet oversaw cats, fertility, and domestic life and could protect against disease. Horus was a god of justice and was strongly associated with the pharaohs who ruled Egypt.

Vocabulary

hybrid, n. something that is a combination of two or more other things

One important myth told of Osiris, who presided over the weighing of hearts. Egyptians believed he had given them their laws and had been their first king and lord of all Earth. He represented order in Egyptian society. But his brother, Set, the god of war, was angry that Osiris was so well regarded. Set and his wife laid a trap for Osiris. They sealed him in a coffin and threw him into the Nile, where he died. Osiris's wife, the goddess Isis, was stricken by grief and set out to find her husband's body. But Set chopped Osiris's body into pieces and scattered them. Isis

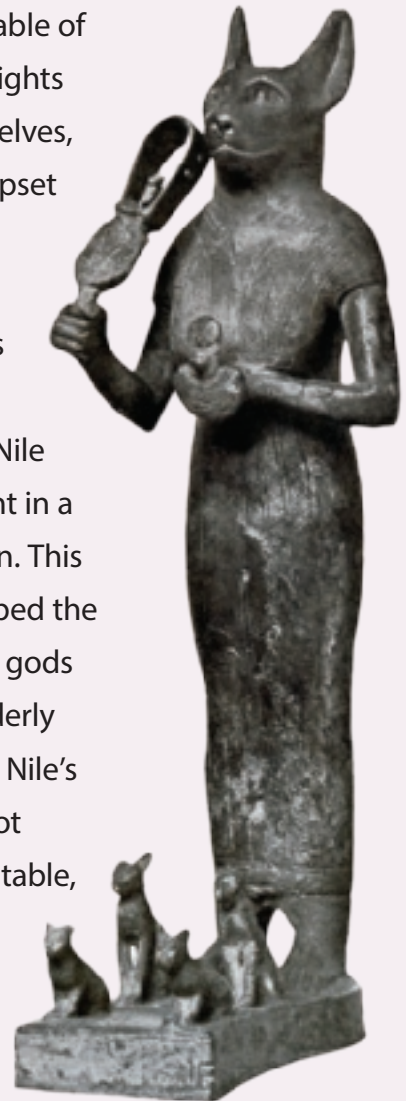


Think Twice

What elements of ancient Egyptian religion are similar to the beliefs of other ancient civilizations? What elements are different?

eventually found most of Osiris's body and tried to rebuild him, but because his body was incomplete, he could not return to his position as ruler of Earth. Instead, he became lord of the underworld. Set was eventually punished by Osiris's son, Horus.

This myth suggests many Egyptian beliefs. The gods were mighty; many were just and loved humans. But they were also capable of jealousy and fights among themselves, which could upset order. Osiris's death and rebirth echoes the way the waters of the Nile came and went in a cyclical pattern. This may have shaped the belief that the gods created an orderly world. But the Nile's floods were not entirely predictable, so Egyptians saw that chaos could erupt in the world.



Bastet



This is a gold statue of the Egyptian god Amun.

Egyptians honored the gods in numerous ways. Artistic depictions of the gods, such as figures, inscriptions, or paintings, could be kept in a home **shrine**. One of the pharaoh's main roles was to organize religious rites on behalf of the whole society. Large temple complexes were built, where priests lived and oversaw ceremonies. People worshipped the gods with offerings and prayers.

Vocabulary

shrine, n. a place considered holy because it is associated with a holy person or event

Find Out the Facts



Find a list of Egyptian deities. Choose one, and research what Egyptians believed about that god or goddess.

Writers' Corner

Use your research to write a biography or description of an Egyptian god or goddess.



Mummies

The Egyptians believed that a soul could not pass on to the afterlife without its body being preserved and intact. The intact body would help the dead person's soul recognize itself and be reunited in the afterlife. To keep the body preserved and intact, the Egyptians made a deceased body into a mummy prior to burial. Egyptians practiced mummification for thousands of years, beginning at least as far back as 3400 BCE.

Mummification was performed by priests, and it was both a religious ritual and a physical process. The priests performed prayers and sacred rites as they

embalmed the body. The embalming process involved the removal of the organs, including the brain. In earlier periods, these organs were stored along with the body in special vessels called canopic jars. Later examples of mummies show organs packed back into the treated body. The heart was always left inside the body because Egyptians believed it needed to travel with the body to be weighed against the white feather of Ma'at.

Vocabulary

embalm, v. to prepare a body to prevent decay

After the organs were removed, the body was treated with natron, a type of salt. This dried out the body's tissues, which slowed or prevented decomposition. However, the dried-out skin gave the body a shrunken and skeletal appearance,

so after the natron was washed off, the body was stuffed with padding to make it look more lifelike. Once the body was treated, it was tightly wrapped with hundreds of yards of linen. Then the mummy was placed in a casket and buried. Funeral rituals commemorated the person's life and prepared the dead person for their transition to the afterlife.

Because of the tools and materials involved and the days of labor performed by priests with specialized knowledge, only the richest members of Egyptian society could afford mummification. Pharaohs were mummified, as were priests and important or wealthy people like the architects who designed major temple complexes.

Those whose families could not afford mummification were also given a ceremony to help their souls pass on. Their bodies were wrapped not in fancy linens



Mummy



Canopic jars

but in their own clothing and buried in the desert with some of their belongings.



Find Out the Facts

What happened at an ancient Egyptian funeral? Look up ancient Egyptian funerary rites and find out.

One consequence of mummification was that Egyptians developed a strong understanding of human anatomy. Over time, ancient Egyptians acquired impressive medical knowledge and skills. Doctors performed surgeries and developed techniques to set broken bones and sew up cuts. They used plants as medicines and to treat pain. Egyptians wrote down information about the body to pass along what they learned. These documents are some of the oldest medical writings in the world.

However, ancient Egyptian doctors still worked within their religious worldview. They thought of disease as the will of the gods or the work of evil spirits. Medical texts refer to Heka, the god of medicine and magic. Prayers were the core of most treatments.



Pyramids and Monuments

Royal and upper-class Egyptians built monuments and tombs to preserve their remains and their riches for the afterlife.

Egypt's earliest kings were buried in tombs called *mastabas*. A mastaba is a rectangular structure made of brick, mud, or stone blocks with a flat roof and an underground burial chamber. After pharaohs began to build pyramids for themselves, mastabas remained in use



Bracelets made with gold, lapis lazuli, and other stones

for the burials of important and wealthy people who were not royals.

One important figure in ancient Egypt was the architect Imhotep. He was a priest of the sun god Re and a doctor at the royal court and was an important counselor to the pharaoh Djoser. He was later revered a genius and even worshipped as a god.

Djoser and Imhotep wanted to build a monument to demonstrate Djoser's might and help him fulfill his role in the afterlife. The pharaoh's tomb was meant to help ensure he could join Osiris and continue to aid in the struggle between order and chaos. Imhotep worked out a way to stack six mastabas on top of each other, each one progressively smaller, so that they made a structure now known as a step pyramid.

The first true pyramid—that is, a structure raised in a pyramidal shape, with steep sides, and not just a series of steps—was

built on the orders of King Snefru before his death in about 2600 BCE. Snefru's burial site, known as the Red Pyramid, was Snefru's third try at building a true pyramid. The first two tries are still nearby, showing the structural problems that prompted Snefru to order his architects to try again.

All of Snefru's work, however, was worth it. His son Khufu began work on his own pyramid as soon as he took the throne. The resulting pyramid—built at Giza, just outside present-day Cairo—is known as the Great Pyramid. The interior contains many shafts and chambers, designed to align with stars. They also helped thwart grave robbers who might break in to steal the pharaoh's treasures.

For four thousand years, the Great Pyramid was the tallest structure built by humans in the entire world. It is one of several pyramids at Giza, which is also the location of a huge sculpture called the Great Sphinx. A sphinx is a mythological creature with the body of a lion and a human head. The Great Sphinx was built as an eternal guardian of the honored dead who rested at Giza.



Find Out the Facts

Research to learn more about Imhotep.



Writers' Corner

Use your research to write a biographical profile of Imhotep.



Find Out the Facts

Look for information about the Great Pyramid at Giza to learn how big it is and how it was made.

Historians used to think the pyramids were built by enslaved laborers, but evidence shows most pyramid workers were free and that they were paid for their work. Up to five thousand people worked as permanent laborers on each pyramid. They lived next to the pyramid and worked on it for years. Additionally, there were also thousands of temporary workers. These were mainly farmers who gained extra income by laboring at the pyramid for a few months when the Nile was in flood. Some pyramid workers earned enough to afford their own modest burial tombs. Sometimes, workers left graffiti on the site noting the names of the work gangs they belonged



Think Twice

What factors may have encouraged ancient Egyptians to build massive tombs like the pyramids?



The pyramids at Giza

to. For many thousands of people, pyramid construction was how they made their living and left their mark on the world.

Another massive, long-term building project was the temple complex at Karnak, in the city of Thebes, built to worship the god Amun. Construction began during the Middle Kingdom, from around 2000 BCE. Pharaohs expanded the complex over the next two thousand years, creating monumental works to honor themselves and other deities such as Osiris and Isis. The complex grew to be over one-third of a square mile in size.



Hieroglyphs

Tombs and religious sites were not only filled with gold and other valuables. The walls were also covered with writing that recorded the stories of the gods and the deeds of mortals. To do this, Egyptians used a pictorial writing system that we call **hieroglyphics**.

Vocabulary

hieroglyphics, n. writing based on pictures rather than letters



Hieroglyphs

Each hieroglyphic symbol could mean a word, an idea, or a sound or fragment of a word. At the height of their use, there were about seven hundred distinct symbols. Most of the time, hieroglyphs were written and read from right to left. However, the inscriptions on tombs were meant to be artistically pleasing because of their role as decorations. As a result, hieroglyphs on tomb walls were sometimes written top to bottom or left to right, according to the most pleasing design.

The Egyptians wrote on stone and on clay, but they also wrote on a form of paper called **papyrus**. Papyrus is a plant that grows in the Nile delta. Papyrus stalks could be dried out and pressed together to form a flat, paper-like material that could be written on.

Vocabulary

papyrus, n. a tall plant that ancient Egyptians used to make paper and other useful goods, such as sandals and rope

Over time, hieroglyphics evolved into three broad types. The oldest hieroglyphics are those found on Egyptian tombs. Because these hieroglyphs were complex and difficult to write quickly, Egyptian scribes developed a simplified writing system based on hieroglyphics, called hieratic. Hieratic was used mostly for business and administrative records. Eventually, an even more simplified form, called demotic, evolved. Demotic was for quick, everyday writing.

For centuries, the ability to read Egyptian hieroglyphics was lost. It was rediscovered almost by chance at the end of the 1700s CE. A French military expedition found a broken stone tablet with inscriptions written in multiple scripts—Ancient Greek, demotic, and hieroglyphs. Eventually, the British took possession of the tablet, which is known as the Rosetta Stone. Scholars decoded the Egyptian writing by using the Greek translations on the stone.



The New Kingdom

In the 1600s BCE, the Middle Kingdom weakened. Wealthy Egyptians fought among themselves for power. A group called the Hyksos, originally from western Asia, had settled in the delta. Using strong metal weapons, the Hyksos took power in Lower Egypt for about a century. To the south in Nubia, the kingdom of Kerma, with an army built around its skilled archers, allied with the Hyksos against the Egyptians.

Egypt's power was temporarily diminished. Around 1560 BCE, Ahmose, a warrior from Upper Egypt, drove the Hyksos out. He became pharaoh and established a new dynasty, beginning Egypt's New Kingdom. Ahmose's successors conquered Kerma and spread Egyptian culture and religion into Nubia.

Several pharaohs expanded Egypt's territory and added to its glory during this period. They built magnificent tombs in the hills and valley near Thebes. This royal burial ground, now called the Valley of the Kings, was filled with beautifully painted scenes and lavish treasures. Some of the pharaohs most remembered today were from this

era, including Hatshepsut; Akhenaten and his queen, Nefertiti; Tutankhamen, or "King Tut"; and Ramses the Great.



Hatshepsut

Egyptians maintained a tradition that only men could occupy the role of king or pharaoh. But one of the most remarkable pharaohs was a woman, Hatshepsut. She ruled Egypt from 1479 to 1458 BCE. Her ascent to the throne was unexpected. Her husband, the pharaoh Thutmose II, died while his son, who would become Thutmose III, was still a young child. Because an infant could not rule or perform the duties of the pharaoh, Hatshepsut ruled in Thutmose III's place as **regent**.

Vocabulary

regent, n. a person who governs a kingdom in the place of a young or absent king or queen

After seven years as regent, Hatshepsut had herself crowned as pharaoh. She reigned for more than twenty years and seems to have been relatively powerful. Her rule appears to have been successful and peaceful.

Because pharaohs were traditionally male, Hatshepsut worked to create ways of presenting herself as a full and **legitimate** pharaoh. At first, she ordered that statues and images should depict her as a woman, but wearing clothing for a man. Later, she decided to do away with the feminine depictions of herself and chose to be shown as inhabiting a male body, including a false beard on her chin.

Vocabulary

legitimate, adj. in accordance with the law or established standards



Hatshepsut

Hatshepsut worked hard to reestablish trade that had stopped under the Hyksos. She ordered large building projects and had older monuments and temples restored. There is evidence that she organized some military campaigns, likely in Nubia. Hatshepsut seems to have been mostly concerned with building up her kingdom internally and using trade to gain resources.

After she died, Thutmose III ruled for thirty-three years. At some point, he ordered the destruction of Hatshepsut's monuments. It's not known why he did this, but it might have been to hide the fact that a woman had been the real ruler of Egypt for so many years. It's possible that the idea of a woman pharaoh was so unusual and disruptive to the harmonious and orderly plan set down by the gods that Thutmose thought her memory had to be erased. We know about Hatshepsut because a historian realized that funeral inscriptions at a temple used feminine terms to refer to her, while statues showed her as a man. Since then, more evidence has been found about her rule, showing that Thutmose's attempt to erase her from history ultimately failed.



Find Out the Facts

Research some of Hatshepsut's accomplishments as a pharaoh.



Akhenaten and Nefertiti

Amenhotep IV wanted to bring big changes to Egypt. Worried that the priests had too much power, he tried to start a new **monotheistic** religion based on worship of the sun god Aten. He closed temples to other gods. He portrayed himself as the one true connection to Aten, the only god. He even changed his name to Akhenaten, meaning servant of Aten. He directed artists to create images of himself and his wife, Nefertiti, that resembled deities.

Vocabulary

monotheistic, adj. related to or characterized by the worship of or belief in a single god

It seems unlikely that most Egyptians would have supported these massive changes. Many priests and people of all social classes probably resisted



Nefertiti

abandoning their traditional beliefs and practices for something so different.



Tutankhamun

Probably the most famous pharaoh of all owes his recognition more to his death than to his life. Tutankhamun ruled Egypt for only ten years. But Tutankhamun's tomb, which was discovered in 1922 by the archaeologist Howard Carter, shows

the incredible wealth and splendor of the Egyptian pharaohs.

In life, Tutankhamun was a short-lived but relatively important ruler. Likely the son of Akhenaten, he came to power at age ten in a period of upheaval and uncertainty caused by his father's attempts to impose a new religion. With help from his advisors, Tutankhamun began the work of restoring the damaged temples and bringing stability back to Egypt. Tutankhamun had originally been named Tutankhaten. He chose a new name that meant the image of Amun to show he wanted to restore honor to the god Amun, a deity his father had tried to quash.

Tutankhamun died suddenly at the age of nineteen. He was buried in a relatively small tomb in the Valley of the Kings. When the Carter expedition opened Tutankhamun's tomb, they found an extraordinary wealth of priceless artifacts that had been buried to accompany the young king to the afterlife. The most famous of these artifacts is Tutankhamun's funeral mask. Made of solid gold, it is inlaid with lapis lazuli. The eyes are made of white quartz, with obsidian pupils. Tutankhamun's tomb also contained all the things the king would need in the

next life: food, clothes, decorative statues, furniture, weapons, and small figurines called shabtis. These represented servants who would perform tasks for their owner in the afterlife.

Find Out the Facts

Learn more about shabtis.



Tutankhamun's funeral mask

Think Twice

What caused Amenhotep and Tutankhamun to make religious reforms? What were some effects of the changes they made?





Ramses II and the Golden Age

The reign of Ramses II, or Ramses the Great, is known as Egypt's golden age. Ramses ruled Egypt for an unusually long time; he held power for sixty-six years, between 1279 and 1213 BCE. He was in his nineties when he died, and it was claimed that he was the oldest man in Egypt at the time, with none of his subjects able to remember a time when he was not alive. As well as a mighty king, he was an effective **propagandist**, creating a lasting impression of himself as glorious and powerful.

Ramses ordered the construction of a palace and new capital city in the delta. He had many temples and statues built, including many enormous statues of himself. These statues showed Ramses not as he was but as he wished to be seen: as the undisputed master of the world, as its mightiest warrior, and as the chosen champion of Egypt's gods.

Ramses valued his military reputation because he was an **expansionist** ruler. One of Ramses's great ambitions was to add more territory to Egypt's empire,

which brought him into conflict with the Hittites. The Hittite Empire arose in what is today Turkey and eventually expanded to include the area of present-day Lebanon, Syria, and part of northern Canaan. The Hittites and Egyptians were both trading partners and rivals and sometimes fought over territory.

Vocabulary

propagandist, n. someone who puts out information to promote a person or cause

expansionist, adj. seeking to conquer or acquire more territory

Ramses conquered southern Canaan and then continued to the Hittites' area. He led a great battle at Kadesh and claimed that he had won a complete victory. The outcome was actually closer to a tie. Ramses and the Hittites eventually negotiated a peace treaty. It is the oldest surviving international peace treaty. Ramses and the Hittite leader agreed to consider each other brothers and to not start wars with one another again. Ramses added a massive hall, supported by great columns, to the temple at Karnak. The outer walls include images of his glorious acts at Kadesh.



Think Twice

Why is the reign of Ramses II often called a golden age?



Find Out the Facts

Ramses was called Ozymandias by the Greeks. There is a famous poem by the English author Percy Bysshe Shelley called "Ozymandias." Find out why Shelley wrote the poem and the message Ramses speaks in the text.



Egypt Declines

After Ramses II, Egypt declined, although the New Kingdom did continue on in some form for another three hundred years. Groups from the eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, Kush, and Mesopotamia took turns invading the once-mighty kingdom. A few centuries later, Alexander the Great conquered the region and founded the great city of Alexandria on Egypt's Mediterranean coast. Later, the Romans took power in Egypt. However, Egyptian works and history were admired by many of these conquerors and remain a source of fascination to people around the world.



Nubian Civilization

While Egypt was a mighty power, other civilizations arose in Africa. Nubia developed along the Nile south of Egypt. This region had fertile soil and more regular rainfall, making it less dependent on the Nile's seasonal flooding. Nubians grew rice and other grains, yams, and beets. The Nubian region also included grassy plains called **savannas** where Nubians herded cattle and hunted. Nubians became known for their skills in using bows and arrows to hunt and fight.

Vocabulary

savanna, n. a flat grassland that also has a few trees

By around 2500 BCE, a sophisticated kingdom called Kerma had emerged. Its location near the third cataract of the Nile helped it develop trade links with Egypt to the north and other African civilizations to the south. From the trading network that passed through Kerma, Egypt received gold, ivory, cattle, pottery, and metal goods. They also received enslaved people. Kerma became known



An Egyptian tomb painting depicting Nubians

Historiography: Perspective Matters

In the 1800s and early 1900s CE, Europeans and Americans led expeditions to find Egyptian artifacts. Many of these scholars were influenced by ancient Greek texts that speak of the glory of Egypt. They also believed that nearby African civilizations had been less sophisticated. Because of this inaccurate belief, they misunderstood the ruins at Kerma, thinking that it must have been a remote Egyptian settlement and that few valuable artifacts would be found there. In the mid-1900s, the ruins were finally excavated, revealing the glories of Nubia—and showing how researchers' biases can impact their work.

for beautiful ceramics and blue glazed pottery. Its kings were buried much like Egypt's pharaohs, in grand tombs filled with gems, jewelry, pottery, and other belongings.

The Kingdom of Kush

Egyptians referred to Kerma as Kush. During the time of the Hyksos, Kush expanded northward. Then, powerful Egyptian rulers rose to power again, reconquering territory. Egyptian religion and practices spread throughout the region.

Around 745 BCE, Kush invaded and defeated Egypt. The Kushite king Piye became a pharaoh and the first ruler of a powerful new dynasty. These Kushite pharaohs, also called the Black Pharaohs, ruled for a century over a vast territory encompassing Egypt and Kush. The two cultures blended to some extent but still continued to exist as distinct groups. Kushite kings were buried in pyramids and tombs, and their authority was seen to come from the Egyptian god Amon-Re. But some Kushites adopted

fashions and practices from southern Africa, such as wearing long earrings and patterned fabrics. Kushite art often features elephants, an animal considered sacred in Kush.

Meroë

In 666 BCE, when Assyrians from Mesopotamia conquered Egypt, Kushites retreated to the south. Kush's rulers moved their capital to Meroë, near deposits of iron ore. The Assyrians had introduced iron tools and weapons to the region, and Meroë became a center of iron production. Kush benefited from the trade as well as the agricultural productivity and military might gained from using iron.

The kingdom of Kush continued to be wealthy and powerful for six centuries. Over time, a thriving trading network linked it with the tropical regions of Africa to the south and faraway civilizations in Arabia, India, China, and Rome. The Kushites left a remarkable legacy of two hundred pyramids at Meroë, which are smaller but steeper than the

great Egyptian pyramids. The site at Meroë also includes evidence of Kushite temples and **reservoirs** to store and distribute water.

Vocabulary

reservoir, n. an artificial lake or other place where water is collected and kept

In 350 CE, Axum, a kingdom near the Red Sea, invaded and conquered Kush and destroyed Meroë. Kushite culture faded away, but Kush's legacy remains as one of the great civilizations of Africa.



A temple at Meroë from the first century CE

Chapter 3

The Israelites

The Big Question

What ideas influenced the culture of the Israelites?

Origins of the Israelites

Little is known of the earliest ancient Israelites, whose religion developed into what is now called Judaism. Their earliest stories tell of challenges, leaders, and a dedication to their religious beliefs. Over time, their culture developed in the lands between the eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia. As Jewish people migrated to other parts of the world, this culture became part of the fabric of many societies.

The Israelites lived in a historic region sometimes called the Levant. This area corresponds roughly to where the modern countries of Israel,



A page from the Leningrad Codex, the oldest complete manuscript of the Tanakh, was created around 1009 CE. The six-pointed star, also called the Star of David, emerged as a symbol of Jewish culture in the Middle Ages.



Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria exist today. The term *Levant* was coined by Europeans to designate the region of the Mediterranean to the east of them, where they found valuable trading connections. *Levant* means rising in French. The Levant was thought of by Europeans as a land toward the east, where the sun rises. This general region is also part of what has come to be called the Near East or Middle East—again terms developed by Europeans and based on their perspective. These terms are a reminder that history and geography are always framed by the worldviews of the people who write or study about these subjects.

Around 1200 BCE, changes started to occur in the Levant. As the Egyptian empire came to an end, new kingdoms arose. One of those kingdoms belonged to the Israelites. Originally a **nomadic** people, the Israelites eventually settled in an area they called Canaan. Over time, the city of Jerusalem became the center of Jewish culture.

Vocabulary

nomadic, adj. moving around often in search of food; not settled in one place

A Different Kind of Religion

A defining feature of the Israelites was their monotheistic religion. This marked a contrast with the polytheistic belief systems of other peoples in the region. While some of these groups focused on a particular god, the monotheism of the Israelites was unusual among ancient civilizations.

Much of the early history of the Israelites is unknown. However, they began to write down stories that related important traditions, beliefs, and challenges. These writings were later collected in a work that became known as the **Tanakh**. This work is also called the Hebrew Bible. The word *Bible* comes from the ancient Greek word *biblos*, which originally meant papyrus or scroll and later came to mean

book. The writings of the Hebrew Bible, or the Tanakh, eventually influenced the development of three major world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Abraham the Patriarch

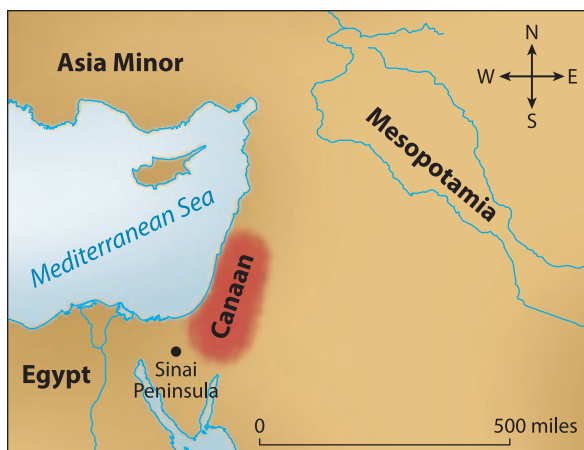
The Tanakh starts with an account of the beginning of the world, the first people, and their relationship to God. It tells of people spreading across the world and relates the story of a great flood that almost destroys humankind. A later story tells of a man called Abraham, who leaves Mesopotamia when God tells him to go to a new land. God says that he will show Abraham special favor and will make Abraham the first of a great new people. Abraham obeys God without question and goes to settle in Canaan.

Vocabulary

Tanakh, n. the collection of Jewish holy writings; sometimes called the Hebrew Bible



An illustrated scroll, created in the 1600s CE, of the book of Esther from the Tanakh



Canaan

descendants and intends for them to live in the promised land. Because the peoples who first practiced Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all considered themselves descendants of Abraham, these religions are sometimes called Abrahamic religions.

The lessons of Abraham’s story, in particular about obedience to God and a sacred connection of Abraham’s descendants to

The Roots of Three Religions

According to the Tanakh, God makes a **covenant**, or special promise, with Abraham and all his **descendants**. Both God and Abraham agree to a special relationship. Abraham remains faithfully devoted to God and does not worship other gods. God protects Abraham and his

Vocabulary

covenant, n. an important agreement or promise

descendant, n. someone who is related to a person or group of people who lived in the past

Find Out the Facts

Learn about the three main parts of the Tanakh.



Holy Books of the Abrahamic Religions	
Judaism	Tanakh (or Hebrew Bible) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes the Torah (or Five Books of Moses)
Christianity	Bible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old Testament (similar to the Tanakh, although some differences exist) New Testament
Islam	Koran (also spelled Qur’an) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes reference to the Tanakh, in particular the first five books (called the Tawrat in Islam)

the promised land of Canaan, came to hold great meaning in all three religions. Indeed, the whole of the Tanakh influences many of the beliefs and practices of these religions. When Islamic rulers came to power in the region in the 600s CE, they identified Jews and Christians as “People of the Book,” groups who had a special status because of their shared beliefs and practices, rooted in the texts of the Tanakh.

In addition to the story of Abraham, the Tanakh includes several other stories that hold great meaning for all three Abrahamic religions. Abraham proves his devotion to God when he shows that he is willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. God rewards this faith and does not allow Isaac to be sacrificed. Isaac’s son Jacob also has a special relationship with God. One story tells of Jacob wrestling all night with an angel. Afterward, he is called Israel, and his descendants are called Israelites. The Tanakh says that Jacob’s sons become the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel.



The Israelites in Egypt

Another story tells of how a great **famine** forces the Israelites to leave Canaan and go to Egypt. They live there for several

generations. The Tanakh says that the pharaoh becomes suspicious of the Israelites, worrying there will soon be more of them than there are Egyptians. So the pharaoh has many Israelite boys killed. He enslaves the remaining Israelites and forces them to do hard labor.

One story tells of an Israelite mother who wants to save her baby boy, Moses. She makes a basket and places the baby inside. She sets the basket to float down the Nile and tells Moses’s sister, Miriam, to follow it. After some time, the basket gets stuck in reeds growing along the bank. An Egyptian woman finds the basket and Moses in it. Watching from a distance, Miriam realizes the woman is the pharaoh’s daughter. Quickly, Miriam thinks of a daring plan. She runs to the Egyptian princess and tells her that she knows of a woman who could help her care for the baby. The princess keeps Moses and raises him as a prince, but Moses’s mother cares for him, keeping the secret that she is his real mother. In this way, Moses grows up as part of the pharaoh’s household, but

Vocabulary

famine, n. an extreme shortage of food that results in widespread hunger

God has sent Moses to be a leader and a **prophet** for the Israelites. As an adult, he fulfills this destiny.

Many years later, the Israelites pray to God to set them free. In answer, God tells Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery. Moses goes to the pharaoh and asks him to set the Israelites free. The pharaoh refuses. So God sends **plagues** to punish Egypt, including illnesses and **locusts**



The pharaoh's daughter finding Moses

Vocabulary

prophet, n. someone chosen by God to bring a message to people

plague, n. something that harms a large number of people, such as a sickness or insects that kill crops

locust, n. a large grasshopper-like insect; in large swarms, locusts can cause widespread crop damage

that ruin the crops, causing starvation. The final plague that sweeps through Egypt kills the firstborn child of every family. But before sending the plague, God warns the Israelites and tells them to mark their doors with a special symbol to protect their children. In this way, the plague passes over the homes of the Israelites. This story is central to the Jewish holiday of Passover, an eight-day period celebrated in the spring that includes a special ceremony called a seder.

Think Twice

What are some themes of the stories of the early Israelites?



Wanting to end the dreadful plagues, the pharaoh finally agrees to let the Israelites go. They must leave quickly, with no time to prepare. They take flat bread with them to eat because they have no time to let bread

dough rise. Moses leads them back toward Canaan, but then the pharaoh changes his mind. He sends soldiers after the Israelites to try to capture them and bring them back to slavery in Egypt. The Israelites **flee**, but the mighty army catches up with them as they reach the shores of the Red Sea. The Israelites are trapped between the army and the sea, and it seems that there is no more hope. Then, God parts the waters of the sea, opening a path of dry land. The Israelites are able to cross over to the other side; then God closes the waters and destroys the Egyptian army. This story of escape from Egypt is known as the **Exodus**. However, the Israelites do not go directly to Canaan. They get lost and wander in the desert for forty years.

Vocabulary

flee, v. to run away

Exodus, n. the story of the Israelites' escape from ancient Egypt; a departure of a large group of people, especially migrants

The events and images of the story of the Israelites' captivity, escape, and wandering in the desert hold great religious meaning for many people today. This is true of many other parts of the Tanakh as well. These stories and images have also become

part of the artistic traditions of many societies. Over many centuries, writers, painters, composers, and other artists have incorporated ideas from the Tanakh into their work. They draw connections between these stories and the experiences of people in different times and places.

Find Out the Facts



Research to find out how Jewish people celebrate Passover around the world.

Writers' Corner

Use your research to write a report about Passover traditions in different countries.



Laws Written in Stone

The story of the Israelites wandering in the desert includes an episode where God gives Moses stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments, a set of laws for the Israelites. These laws are to be used to guide the way the Israelites live. Some of the laws involve how to live, and others give instruction about worshipping God. Others address how to treat other people. The commandments are central to all three Abrahamic religions. They are also

considered a source of the moral principles behind the laws of many modern nations.

Moses is a major figure in the religious and artistic traditions of many peoples. Because of his role leading the Israelites out of Egypt, he is seen as a **liberator**, or person who frees others. The story of the Ten Commandments portrays Moses as a **lawgiver**, an important authority figure who provides a code of laws and **ethics** to his people.

Vocabulary

liberator, n. a person who frees others from oppression

lawgiver, n. an authority figure who provides a code of laws and ethics to a people

ethics, n. rules based on ideas about right and wrong



Think Twice

How does having a set of written laws contribute to a civilization?



The Promised Land

After he brings the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, Moses dies. A new leader called Joshua leads the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan. However, others

already live there. The Israelites battle to take control of the land. One story tells how Joshua leads an attack on the city of Jericho. At the sound of trumpets, the protective wall around the city crumbles, allowing the Israelites their first great victory as they conquer Canaan.

The Tanakh tells how the Israelites come into the land of Canaan with the belief that God has sent them there and that it is meant to be their land. The area the Israelites fight to conquer is located mostly in the lands between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, which runs between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Israelites fight so they can live in the land God reserved for them and build a monotheistic society based on God's laws.



The Phoenicians

Many different groups lived in and around Canaan. One important group was the Phoenicians, who lived along the eastern Mediterranean, in the coastal regions of present-day Syria, Lebanon, and northern Israel. Phoenicians came into the area by 3000 BCE and started building cities by 1500 BCE. They continued to prosper over several centuries.

The Phoenicians were skilled sailors and shipbuilders. They traveled far and wide at a time when many other peoples did not have the ships and **navigation** skills to do so. They became successful traders throughout the Mediterranean region, going to Greece, southern Europe, and western Africa. Eventually, they went even farther, eastward into Arabia and India and north to the British Isles in the North Atlantic. They established a settlement at Carthage, in North Africa, that developed into a powerful center of trade. Phoenicians encountered Mesopotamian cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphics, but they eventually developed an **alphabet**, a system of letters that symbolize certain sounds. This is the writing system we use today.

Vocabulary

navigation, n. the act of planning and directing the movement of a ship, plane, or other vehicle

alphabet, n. a set of letters that symbolize sounds and can be combined to make words

The Phoenicians were especially known for making a purple dye. In ancient times, it was difficult or even impossible for most peoples to create the color

purple. Phoenicians learned how to manufacture their purple dye using snails that live in the Mediterranean Sea. The process to create the dye was difficult and time consuming. This meant that the purple cloth Phoenicians made was extremely valuable.

Phoenicians also learned how to make glass, another valuable commodity in the ancient world. The Phoenicians had access to wood, too. Their homeland included abundant cedar and fir trees. Many other areas around the Mediterranean and the Fertile Crescent lacked trees, so Phoenicians gained wealth from their ability to trade wood. From the peoples they traded with, Phoenicians received metals, linen, grain, livestock, gems, spices, and other goods. They also traded enslaved people. Like other ancient peoples, Phoenicians enslaved captured enemies. Some sources suggest Phoenicians may have sometimes tricked people onto their ships by pretending to have goods available to trade and then enslaved them.

Think Twice

Why were items like purple dye and glass so valuable?





A Phoenician glass vase

Philistines

Another of the Canaanite peoples encountered by the Israelites were the Philistines, who settled in the region around 1200 BCE. They settled mostly in areas along the coastal plain in the southern part of the area that is now the country of Israel. Philistines had strong iron tools and weapons, which helped them build a powerful army. The Tanakh contains numerous references to Philistines, describing them as enemies of the Israelites. Ancient Greek writers used

the word *Philistia* to refer to lands where the Philistines lived. It may be this word that gave rise to the term *Palestine*, another name sometimes used to refer to this region of the Levant.

The Israelites in Canaan

The Tanakh contains accounts of the Israelites conquering Canaan and developing a society that is first led by leaders called judges. The judges are described as social, political, and military figures who help the Israelites thrive. Most of these leaders are men, but one key judge is Deborah, who is celebrated for both her wisdom and her courage. She organizes an attack on an enemy king, and the Israelites win a great victory.

The tribes of Israel build their civilization in the desert and rocky hills of the land. Their worship centers on faithfulness to just one God and adherence to the commandments. The Tanakh describes a shelter or tent called the tabernacle, a sacred space where the Israelites can come into contact with God's presence. Inside the tabernacle is a special chest called the Ark of the Covenant, where the Israelites



The Tanakh describes Deborah as an important leader.

keep the tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

The Tanakh also describes how the Israelites come to have a line of kings. The stories tell of how the Israelites ask their leader, the judge Samuel, to choose a king for them. Samuel appoints Saul, who leads the Israelites to victory in many battles. But Saul disobeys God and then dies in battle, so Samuel chooses another king, David.



Think Twice

Why might a society want to be ruled by a king? Why might some people prefer not to have a monarch?



David Unites the Israelites

Archaeologists have found an artifact called the Tel Dan **stela** that refers to a “house of David.” However, little is known about who David was. According to the

Tanakh, David was originally a shepherd. One story tells of an incredible battle between the humble David and a giant named Goliath, a Philistine. David’s victory over Goliath gives him great status. When he becomes king, David unites the tribes of Israel. He establishes the capital of his new kingdom at Jerusalem. David is described as a great king and also a writer of **psalms**, or sacred songs that are part of the Tanakh. The period of David’s kingdom is thought to be sometime between the tenth and ninth centuries BCE.

Vocabulary

stela, n. a tall stone or wooden slab inscribed with words or designs

psalm, n. a sacred song or poem



One story tells of David’s victory over the giant Goliath.

Solomon and the First Temple

The Tanakh goes on to tell of David's son Solomon, the next king to rule over Israel. Solomon builds up the kingdom and gains power and wealth. The cities of Moab and Edom are added to the Israelites' territories. Some scholars think the Israelites grew wealthier during this period by trading with the neighboring Phoenicians.

The Tanakh portrays Solomon as a ruler of great wisdom. He is identified as the author of many of the Tanakh's **proverbs**, or wise sayings. The text also tells of his glorious building projects, including a magnificent temple in Jerusalem. Solomon builds the Temple as a place to keep the Ark of the Covenant and to worship God.

Vocabulary

proverb, n. a wise saying; a brief observation that offers guidance or insight

However, the Tanakh also tells of troubles in the Israelites' kingdom during Solomon's reign. The tribes argue, and some Israelites grumble about the taxes

Solomon requires. After Solomon's death, some of the tribes split away from the others. They start a separate kingdom called Israel. The others form the kingdom of Judah.

The Fall of Israel

Historians have not found evidence outside the Tanakh of Solomon's temple. There is debate and disagreement about the nature of the early Israelites' kingdom



Solomon is said to have been a wise king.

and regional power. However, it is known that the Assyrians were a powerful force in the surrounding region. They threatened and conquered many peoples as they expanded their empire. In the 730s BCE, the Assyrians took power in the area around Jerusalem. Some Israelites may have been brought to different areas in the Assyrian Empire, where they eventually mixed with other peoples. Some scholars think this led to the development of a new group, known as the Samaritans. They adopted some of the Israelites' religious practices but also had separate traditions.

The Destruction of the Temple

In 597 BCE, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and the surrounding area. The Tanakh tells of a great forced migration when Nebuchadnezzar makes the Israelites leave Jerusalem and go to live in Babylon. Other Israelites remain in the kingdom of Judah but resist Babylonian rule. Eventually, Nebuchadnezzar returns and completely destroys Jerusalem, including the Temple. All Judah's people are forced to go to Babylon. This period is known as the Babylonian captivity or the

Babylonian exile, a sad and difficult time when the Israelites longed to return to their homeland.

It may be during this period that Jews first began some practices such as worshipping in **synagogues**. They also observed the **Sabbath**, a day of rest and worship lasting from sundown on Friday evening to sundown on Saturday evening.

Vocabulary

synagogue, n. a Jewish temple or house of worship

Sabbath, n. a day of rest and worship observed by members of a religious group



The destruction of the Temple



The Diaspora and the Second Temple

Eventually, Babylon was conquered by the new Persian Empire. The Tanakh tells of how the Persian king Cyrus II lets the Jewish people of Babylon return to Judah, also now under Persian rule. Some Jews stay in Babylon, and others migrate to other regions around the Mediterranean. This spreading out of groups of Jewish people to other areas is called the Jewish **Diaspora**. The word *diaspora* is an ancient Greek word meaning scattered. As groups of Jews scattered and spread to new areas, their culture and ideas spread to new places.

Vocabulary

diaspora, n. the migration of people to different areas outside their homeland; the members of a group living outside the group's homeland or place of origin

Some Jews returned to Judah. Eventually, they rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem. This became known as the Second Temple. The Jewish people continued to look

to their priests and scholars for guidance and to practice rituals and other ceremonies according to their traditions.

The Tanakh tells of Queen Esther, a Jewish woman who marries a Persian king. She learns that Persian forces plan violence against Jews and persuades her husband to stop it. The Jewish festival Purim celebrates Esther and her protection of the Jewish people.



Esther reveals the plans for violence against the Jewish people.

Dietary Laws

Some Jewish people follow a set of rules and traditions about food. Following these rules is known as keeping **kosher**.

The word *kosher* means clean or pure. The ancient Israelites developed many rules about what types of food are kosher and how these foods must be prepared. For example, only meat from certain animals is kosher, such as fish, beef, and lamb. Pork and shellfish are forbidden. However, meat from allowed animals must be processed and prepared in a certain way in order to be kosher. This includes how the animal is slaughtered and how the meat is processed before it is sold and cooked. Meat and milk cannot be mixed together in one dish.

Arabic peoples developed a set of similar dietary laws, and some Muslims follow this tradition. Food that follows these laws is called halal. Kosher and halal rules are not exactly the same, but the similarities suggest that groups in the Levant may have had shared reasons for developing practices and restrictions around food.



Find Out the Facts

Research to find out more about Jewish dietary laws. Learn about what foods are allowed and the process of ensuring that foods are kosher.

Greek Rule and the Maccabean Revolt

The Persians were eventually defeated by Alexander the Great, who spread Greek culture throughout the eastern Mediterranean and eastward to India. When Alexander died in 323 BCE, his empire was divided among several kings. Judah came under the control of the Seleucid line of kings.

In 176 BCE, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV came to power. Some previous rulers had given Jewish people a fair amount of **autonomy**, allowing them to worship according to their traditions and to use the Torah as their governing laws. However, Antiochus decided that the Jewish people would have to worship the Greek gods and goddesses, as did other peoples of the region. In 164 BCE, a Jewish leader called Judas Maccabeus led a revolt. He and his supporters, called Maccabees, battled

Vocabulary

kosher, adj. in accordance with Jewish dietary laws

autonomy, n. self-governing; having the power and freedom to make choices



Illustration of a menorah from the late thirteenth century CE

the Seleucids. After a long struggle, the Maccabees were victorious and took power in Judah.

The Tanakh tells of the Maccabees capturing the Temple, which Antiochus's soldiers have **defiled** with blood and images of their deities. After taking back the Temple, the Maccabees work to purify it. Part of this ritual is the lighting of a special oil lamp called a **menorah**. There is only one small jar of oil left, an amount that usually would last for one day. But the lamp burns for eight days, until the Jews are able to get more of the special oil. The Jewish

festival Hanukkah commemorates the Maccabees' victory and their purification of the Temple.



Roman Rule

The Romans had become a formidable power in the last century BCE. In 63 BCE, Pompey the Great added Jerusalem to the Roman Empire. Romans modified the name of the region, changing Judah to Judea. At first, Romans allowed Jewish people to practice their religion. They appointed a Jewish man named Herod to rule as king of Judea. When the Jewish temple was damaged and **plundered**, Herod had it rebuilt. Construction lasted more than two decades, and the new temple was larger and included several different areas. It was the center of Jewish life in Jerusalem. People not only worshipped there but also gathered there to trade and celebrate.

Vocabulary

defile, v. to spoil; to make unclean or unholy

menorah, n. a candleholder that holds nine lights and is used in observance of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah

plunder, v. to take something by force



Diversity in Judea

Over time, more tensions arose between Jews and Romans. In addition, Jewish people debated among themselves about how to practice their religion and how to cope with their Roman rulers. One group, known as the Pharisees, gained support among many Jews. The Pharisees sought to teach members of the Jewish community how best to apply the ideas and lessons of the Torah to their daily lives. They developed interpretations of traditional writings and of stories and teachings that had been passed down orally. The Pharisees wanted to resist Roman rule, although they did not teach that Jews should openly fight the Romans.

Another group of Jews was the Sadducees. Many of them were from wealthier families. They were educated and served as priests and scribes. Sadducees were known for their focus on performing rituals and ceremonies correctly. They preferred to follow only the written laws of Judaism. They did not agree with the Pharisees about the validity of oral law and tradition. The Sadducees thought it best to cooperate with the Romans, believing

this would help ensure order and peace in the region.

Yet another group, the Essenes, were priests who went to live in a site called Qumran, outside of Jerusalem near the Dead Sea. They followed written laws and devoted themselves to prayer but kept themselves isolated from others in Judea. They disliked Roman rule but thought the best strategy was to pray for it to end.

A group called the Zealots had great **zeal**, or passion, for God and religion. They believed it was important to put religious beliefs into action. The Zealots were fiercely opposed to Roman rule and wanted to fight to end it.

Vocabulary

zeal, n. passion; eagerness

The tensions between Jews and Romans, and among different Jewish groups, increased over time. In 66 CE, the Zealots led a revolt in Jerusalem. They managed to defeat the Roman forces there, but a few years later, Rome sent more soldiers and regained control. The Romans then destroyed the Jewish temple. Jews continued to live under

Roman rule, sometimes resisting and rebelling. The Romans repressed the dissent and prohibited Jewish people from living in Jerusalem. Romans also began calling the region Palestine rather than Judea.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1947 CE, a shepherd in the area of Qumran, near the Dead Sea, happened to go inside a remote cave. To his surprise, he found a number of old clay jars. These jars contained scrolls of parchment with writing on them. Archaeologists examined the scrolls and determined that they contained biblical texts and other ancient writing.

The early parts of the Tanakh refer to events and people from long before the texts were first written down. Scholars analyze the oldest known versions of these writings and try to determine how what the written texts describe fits into the historical record. The Dead Sea Scrolls are the oldest written copies of the Tanakh texts that have ever been found. Before these scrolls were found, the oldest known copies of biblical texts came from the end of the first millennium CE.



Most of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written between about 200 BCE and 70 CE. The scrolls helped change scholars' understandings of the history of the Jewish people who lived under Roman rule in Judea. Most were religious writings, but some also recorded daily life, trade, and other details. The scrolls show that Jews in that place and time were a diverse group, with different ideas about their religion and how to practice it. They had to live under an occupying power, and they hoped for change. They were determined to stay faithful to their religion despite the difficult circumstances.



The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947 CE.

The Spread of Judaism

Even though many conquerors took control of the lands where the Jewish religion first developed, Jewish people held on to their religious beliefs and their culture. Leaders called **rabbis** studied, wrote, and taught about Jewish beliefs. They collected writings about Jewish legal traditions and eventually developed a work called the Talmud. Along with the Tanakh, the Talmud is a central text of Jewish belief.

Vocabulary

rabbi, n. a Jewish religious leader and teacher

Over time, Jewish people spread to many lands. They brought with them their sacred texts and practices, including keeping kosher, resting and worshipping on the Sabbath, and celebrating holidays throughout the year. Holidays are celebrated according to the Hebrew calendar, which is mostly structured according to lunar phases. Judaism today is not the same as Judaism in ancient times. Like other



The Western Wall, Israel

religions, Judaism has changed as the world has changed. Today, two of the most important holidays, or the High Holy Days, are Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Both holidays occur in the fall, usually in September but sometimes in early October. Rosh Hashanah is the celebration of the new year. It is also the start of a ten-day period of special worship. The end of this period is Yom Kippur, also called the Day of **Atonement**. It is the holiest day of the Jewish year. Practices related to Yom Kippur include asking for forgiveness, mourning loved ones who have passed away, and setting spiritual intentions for the coming year.

Vocabulary

atonement, n. making up for or repairing offenses or injuries; taking action to earn forgiveness

As Jews migrated to other lands, many continued to feel a deep connection to Jerusalem and the lands around it. The Temple that the Romans destroyed remained an important place in Jewish history and belief. A few parts of the Temple survived, including some of its western wall. Today, the Western Wall is a sacred site for Jewish people. An important Jewish tradition is to go to the Western Wall to pray. And Jews around the world remain committed to their faith, telling the stories of the Tanakh and continuing its customs and practices.

Find Out the Facts

Find out more information about the Western Wall.



Writers' Corner

Use your research to write a report about the Western Wall.



Chapter 4

Ancient Greece

The Big Question

What elements of Greek civilization influenced many other societies?

Roots of Western Thought

From small cities along storm-wracked coasts, the people of ancient Greece built a thriving civilization. Many of their ideas and achievements are still cherished by people the world over. The Greeks were the first in Europe to experiment with democracy. They helped lay the foundations for Western philosophy, science, mathematics, political theory, and more.

Ancient Greece was not a place defined by clear boundaries. It included the Greek mainland and nearby islands as well as lands along many parts of the Mediterranean coast. Eventually, Greek culture spread far and wide,



In the 1500s CE, a Dutch artist imagined what ancient Thessaly looked like.



influencing other civilizations. The ancient Greeks were not a single people. They were a group of peoples and cities bound together by language, culture, religion, and shared political and economic interests.



A Land of Mountains and Sea

Mainland Greece is a peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides. Beyond the mainland, much of Greece is an **archipelago**: a chain of small to medium-sized islands. The largest island, Crete, lies about halfway between the tip of the Greek mainland and northeastern Africa. The mainland has two major zones. The central and northern zone is mountainous. To the southwest is the Peloponnese, a large peninsula connected to the rest of the mainland by a narrow stretch of land, or **isthmus**.

Vocabulary

archipelago, n. a chain of islands

isthmus, n. a narrow piece of land that connects two larger landmasses

Find Out the Facts

Research the etymology of the word *archipelago*. Find the root words and what the word originally meant.



Map of Ancient Greece, 500 BCE



The terrain of Greece is a product of intense **tectonic** activity, including frequent earthquakes and powerful volcanoes. As a result, Greece is rugged, with about 80 percent of the land taken up by mountains. Travel was difficult and cities developed in relative isolation.

Vocabulary

tectonic, adj. related to the movement of Earth's crust

With so many mountains, there is relatively little land for farming. In most regions of Greece, winters are mild and summers are hot and dry. Rainfall is not plentiful, and irrigation was a challenge for ancient Greek farmers, who had to get water from small

streams rather than major rivers. Thus, ancient Greek farms were fairly small, though productive. Farmers grew wheat, barley, chickpeas, lentils, beans, olives, and grapes. Greeks also grew fruits and vegetables for their households, including figs, pears, pomegranates, cucumbers, onions, and garlic. Animals like goats and sheep grazed on the mountainsides and were used as a source of meat and dairy products. Fish was also an important part of the diet.

Surrounded by water, with relatively little good farmland, the early Greeks became skilled seafarers and navigators. The miles of coast offered many natural harbors where ships could be built and sheltered from storms. With these ships, ancient Greeks explored and colonized

many lands. The oceans and mountains also made Greek cities hard to attack and relatively easy to defend.

The Minoans

The first civilizations that arose in this region were not Greek. That is, they were different from the people who spoke Greek and later dominated the region. The Minoans flourished on the large island of Crete between about 2700 and 1500 BCE.

Archaeologists first learned about the Minoans from the ruins of an ancient palace at Knossos, on Crete. It had many interconnected rooms on several levels. These rooms could be used for multiple functions, including eating, entertaining guests, storing supplies, and sleeping. The Minoans also built intricate systems of pipes and drains. A network of paved roads connected the towns on the island.

Minoans decorated buildings with **frescoes** and other artworks; walls and columns were painted vibrant colors. One famous aspect of Minoan culture is their use of bulls' heads in art, which may have had religious significance. Minoans also developed well-made and richly ornamented pottery. Their art frequently

included images of sea animals, such as fish and octopuses, as well as shells. Their artistic style was marked by flowing lines, perhaps influenced by the tides and waves that surrounded them. Minoan pottery was an important export alongside other arts and crafts products, including gold cups, bronze vessels, and figurines. Minoans also had a writing system known today as Linear A. Although many have tried, no one has been able to decipher it.

Minoan civilization was prosperous and probably fairly peaceful. Crete produced some agricultural goods, like olive oil and figs, for export. It also had valuable forests, which allowed the Minoans to provide wood to neighboring regions that lacked it. The Minoans also raised sheep and

Think Twice



Why do archaeologists study pottery more than artifacts made of other materials, like wood or fabric, when investigating ancient societies?

Vocabulary

fresco, n. a type of painting done on wet plaster

Think Twice



Why was wood valuable in the ancient Mediterranean world?

The Minotaur

Archaeologists coined the term *Minoan*. In Greek mythology, King Minos was a ruler of Crete. He built a labyrinth (maze) to hold a monster called the Minotaur, who had a human body and the head of a bull. Some think this labyrinth could refer to the palace at Knossos. Others think the myth is connected to a different site on Crete. They point to the ruins of an ancient quarry with complex tunnels. It's impossible to know the true origins of the myth. But it's intriguing that an ancient story associated with Crete features labyrinthine architecture and a bull, given that artifacts indicate that both were meaningful features of this civilization.

produced wool, another profitable good. They had large, well-made ships that they used for fishing and trading. This brought them into contact with other cultures, including the Egyptians, Babylonians, and peoples of the Levant. After thriving for more than a thousand years, Minoan civilization declined. It's not known exactly what happened to the Minoans. A natural disaster may have weakened them. Some scholars think the biggest factor was the rise of the other great power of early Greek history—the Mycenaeans.



Mycenaean Civilization

The Mycenaean culture is named for the city of Mycenae, which was in the Peloponnese region. This was the dominant civilization in the Peloponnese and several of the Greek islands between about 1700 and 1100 BCE. Many of the major Mycenaean settlements would continue to be major cities for years to come. As well as Mycenae itself, Mycenaean settlements included Sparta, Thebes, Argos, Athens, and Tiryns.

Mycenaeans produced great works of art, built cities and palaces, and traded around the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. They were not a single united group. Many of the cities and settlements probably had their own rulers and political ideas. A handful of Mycenaean texts exist written in a script called Linear B, which has been deciphered. But most of what is known about this culture comes from other kinds of artifacts. The large walls of many Mycenaean palaces suggest that Mycenaean rulers were not unified and that they expected to go to war with one another now and again. Ordinary Mycenaeans lived in relatively humble

houses. Wealthy Mycenaeans were buried with finely made weapons, armor, and masks.

Mycenaean civilization ended around 1100 BCE. However, it had a strong influence on the Greek civilization that later developed. The heroic tales found in the Greek epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* may be related to Mycenaean legends. Agamemnon, chief of the Greek kings who went to war against Troy, was said to be from Mycenae, and the archaeological findings at Mycenae suggest it was ruled by people who considered themselves proud and skilled warriors.

Greek civilization shared many features of the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures. Greek religious practices developed from roots that probably took hold in the Mycenaean period. Many Mycenaean religious rituals, like pouring out wine to honor gods, building large temples at holy sites associated with natural spirits, and sacrificing animals, persisted in the Greek civilization that developed after the collapse of the Mycenaeans.

It's not clear exactly what happened to Mycenaean civilization, but its end was probably part of the larger Bronze Age collapse, when several

Mediterranean civilizations experienced a sudden decline. Various factors likely came together to cause instability, such as earthquakes, drought, famine, internal fighting, and invasions by external enemies.

The end of the Mycenaean civilization ushered in a period called the Dark Age. There was less food, fewer resources, and less wealth. Trading, building, writing, record keeping, and other economic activities slowed dramatically. Stories suggest the Dorians (an early Greek people) invaded and took over southern Greece using iron weapons and tools. Later, inhabitants of southern Greece and some islands claimed to be descendants of the Dorians.



The Rise of Greek Culture

Around 750 BCE, inhabitants of Greece began calling themselves Hellenes. This is why ancient Greek culture came to be called **Hellenic**.

Vocabulary

Hellenic, adj. related to the culture of ancient Greece

The Greeks began to build small kingdoms, each centered on a town or city. They were connected through shared language, religious beliefs, and cultural practices. The Greeks traded with the nearby Egyptians and Phoenicians and adapted the Phoenician alphabet to make a Greek alphabet. They kept records and began to write down some of the oral tales handed down from previous generations. In time, Greek myths became widely known across much of the Western world. Even today, these religious stories provide insight into ancient Greek civilization.



Greek Religion

The Greeks believed in many gods and goddesses and a natural world full of minor gods, spirits, and monsters. They saw gods and spirits as active and powerful forces in the world. In order to have a happy and successful life, people had to honor, appease, thank, and bargain with the gods and spirits.

The most powerful and important gods were the Olympians, who were believed to live at the top of Mount Olympus. They were the family and court of Zeus, king of the gods. Zeus was also the god of thunder

and lightning, weather, and justice. His brother Hades governed the underworld, the realm of the dead. His other brother, Poseidon, was the god of the sea. Zeus's daughter Athena was the goddess of war and wisdom, but also peace and weaving. His son Apollo was linked to music, poetry, archery, and light. Lesser gods and spirits were associated with particular natural phenomena. Nymphs were spirits of springs, trees, and rivers. In Greek mythology, gods and spirits were much like humans. They were capable of love, envy, anger, pettiness, and joy. Some of the gods were rivals, and some were friends.

Gods and spirits were worshipped at temples, which were often built at sacred places believed to have a special connection with a particular deity. Within the temple, an image or statue of the deity could often be found. Some temples attracted many worshippers who sought the aid of the god or goddess. These were often developed into a temple complex, which would have shrines to other gods and goddesses added to the main temple.

Priests and priestesses cared for the temple, conducted rituals, and offered interpretations of events believed to be signs from the gods. Some priests and priestesses were believed to have special



powers. A famous temple to Apollo was home to a priestess called the Pythia, also known as the **Oracle** at Delphi. Greeks believed she had the ability to reveal the future by giving **cryptic** messages that could be interpreted by the person who had sought a revelation. Some temples became linked with particular types of work. Temples to Asclepius, the god of healing, often functioned as a sort of hospital. In Athens, metal workshops developed around a temple to Hephaestus, god of fire and blacksmiths.

Vocabulary

oracle, n. a person who gives wise advice or tells prophecies

cryptic, adj. having a hidden meaning

Find Out the Facts



Research a Greek god or goddess. Learn about the powers, symbols, and stories associated with this deity.

The gods were also honored in many festivals. These often included competitions, especially if the festival was held to celebrate gods who oversaw poetry, music, athletic talent, or proficiency with weapons. The most famous of these festivals was the Olympic Games, held at Olympia and intended to honor Zeus. Greeks came from throughout the region for the games, which included competitions in javelin and discus throwing as well as wrestling and running. If city-states were in conflict, a truce was declared

so that competitors (who were religious pilgrims, in a sense) could travel safely to the games.

Writers' Corner



Use your research to write a story or play in which the Greek deity uses their powers.

Colonization

As Greek kingdoms emerged, their populations began to grow rapidly. This led to the establishment of **colonies**, which were new city-states that were independent but maintained relations, particularly trading relations, with a “mother city.” Thanks to their ability to travel by boat, the Greeks were able to establish colonies across a wide area. While at sea in search of trade opportunities, they set up or took over settlements frequented by traders in need of rest, supplies, and other business necessities on their way elsewhere.

Some colonies were quite closely controlled by the mother city, but many were not. Residents of the colonies often

adopted cultural practices of the people who were already there before Greeks arrived. But many colonies supported their mother city in times of crisis, such as war.

City-States

Over time, groups of nobles took power and overthrew the kings. These nobles ruled over independent city-states, each with a particular character and government. Dozens of Greek city-states arose throughout the mainland and islands. The biggest, most powerful city-states included Athens, Sparta,

Corinth, Thebes, Syracuse, and Rhodes. Sometimes bitter rivals and sometimes allies,

these city-states always remained distinct and independent.

The Greek term for a city-state is **polis**, which is the root of the modern word *politics*. Over time, the word *polis* also came to mean the collection of citizens

Vocabulary

colony, n. an area settled by people who come from elsewhere

Vocabulary

polis, n. a city-state of ancient Greece

who belonged to the city-state. The idea of the **citizen** became important in ancient Greece and later influenced other civilizations. Ancient Greece was one of the first societies to develop the idea that a society should be run by its citizens.

Vocabulary

citizen, n. in ancient Greece, a person with legal rights and responsibilities in a city-state

In Greece, a citizen was a resident of a city-state who had political rights and responsibilities. Generally, citizens exercised their power through participation in an assembly, which was a governing body for the city-state. The amount of power the assembly had varied among city-states and across time periods. In most city-states, citizenship was restricted to adult male property owners who had been born in the city-state. Greek citizens expected to have some say in the organization and running of their city. The idea was that citizens had a stake in the



Think Twice

What other words might also come from the Greek root *polis*?

city's success or failure and thus should be allowed to partake in the city's politics.

The idea that citizens should have a say in the running of the polis influenced how the cities were built. Discussion happened out in the open so that people could listen to or make speeches and influence the decisions of the day. Thus, most Greek city-states built an open public space called an *agora*, which served as both marketplace and meeting space.



Tyrants, Oligarchs, and Democracies

Around 650 BCE, a new period of unrest developed in many of the Greek city-states. Farmers, merchants, and artisans were dissatisfied with the ruling nobles and came to resent their power. The instability led to the rise of tyrants, strong leaders who had total authority. Many Greeks supported these tyrants, feeling that they ruled fairly. Some, however, were harsh and unjust. The concept of citizen input in the running of society did not disappear, however. Over time, Greek city-states transitioned away from rule by

tyrants. Many became **oligarchies**, ruled by a small group of wealthy and powerful citizens. Some became **democracies**, characterized by the idea that all citizens should participate in the government of the city-state. The place that most cherished democracy was the mighty city-state of Athens.

Vocabulary

oligarchy, n. a government controlled by a small group of people from aristocratic and wealthy nonaristocratic families

democracy, n. a form of government in which people choose their leaders



Think Twice

How were Greek tyrants similar to kings? In what ways were they different?



Athenian Democracy

Athens is located near the southern tip of Greece's mainland, east of the isthmus that connects to the Peloponnese. With hilly terrain and a lack of fertile soil, the area produced wheat, barley, olives, and grapes. But Athens needed to import

food to sustain its population. This may have helped spur upper-class Athenians to develop a form of government that included members of the lower classes. Allowing more citizens a greater voice in the running of society gave more people a sense of duty to the city-state as well as an incentive to think about how to make the society flourish.

Athenian democracy went through various stages of development. The core principle was that the people ruled the city-state. The term *democracy* is itself Greek, coming from the terms *demos* (people) and *kratia* (power). Over time, the Athenian government made numerous reforms that reinforced the ideas that citizens should hold political power and that equality and freedom are values that a society should promote and protect. However, it's important to note that the majority of people who lived in Athens were not citizens. Immigrants were not citizens, nor were any women. A large population of enslaved people did much of the hard work of daily life but were not citizens either. Citizens were a minority, but they were a much larger group than the aristocrats and oligarchies that ruled many early civilizations.



Solon's Early Reforms

The first changes that led to the development of Athenian democracy occurred under a ruler named Solon. Around 600 BCE, farmers and other commoners began resisting the ruling nobles and supported a tyrant instead. This was a pattern that happened in many Greek city-states. Nobles owned most of the land, and people borrowed money to buy land for farming. Some had to sell themselves or family members into slavery to pay off this debt. As tensions increased in Athens, its nobles decided to take action in order to avoid an uprising. They agreed that for one year, they would give up some power and put one person in charge, who would propose reforms. They chose Solon, a wealthy merchant who also wrote poetry. Solon was like a tyrant in some ways—a leader with a lot of power, chosen to provide stability. But he did not hold total power. He proposed reforms to give citizens more say in systems of law, justice, and taxation.

Solon drafted a new set of laws for Athens, freed enslaved landowners, and

canceled debts. He allowed more citizens to participate in Athens's Assembly. He divided citizens into four groups based on their wealth, then set out a system of taxation and political rights based on those categories. The wealthiest still had the most power and could be part of the council that passed laws, but all full citizens could go to the Assembly and have some influence on laws and decisions. In the end, Solon's reforms were too radical to gain lasting support from the upper class. Meanwhile, the lower classes thought he had not gone far enough. But his reforms provided a basis for the thriving democracy Athens later developed.



Developing Democracy

Leaders after Solon also made reforms. A ruler called Cleisthenes allowed all property-owning men (not just nobles) over the age of eighteen to participate in government and gave them the right to hold high political offices and become military leaders. He put more power in the hands of the Assembly and the council. He also created a new system of organizing Athenian citizens.

Every citizen belonged to a group called a *deme*. Distributed throughout all of Athens's territory, demes were organized into larger units that deliberately mixed groups from different areas. The strategy was to create political groupings that reduced the power of older groups and gave citizens the sense that power was more evenly distributed.

Around 487 BCE, Athenians began the practice of **ostracism**. Citizens could vote to **exile** a person, or force them to leave the city. In this way, citizens could end the careers of people they thought were too powerful or whose ideas they simply didn't like. Ostracism could potentially happen once every year. First, the

Assembly would decide whether or not to proceed with an ostracism vote. If a majority chose to do so, citizens would then vote to determine who would be ostracized. This voting was anonymous. The names of candidates for ostracism were scratched onto shards of pottery called *ostraka*. Officials checked the results. The person who had received the most votes was sent into exile. He had to leave the city within ten days and could not return to Athens for at least ten years.



An ostrakon

Vocabulary

ostracism, n. in ancient Athens, forcing a person to leave the city; today, shunning or ignoring

exile, v. to force someone to live outside of a place as a punishment



Think Twice

How might mixing people from different areas to form political groups have encouraged people to think more about acting in the best interests of the whole of Athenian society?



Athenian Culture

Athenians valued education, debate, philosophy, literature, and music. They believed a good education was necessary preparation for future citizens' participation in the polis. Boys learned reading, writing, arithmetic, and music. To learn how to discuss and debate in the Assembly and courts of law, they

studied **logic** and **rhetoric**, or the art of expressing themselves well. This would help them become eloquent and persuasive **orators**, or public speakers. They also learned traditional stories of Greek heroes. Athenian men used their broad education to participate in Athens's democracy and its larger culture. They gathered for **symposia**, which were banquets where they would feast, listen to music, and discuss a particular topic. They would take turns speaking about the topic, debating their ideas, and developing arguments and points of view. Physical fitness was also valued, and boys and men exercised and participated in athletic competitions. Young men had two years of military training. The Athenian navy was unmatched in strength and skill, a source of pride for the city-state. Athenians wanted their

city-state to be strong in every way: militarily, culturally, economically, and politically.

Life for Athenian girls and women was different. They did not participate in the Assembly or other political institutions. They mostly stayed at home. When they did go out, they had to be chaperoned by a male relative. They contributed to the polis through their roles as wives and mothers and through religious practices. Girls received some education at home but did not go to school as boys did. They were usually married at a fairly young age. Some women served as priestesses. On the whole, though, Athenian girls and women lived mostly in the private sphere of the home and family, while public life was reserved for males.

Vocabulary

logic, n. the study of ways of thinking and making rational arguments

rhetoric, n. the skill of using words effectively in speaking or writing

orator, n. a public speaker

symposium, n. in ancient Greece, a meeting for drinking, music, and intellectual discussion; today, a meeting or conference for discussion of a topic



Girls received some education at home.



Find Out the Facts

Look for facts about the lives of Athenian children.

Athens was located slightly inland but fairly close to the coast. The geography and climate meant that Athenians needed resources from trading. They built a port called Piraeus on the coast. Athens developed into the greatest naval power in the region and a busy trading city. One result was that many non-Athenians resided in the city. Called **metics**, they were considered foreigners and generally were not citizens, although some were granted citizenship for special reasons. However, metics were important to Athens's economy. Many were merchants, traders, or skilled artisans.

Vocabulary

metic, n. a foreigner living in an ancient Greek city

A large percentage of Athens's population was enslaved workers. They did the hard labor to keep wealthy and middle-class Athenian households, farms, and businesses running. A few of them were educated and taught Athenian children; some were musicians

who provided entertainment. Despite their contributions to society, they had no political rights. Occasionally, Athenian slaves could buy their freedom. However, there was no avenue for them to ever become citizens.



Sparta's Military Might

Sparta, located on the Peloponnese peninsula, was another powerful city-state. Sometimes rivals and sometimes allies of the Athenians, Spartans prized military strength above all else. As a result, they had the strongest army in the region. Sparta was led by two kings who ruled together. Beneath the kings was a governing council of five officials, called *ephors*, who were elected from and by the citizens of Sparta. The ephors had to swear to uphold the rules of the kings but could also put the kings on trial if necessary. Ephors served for one year and could never hold the position again.

All Spartan men served in the military. Boys were sent away to training camps at seven years old to learn to use weapons and military tactics. Although they were taught to read, most of their education focused on honing their skills as warriors. At twenty years old, men became part of

Sparta's army. They could marry and start families, but they lived in **barracks** until the age of thirty.

Instead of establishing faraway colonies, Sparta conquered surrounding territories. They called the people they conquered **helots**. Spartans treated the helots as an underclass. Some historians characterize helots as enslaved workers; others consider the helots to have been severely oppressed but not exactly enslaved. Helots had almost no rights. They were expected to work on farms for Spartan masters and earned little or no money. Helots were also required to serve in Sparta's military. Because Spartan society included a large population of helots, on whose labor the Spartans relied, the Spartans were always worried that helots would revolt. They treated the helots harshly in the hopes of controlling them through fear and violence.

Vocabulary

barracks, n. buildings where soldiers live

helots, n. oppressed underclass in Sparta

In some ways, the lives of Spartan girls and women were different from those in other societies. Spartan women focused on Sparta's military strength. Their primary role was to be mothers of

warriors. Physical fitness was considered an important asset that would allow women to carry out this role. Girls were trained in sports such as throwing the javelin and wrestling. Whereas girls in other city-states were married around the age of thirteen, Spartan girls did not marry until their late teens or twenties. This was in part because childbirth is less dangerous at a later age but also because Spartans wanted to ensure that their women were strong enough to produce children, especially sons who would soon join the military.

Spartan women had more rights and freedoms than women in most ancient Greek city-states. With men living in barracks or away at war, Spartan women lived relatively independent lives. They could own property, go out in public on their own, and participate in athletic games. Their clothing was designed to allow movement. All these details distinguished them from women in other Greek societies, particularly those in Athens.

Find Out the Facts

Ancient historians noted Spartans' reputation for bravery and toughness and Athenians' focus on fine food and culture. Find some ancient descriptions of each group.





A bronze figurine shows a Spartan girl running.

Rivalry Between Athens and Sparta

Even though Greek city-states were loosely connected through language and culture, they still sometimes fought with one another. Athens and Sparta were the two most powerful city-states and often saw each other as rivals. Sometimes, they were willing to work together to defend against outside enemies; other times, they viewed one another as competitors.

Their differing lifestyles and values meant that Spartans and Athenians saw themselves as quite different from one another. Athenians were proud of

their democracy and their rich culture. Spartans were proud of their military power and their reputation for toughness and bravery. Sparta's culture focused on creating warriors who could withstand harsh conditions. They favored plain food and thought it best to avoid comforts. Athenians prized fine food and drink, art, and all the good things life could offer. They also valued military strength but thought it was one part of an ideal society, not the main goal. The Athenians developed a strong army and a superior navy, but the Spartan army was the best in the region.

Writers' Corner

Imagine a meeting between an Athenian and a Spartan. Write a dialogue in which they discuss both city-states. They might argue about which one is better, gently joke about each other, or learn to appreciate the rival culture.



The Persian Wars

As Athens, Sparta, and other Greek city-states developed their cultures and political systems, a great power began to rise to the east: the Persians. The Persians originated in a region in southwest Asia to the west of Mesopotamia. This region lies in what

is now southwestern Iran. The Persian king Cyrus the Great began to conquer surrounding lands. Soon, the Persian Empire took control of Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Asia Minor. Eventually, the Persian Empire reached into Egypt and to the territory northeast of the Greek mainland.

The Persians had a mighty army and took a savvy approach to administering a large, diverse empire. They mostly allowed the peoples they conquered to maintain their own cultures and religions as long as they acknowledged Persian rule. The Persians also expanded the network of roads that supported travel and trade in the region. The impressive Royal Road ran from eastern Persia all the way to Anatolia, some 1,500 miles long. This road made travel much faster and easier.

Zoroastrianism

Early Persians believed in many gods, but in the early sixth century BCE, they began following a new, monotheistic religion. Known as Zoroastrianism, it was introduced by a teacher called Zoroaster who spoke of one god, Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrianism is still practiced today. Its holy book, the Avesta, is said to contain Zoroaster's teachings.



The Persian Empire reached its height under Darius, who came to power after Cyrus. Persians had conquered Greek areas in Asia Minor, and it seemed likely that Darius would continue to push into Greek islands and the mainland. In 499 BCE, when Greeks living under Persian control in Asia Minor revolted, Athens sent ships and soldiers to help them. The Persians crushed the revolt, but more conflict loomed.



Victory at Marathon

In 490 BCE, a Persian fleet invaded Greece from the sea. It landed at Marathon, about twenty-five miles north of Athens. There is debate about exactly what happened at Marathon and why, but the outnumbered Athenians were victorious in the great battle. Instead of relying on their mighty **cavalry**, which was not present at the battle, the Persians had their formidable archers lead the way. But the Athenians were well trained and disciplined against such attacks. Soldiers called **hoplites** used heavy armor, long spears, and large shields. They fought standing

close together in a formation called a **phalanx**. Grouped into a tight row, each soldier protected the man next to him with a shield in a tight formation that looked like a forest of spears. The Persian archers could not find a way through the wall of shields; when Persian troops came up to the Athenian line, they were killed or driven away before they could do any harm. The Athenian victory at Marathon was the first time the great Persian army had been defeated.

Vocabulary

cavalry, n. troops who fight on horseback

hoplite, n. an ancient Greek foot soldier

phalanx, n. a group of soldiers who attack in close formation with their shields overlapping and spears pointed forward

Find Out the Facts



Historians have some ideas about how the Greeks won the Battle of Marathon. Look up what scholars think might have happened.





A Heroic Stand at Thermopylae

Athens, Sparta, and other Greek city-states had been allied against the Persians prior to the battle at Marathon. After Darius's death, his successor, Xerxes, continued to threaten Greek territories. In 480 BCE, Xerxes attacked Greece with a massive army and navy. The allied city-states attempted to mount a defense. While their rivalries and independent identities may have weakened their ability to organize, the Greeks fought hard against the Persians. Led by King Leonidas, the Spartan army tried to fight the Persians on land. They wanted to delay and weaken the Persians by blocking them at a narrow mountain pass called Thermopylae. Leonidas's small force was vastly outnumbered. The Spartans and their allies resisted for three days against overwhelming odds before they were wiped out by the Persians. The bravery of the Spartans and their stand against the Persian army became legendary.



Think Twice

How does the account of the clash at Thermopylae reflect Spartan values and identity?



Salamis

While the Persians advanced by land and sea, the remaining Greek forces regrouped, mostly led by the Spartans. Eventually, the Greek and the Persian fleets met in the narrow **straits** around Salamis, an island between the Peloponnese and the rest of the mainland. The location may have been an advantage for the Greeks, who were familiar with these waters and knew how to navigate them. Some historians think the Greeks lured the Persians to this spot. The large Persian ships had difficulty maneuvering through the narrow, shallow straits. The Greeks had smaller, faster ships called triremes, which helped them destroy the Persian fleet in a decisive victory. The next year, the Greeks went on to win major land battles and drove the Persians out of Greek territory.

Vocabulary

strait, n. a narrow waterway that connects two large bodies of water

Herodotus: The First Historian?

Herodotus wrote about Greek history, including the Persian Wars. Some consider him to be the first historian. Herodotus explored the causes and effects of historical events. He wrote about how different groups experienced the same event. He offered interpretations of events and of the choices made by the people involved in the events. His writing reflects his worldview. For example, he often considered how the gods and goddesses might have intervened in events or how they might have reacted to human choices. Though it must be read critically, his work paints a complex picture that helps shed light on ancient Greek civilization.

The Delian League was formed to help defend against future threats from Persia. It became a way for Athens to add to its wealth and power. The allied city-states agreed to contribute money and ships to the alliance, which essentially meant giving these resources to Athens. Over time, Athens began to treat the other city-states more like colonies than like allies. The other city-states had to swear an oath of loyalty to Athens, and they were not allowed to leave the league. In this way, Athens established an empire. Income and support from the Delian League, combined with the relatively peaceful period following the defeat of the Persians, fueled the golden age of Athens, which lasted through most of the 400s BCE.



The Golden Age of Athens

The Persian Wars could have been the end of Athens as a major power. Instead, Athens grew stronger, thanks to its dominant navy and its role as a leader. Athenians set up the Delian League, a group of allied city-states that would work together, with Athens at its head. Notably, Sparta did not join the alliance.

Find Out the Facts



Learn more about the Delian League. Find out which city-states belonged to it and how it operated.



Pericles Leads Athens

The most important Athenian leader of this period was Pericles. A strong military commander, he also had a reputation as a skilled orator. He led efforts to reconstruct

defensive walls to protect Athens from attack. He also worked to strengthen Athenian democracy. One reform was to start paying citizens for government work, such as serving as officials and on juries. While all citizens had long been allowed to participate in government, poorer citizens often couldn't because they needed to spend most of their time working to earn money. The reform made it more feasible for less wealthy citizens to exercise their rights. Pericles also wanted to contribute to Athens's cultural glory. He oversaw the construction of a great temple to Athena, the Parthenon. It was built to honor the city's patron goddess and to symbolize the wealth and superiority of Athenian culture.



Think Twice

In what ways does Pericles represent Athenian ideals?



The Acropolis



Greek Literature and Drama

Ancient Greeks loved great epics and dramas. The earliest pieces of Greek literature are the epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which are attributed to the poet Homer. *The Iliad* tells of a great (likely mythical) war between the Greeks and the Trojans. The *Odyssey* recounts the adventures of Odysseus as he tries to return home after the war. Tales known as Aesop's **fables** were also popular. Greeks also wrote poems and developed theater as a form of literature and entertainment.

Vocabulary

fable, n. a short, cautionary tale, often featuring animals that speak and act like humans as the main characters

During Athens's golden age, several playwrights shaped the tradition of Greek drama. They wrote two kinds of plays: tragedies and comedies. Greek tragedies were serious and had sad endings, often closing with the death of a heroic character. They expressed ideas about human flaws and frailty and the power of fate in people's lives. Three Athenian playwrights created

many of the most famous Greek tragedies: Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides. Comedies were funny and had happy endings. They often examined contemporary social and political issues and sometimes mocked leaders. Aristophanes rose to fame as the master of Athenian comedy.



Find Out the Facts

Research the life and works of one of the four major Athenian playwrights.

Writers' Corner



Using your research, write a short play inspired by the style of the playwright you chose.

Contributions to Math and Science

Hippocrates was a doctor who wrote about how environmental factors like weather and drinking water can impact health. His writings were later collected and used by others to advance the field of medicine. **Pythagoras** developed important principles of mathematics.

Aristarchus figured out that Earth orbits the sun, rather than the other way around. **Archimedes** became known for his clever inventions and mathematical discoveries. He also first expressed the mathematical principle of pi.



The Peloponnesian War

Although Athens and Sparta had been allies during the Persian Wars, they soon returned to their positions as rivals.

Sparta grouped its allies together in the Peloponnesian League. Sparta's main

allies were Corinth and Thebes. The Delians and the Peloponnesians, with Athens and Sparta as leaders, became increasingly suspicious of each other.

Sparta still had the strongest army, but Athens was wealthy, and its naval strength was unmatched. Eventually, war broke out between the rivals. It lasted for more than twenty-five years.

Pericles still led Athens when the war began in 431 BCE. He wanted to avoid land battles with Sparta and use Athens's naval power. Athenians withdrew behind the city's defensive walls. Sparta would regularly attack and destroy surrounding farmland and villages, but the Athenians stayed holed up while their navy brought supplies from the port at Piraeus to the city. This strategy worked for a while, but the Athenians grew restless. Some Athenians wanted to fight back and began grumbling about Pericles.

The city was jam-packed because people from the country had poured into Athens for safety. Then, a plague swept through the crowded city, killing many. Athenians wondered if the gods had abandoned them and if their leaders were making good decisions. The war dragged on for years, with neither side able to strike a decisive blow. Finally, Sparta began to gain the upper hand. Athens's defeat came in 405 BCE when the unthinkable happened—Sparta defeated and destroyed the famous Athenian navy. The Spartans began a **blockade** of Athens. Unable to get supplies from overseas, the Athenians surrendered.

Vocabulary

blockade, n. a military strategy aimed at preventing people and goods from entering or leaving an area

Writers' Corner



Write a detailed paragraph that discusses how the war might have impacted Athenians' ideas about their culture and political system.



Philosophers of Athens

The Peloponnesian War brought Athens's empire to an end, but the city-state survived. It rebuilt its democratic system. Though it was less wealthy and powerful than before, it managed to retain its identity and values. Athenians valued philosophy, a broad subject that involves the examination of ideas, knowledge, truth, and the nature of the world and human life. It was in the period after the long years of war and the crushing defeat that Athens produced many of its most influential philosophers.

Think Twice



Why might the experience of a long, difficult war and a disappointing defeat have inspired philosophers in Athens?

Socrates was the first philosopher of his kind. He both lived in Athens during its golden age and fought in the war that brought it to an end. He developed an approach to working out moral problems that involved asking a series of probing questions to get closer and closer to what a person really thinks or believes is true. This is called the Socratic method. Socrates

wrote nothing down. We know about his life and his ideas through his most famous student, the philosopher Plato. Socrates often appears as a character in Plato's works, which often feature dialogues between two characters. As Plato's work advanced, Socrates's persona became a tool that Plato used in his dialogues rather than a real historical person whose words Plato was recording.

Plato's *Republic* lays out his vision of an ideal society. This society is strictly organized with a wise ruler, the philosopher-king, at the top. Because the philosopher-king, as Plato imagined him, is curious and clever, he can make the best decisions for society. Plato set up a school called the Academy, at which he taught many students who carried forth his ideas and methods.

Types of Greek Philosophy

Ancient Greek philosophers developed several rival schools of thought. Sophists were an early group who taught rhetoric, math, science, and other subjects. Epicureans held that life should be about maximizing happiness and minimizing pain. Stoics, meanwhile, rejected this view and emphasized self-control and living simply.

Perhaps the most influential Greek philosopher was Aristotle, Plato's student and friend. Aristotle was fascinated by the world, and he wrote perhaps as many as two hundred texts on subjects as varied as the theater, logic, political theory, and biology. Aristotle's work influenced thinkers and scientists throughout Europe and Asia for centuries.



Alexander the Great

Alexander came from the kingdom of Macedonia, to the north of the Greek mainland. His father, Philip II, attacked the declining city-states of Greece. By 338 BCE, he had defeated Athens and taken power over many Greek territories. Philip hired Aristotle to tutor Alexander. The young prince loved tales of music, warriors and deadly battles, and the arts. He respected Aristotle and adopted the broad Greek, or Hellenistic, culture as his own. As king, Alexander brought some of the greatest world empires to their knees. In doing so,

Think Twice



What does Philip's choice to have Aristotle teach his son suggest about how Philip might have viewed Aristotle or Greek culture?



A Roman mosaic depicts Alexander's victory over the Persians.

he spread Greek language and culture across a vast region.

Alexander finished the work his father, Philip II, had started, crushing Greek cities that were still opposed to Macedonian rule. Then he turned his attention to Persia. Although the Greeks had managed to keep the Persians out of their lands, the Persian Empire continued to reign supreme to the east. In a reversal of the Persian Wars, Greek-speaking peoples under Alexander invaded and defeated Persia.

Alexander took many learned people along with him on these journeys. It seems

he wanted to use Hellenic culture to build his reputation as a great ruler.

Alexander and his armies moved at an amazing pace as they dismantled the Persian Empire. They conquered Egypt, where Alexander established the great city of Alexandria. With no more rivals in the region, Alexander was the master of Persia, Egypt, and Greece. He then continued to push eastward to the borders of India. After Alexander's death, his vast realm was divided up among his closest and most capable generals. They ruled over smaller kingdoms that all continued to reflect the influence of Hellenistic culture.

The works of Greek thinkers, scientists, dramatists, artists, and architects were taken to many lands and became models for others. Over time, some of the peoples shaped by this spread of Greek culture began to think of themselves as the true inheritors of the Greek legacy. One of these societies, the Romans, went on to incorporate and adapt many Hellenistic ideas and achievements for its own use. In this way, the mighty Roman Empire that eventually arose continued to preserve and promote the works of the ancient Greeks.

Chapter 5

Ancient India

The Big Question

What ideas, practices, and events united groups across the vast Indian subcontinent?



A Diverse and Fertile Land

Two major world religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, arose in ancient India and later spread far and wide, influencing many cultures. Indian civilization also developed magnificent art and literature, influential philosophy, and innovations in math, science, and technology.

Located in South Asia, India lies on a peninsula, called a **subcontinent** because of its relative separation from the rest of Asia. Part of this separation is created by the Himalayas, the



A statue of Rama from the eleventh century CE



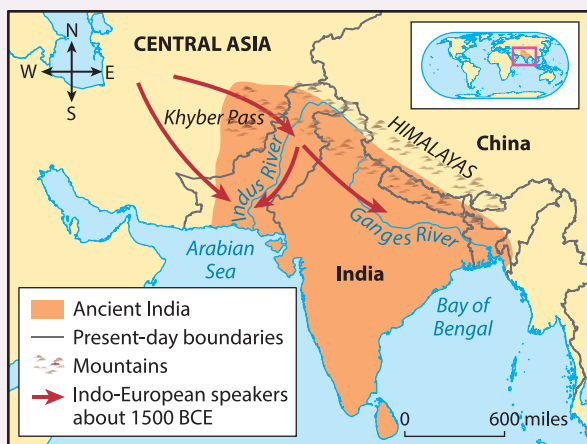
highest mountains in the world, which stretch across the northern end of the region. Another mountain range, the Hindu Kush, sits to the west of the Himalayas. These massive mountains form a natural boundary between India and central Asia. In addition to India, the subcontinent also includes parts of Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan.

The subcontinent is geographically diverse, with snow-capped mountains, fertile coastlines, deserts, hills, and plains. The central part has many **plateaus**, some of which have little water but contain valuable minerals. In the north and south, rivers create lush land well-suited for agriculture. Both the Ganges River system in the northeast and the Indus River system in the northwest were home to ancient peoples.

Vocabulary

subcontinent, n. a major subdivision of a continent

plateau, n. a large, flat area of land that is higher than surrounding lands



Ancient India

The Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus civilization arose in the northwestern part of the subcontinent around 2600 BCE. Its territory covered much of the area that is now known as Pakistan. Even though much of the land surrounding the Indus River was dry, the soil around the river system was fertile enough to support farming. A seasonal wind known as a **monsoon** caused a rainy season from April to October. These heavy rains could cause destructive flooding but also provided water for crops, people, and animals.

The people of the Indus valley farmed and kept livestock. Rice and other grains, dates, lentils, and sesame were

grown, along with many fruit trees and vegetables. Farmers used crop rotation, irrigation, and plows drawn by oxen. Other animals were also **domesticated**, including goats, sheep, and even elephants. Because of their great size, elephants became useful in construction. They could lift, push, and carry heavy loads.

Vocabulary

monsoon, n. a wind from the south or southwest that brings heavy rainfall to Asia during the summer months

domesticate, v. to tame and use for agriculture or other purposes

The Indus valley people formed numerous settlements and villages as well as two great cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. (Indus valley civilization is also called Harappan civilization.) Both cities had large streets laid out in a grid pattern and paved with bricks. Houses and buildings were also built with bricks, made of clay and straw and baked in the sun or in ovens.

Houses had wooden roofs, courtyards, and bathrooms. Wells brought fresh water to the houses; drains and sewers carried away wastewater. The Indus



Mohenjo-Daro is in modern-day Pakistan.

people did not construct huge temples or palaces. But they did build granaries, public baths, and protective walls around their cities. Artisans produced many objects for both daily life and decorative use, including **terra-cotta** figurines, beautifully glazed pottery, and tools of copper and stone.

The Indus civilization developed trade with other regions, including other parts of the subcontinent, China, Mesopotamia, Iran, and Afghanistan. They shipped goods on plank-style boats made of woven plants or of cloth. They built docks

and canals, and they may have been some of the first people to make wheeled vehicles like carts. Through trade, they acquired raw materials such as copper, gold, jade, lapis lazuli, and **carnelian**. They developed a standardized weight system and used seals to mark ownership. A written language of symbols, called Indus or Harappan script, appears on many seals, pottery, and tablets. These records likely contain information about trade and other daily activities, but no one has yet discovered how to read this ancient script.



Think Twice

In what ways was the Indus valley civilization similar to other ancient civilizations? How was it different?

Vocabulary

terra-cotta, n. baked or hardened brownish-red clay

carnelian, n. a hard, red stone

After prospering for several centuries, the Indus civilization faded away. Many people migrated to the east, near the Ganges River. Historians have several hypotheses about why this happened. Environmental changes may have caused people to move. Perhaps the Indus River changed course, impacting homes and farming. Maybe a disruption to the monsoon pattern caused a drought. There is no evidence that warfare or political upheaval put great pressure on the Indus civilization. Historians continue to look for clues about what caused the decline of the Indus valley civilization.



Find Out the Facts

Learn more about Mohenjo-Daro or Harappa. Find out more details about what scholars have learned from the ruins of one of these ancient cities.



Writers' Corner

Write a detailed description of the ancient city you researched.



A New Era

A new era began to emerge in the Indus valley. New groups began to migrate into the Indus valley region around 1500 BCE, probably from the area that is now Iran. Previously historians referred to these newcomers as Aryans, and overstated the influence they may have had on this region. It's not clear whether Aryans were really one group or several. Scholars do think these people brought a new language influence to the region. Their language (or languages) was part of the large Indo-European language family. Many modern languages grew out of the Indo-European language group, including English and also Hindi, which is spoken in India today. New cultural practices emerged, such as riding horses and raising cattle for meat and milk.



A bronze sculpture of a chariot from about 1500 BCE



The Vedic Period

The Indo-European groups were originally nomadic but eventually settled down into small kingdoms. These kingdoms sometimes fought each other, though they had similar cultures. Over time, new practices developed. Cows came to be considered sacred and were no longer used for food. Agriculture around the Ganges River valley improved as people built irrigation systems and learned to use iron to make strong tools. Farmers in different parts of India grew crops according to the climate. In the north, farmers grew grains such as wheat, barley, rice, and millet. In the south, they grew vegetables and cotton, which could be used to make cloth. Farmers also produced spices like ginger, cinnamon, and pepper. These became a source of wealth, as other cultures sought spices in trade.

A written language called Sanskrit developed. At first, it was used to keep records. Then people began to write down stories, prayers, and rituals that were part of the oral tradition. These were later gathered into a collection known as the Vedas, some of the oldest religious texts in the world. The word *veda* means knowledge or wisdom.

The texts are considered to reflect the divine truth and sacred knowledge gained through meditation by wise religious figures known as sages. The Vedas were first transmitted orally, and later written down, perhaps between 1500 BCE and 500 BCE during an era called the Vedic period.



Varnas and Jatis

A complex social order based on religious and social beliefs emerged during the Vedic period. Society was organized into four *varnas*, or classes. People were born into a certain varna, and this determined the kind of education, work, and life they had. The varnas with the highest status were the Brahmins, or priests, and the Kshatriyas, or nobles. Brahmins had great power due to their status as religious leaders. Kshatriyas had power through **secular** roles as government officials and soldiers. The next highest group was the Vaishyas. They were farmers, merchants, and artisans. Most people belonged to the least powerful varna, the Sudras. They worked as servants and laborers and had few rights.

Vocabulary

secular, adj. not religious

The four varnas were each divided into smaller groups called *jatis*, which were often based on a particular type of work. Jatis developed their own customs and rules relating to food, marriage, and other social behaviors. People stayed within the jati they were born into, which determined many parts of their lives, such as the jobs they could have and the people they could marry. This strict social separation, with almost no possibility of switching to a different group, is called a **caste** system.

Vocabulary

caste, n. a division of society based on differences in wealth, social status, and occupation

The group at the bottom of the social hierarchy was the Dalits, or untouchables. They were considered to be outside the caste system. They had the hardest and most unpleasant jobs, such as collecting garbage, processing animals for meat, and dealing with dead bodies. The Dalit class emerged at the end of the Vedic period, when complex religious ideas about purity and cleanliness took hold. Those with higher social status wanted to avoid

anything that might be unsanitary, so Dalits were made to do those tasks. Over time, the upper classes came to believe that even looking at or touching Dalits could make them unclean, so Dalits had to stay away from others. This kind of hierarchy and segregation also existed in other societies. But over time the caste system, and the separate group of Dalits excluded from it, came to be a distinct feature of ancient Indian civilization.

Think Twice

How did the jati system shape people's lives?



Caste in Modern India

The caste system continues to be part of Indian society today. However, the modern caste system is not identical to the ancient system. It reflects historical practices as well as contemporary influences. In the twentieth century, India outlawed discrimination based on caste. Scholars study how the concept of caste continues to play a complex role in modern Indian society, keeping in mind that all societies have hierarchies of various kinds.



Hinduism

Religion was another major part of ancient India. The Vedas were said to be inspired by wise men who heard divine truths. They are important texts in Hinduism, a religion that began to emerge during the Vedic period. Although Hinduism does not have one holy book, the Vedas are sacred scriptures read and respected by Hindus today.

Brahmins memorized and recited the Vedas and oversaw many rituals and other religious practices. Over time, Hinduism developed around the idea of *Brahman*, which is a supreme, infinite, and cosmic principle. Brahman is a complex concept but can be understood as fundamental truth and the source of life. In this way, Brahman is sometimes thought of as a supreme being.

Three major gods are considered part of the universal spirit of Brahman: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer. Together, they are responsible for the continual creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe. Brahma is understood as the god who created the universe and all living beings. He is often seen as inspiring the Vedas. In art, he is

frequently represented as a four-headed figure riding a swan or goose. Sometimes he is shown sitting in a lotus flower, which represents purity. In his hands, he holds no weapons, only objects that allow him to set the destiny of humankind, including a cleansing vase and the Vedas.

Vishnu and Shiva have more interactions with human life. Vishnu is a complex deity, understood to have many **avatars**, or forms. Avatars of Vishnu appear as both humans and animals. Vishnu intervenes in times of trouble, preserving and protecting the universe and restoring balance between good and evil. Shiva is also connected to good and evil. His destructive powers are chaotic and sometimes harmful, but they are also needed because destruction must occur in order to then recreate the universe. Shiva is often viewed as having great passions and appetites; his extreme behavior echoes the flaws of human nature.

Vocabulary

avatar, n. the form a Hindu god takes on Earth

Three goddesses are companions to these gods and are often seen as their wives. Sarasvati, the companion of Brahma, is the goddess of learning and wisdom.



Brahma

Hinduism. Another important concept is **reincarnation**, or the rebirth of the soul. Hindus believe that souls experience many lives before finally connecting with the spirit of Brahman. This is connected to the idea of **karma**, a force that determines the status or fate of a person based on what has occurred in past lives. A person who leads a bad life may be reborn as a lower life-form, while those who lead good lives



Vishnu

Lakshmi, the companion of Vishnu, is the goddess of wealth and prosperity. She is honored during Diwali, or the Festival of Lights. Parvati, companion to Shiva, is associated with fertility and marriage. She also represents self-discipline and restraint, balancing out Shiva's extreme passions and behavior.

The cycle of creation, preservation, and destruction is a central concept in



Shiva

are reincarnated as higher forms. All life is considered sacred, including the lives of animals and insects. To earn a better

Vocabulary

reincarnation, n. rebirth in a new body or form of life

karma, n. the force created by a person's actions, believed to determine what will happen in the person's next life

existence in the next life, a person must follow **dharma**, or personal duty. What is expected of people depends on their place in society, but everyone has duties to fulfill.

Vocabulary

dharma, n. in Hinduism, an individual's duty, which is met by observing specific customs or laws



Find Out the Facts

Research ancient and modern representations of one of the six major Hindu deities.



Think Twice

What similarities can be seen between the cycle of creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe and the idea of the reincarnation of souls?



Vedic Texts

The Vedas are the oldest texts of Hinduism. They include religious stories, chants, songs, prayers, meditations, rituals, and other teachings. These texts express the central beliefs of Hinduism and also reflect the ancient society in which they were

created. The oldest of the four Vedas, called the *Rig Veda*, includes over a thousand hymns of praise to the gods. The *Yajur Veda* contains mantras and sacred verses. The *Sama Veda* has chants and tunes to use in religious rituals, accompanied by music and dancing. The *Atharva Veda* includes spells and charms. The Upanishads, considered Vedic texts, contain mystical teachings believed to have been first communicated orally by wise religious scholars.



Ancient Indian Epics

Two epic poems recorded in Sanskrit continue to influence Hindus today. The *Ramayana*, first written down around 300 BCE, recounts the story of Rama and his faithful wife, Sita. Rama, an avatar of Vishnu, becomes a king. He, Sita, and his brother Laksmana are sent into exile in a forest. Many adventures follow, including the kidnapping of Sita by the demon king Ravana. Rama and his brother then go on a quest to rescue Sita. At one point, Rama allies himself to the monkey god Hanuman, who commands an army of monkeys. After many battles and plot twists, Rama defeats Ravana and reunites with Sita. The story teaches the



The wedding of Rama and Sita

importance of virtue and doing good deeds. It remains well known in India and many other countries.

The *Mahabharata* is another epic that tells of the adventures and struggles of heroic figures. One episode from the *Mahabharata* is called the Bhagavad Gita, or Song of the Lord. It is a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu. Arjuna is about to go to war against his own cousins. Arjuna tells Krishna of his doubts about the morality of the looming war. Krishna, whose divine identity is not revealed until later in the text, guides Arjuna in his thinking.

Much of Krishna's lesson reflects the teachings of the Upanishads. Krishna

explains that as a warrior, Arjuna has a duty to fight. This is rooted in the notion of dharma, the idea that individuals are born into a certain role in society and have an obligation to fulfill that role. Krishna points out that because the soul is immortal, those who die in battle will either be reincarnated or join with Brahman for eternity. However, Krishna stresses the importance of wisdom and reflection as guidance for action. Arjuna should not act out of hatred or a desire to kill. Rather, he should focus on devotion and duty.

Think Twice

How are Hindu beliefs reflected in the Bhagavad Gita?



Origins of Buddhism

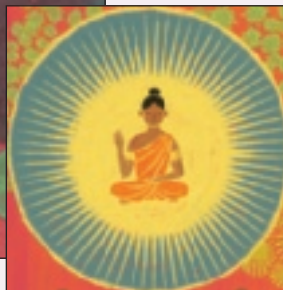
Buddhism also began in India, sometime in the 500s BCE. With roots in Hinduism, many Buddhist beliefs and practices reflect ancient Indian culture, although some aspects are quite different. Buddhism started with the story of a wealthy Hindu prince, Siddhartha Gautama.

According to tradition, Siddhartha was sheltered from all hardship and grew up in comfort and luxury. He left his palace for the first time when he was twenty-nine. What he saw deeply saddened him: ordinary people suffering from illness, poverty, hunger, and ultimately death. Siddhartha decided to abandon his easy life and seek understanding about the human condition and how to achieve happiness. Leaving behind his wife and young son, he spent six years learning from sages and practicing extreme self-denial. He ate very little, hoping that strict discipline would help him develop spiritual understanding. One day, when he was too weak to continue, he sat



Siddhartha meditated deeply.

under a tree and **meditated** deeply. He achieved a moment of great understanding and was transformed to become the Buddha—one who is awakened or enlightened. He then went on to teach others what he had learned.



Vocabulary

meditate, v. to focus attention on one's mind and thoughts in order to gain new understanding or spiritual growth



Buddhist Principles

The Buddha taught that suffering was a part of being alive. He believed that people could become enlightened and reach a state of **nirvana**, or perfect peace, through spiritual practice. Like Hindus, Buddhists envision a cycle of life, death, and rebirth and believe people's actions impact them and affect how they are reborn.

Vocabulary

nirvana, n. a state in which the human soul has attained perfect peace

The Buddha's main teachings are expressed in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths describe the challenge of human life and the spiritual solution to suffering. The first truth is that all existence involves suffering, from loss and sorrow to the struggle for personal happiness and satisfaction. This is related to the second truth: suffering is caused by attachment to worldly things instead of spiritual things. Human longings such as the desire for comfort, wealth, power, companionship, or excitement are the true source of suffering. The third truth is that to end suffering, it is necessary to

stop desiring, or to become unattached to worldly things. The fourth truth is that it is difficult to stop desiring things. The only way to do so is to follow the Eightfold Path.

Buddhists can spend a lifetime developing an understanding of the Four Noble Truths and learning to follow the Eightfold Path. The eight practices can be summarized as follows:

- Learn and deepen understanding of the Four Noble Truths in order to perceive life as it truly is.
- Practice letting go of worldly desires; avoid hatred and harmful intentions.
- Be truthful and avoid speaking harshly or badly of others.
- Choose correct actions by avoiding harmful behavior such as killing, stealing, or wrongful acts.
- Do work that does not harm others; avoid professions that exploit or hurt people or animals.
- Put effort into positive thoughts and actions; work to leave behind negative feelings such as anger and jealousy.
- Become aware of thoughts, emotions, and sensations in order to more clearly understand one's own mind and greater truths.

- Develop concentration; focus one's mind to see clearly and grow spiritually.

Writers' Corner



Write about the Eightfold Path.
How do you think people can go about following it?

Buddhism spread throughout much of Asia. Over time, two major branches developed. Theravada Buddhism views the Buddha as a great teacher but not a god. Mahayana Buddhism views the Buddha as a god. Recognizing that few humans can follow the Eightfold Path completely, Mahayana practitioners try to follow it as best they can and believe that worshipping the Buddha is also a way to reach nirvana.



Jainism

Another religion that arose in ancient India is Jainism. Like Hindus and Buddhists, Jains believe in a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Jains also seek enlightenment but have specific ideas about how to achieve it. Living in a simple and disciplined way is seen as crucial to spiritual growth. Jains strongly emphasize nonviolence and try to avoid harming

all living things. Their practices include prayer, meditation, and fasting. While they do not worship gods, Jains believe in the existence of souls. They revere a group of ancient spiritual leaders called Jinas. These were early Jains who founded some of the first Jain communities and are considered to have achieved enlightenment. Some scholars think that Jainism arose around the same time and place as Buddhism. Like the early Buddhists, the early Jains may have rejected some of the Brahmins' teachings about the importance of caste and religious rituals. Instead, Jains and Buddhists focused on individuals' behaviors and the choice to live simply.



The Mauryan Empire

As religious and cultural practices developed across ancient India, so did the political sphere. By the 500s BCE, many small kingdoms existed across the subcontinent. They shared religious and cultural ties but were separate societies. Sometimes they went to war with one another. Starting in 321 BCE, a leader called Chandragupta Maurya saw an opportunity to conquer the region and build a powerful society unified under one

leader. Eventually, he founded a dynasty that ruled for more than a century.

Chandragupta lived at the time when Alexander the Great was conquering an enormous territory that went from the eastern Mediterranean all the way to the edge of India. Alexander made it to India in 325 BCE. His army had made unprecedented conquests, but many of his generals and the regular soldiers were weary by the time they reached India. Despite victories against Indian kingdoms, Alexander decided to turn back when faced with the possibility of rebellion from his own military. By conquering kingdoms and then leaving, Alexander created instability. Chandragupta seized his chance and began conquering kingdoms in the north. As Chandragupta's army grew bigger and stronger, he took control of most of the subcontinent and unified India for the first time.



Think Twice

How do you think Alexander's decision impacted Indian civilization?



Find Out the Facts

Learn about the role of elephants in ancient India.



Chandragupta established a capital in the northeastern city of Pataliputra and created an organized government. He also built a network of spies to root out disloyalty among his subjects. One of his main advisors was Chanakya, a brilliant political strategist. He wrote the

Chanakya and Machiavelli

More than a thousand years after the *Artha-shastra* was written to give advice to Mauryan leaders, an Italian named Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* for the ruler of Florence. Both texts explore the idea that strong leaders should use harsh tactics to stay in power. They suggest that maintaining order and stability are so important that anything a leader does to meet such goals is acceptable—and their actions should be judged differently from the actions of non-leaders. This is sometimes expressed as “the ends justify the means.” Both texts were written during times of political instability. Some historians think the authors truly believed rulers should use tough measures to keep order or to stay in power. Others think the authors wrote what they thought their leaders likely wanted to hear.

Artha-shastra, one of the earliest works of political science. It advised how a king could gain and hold on to power, including how to conduct war and diplomacy and how to maintain authority within the kingdom. Chanakya argued that a ruler should take any action that would help them reach their goals. This may be part of why Chandragupta encouraged spying and had a reputation as a suspicious and authoritarian ruler. However, he also developed ties with some former rivals. After defeating the Seleucid king in present-day Iran, Chandragupta took control of land but also sent a gift of five hundred elephants as a sign of peace. Stable relations with the Seleucids fostered favorable diplomatic and trade ties with the Hellenistic world.



The Reign of Ashoka

The Mauryan Empire became even stronger under Chandragupta’s grandson Ashoka. At first, Ashoka crushed revolts and led battles to conquer even more land. Then he had a change of heart. According to tradition, after one brutal battle, Ashoka looked out on

the destruction and was sickened by what he saw. He became determined to pursue peace and work to make life better for people instead of simply conquering them.

Ashoka embraced the new religion of Buddhism that had begun to spread in the 500s BCE. He devoted himself to spreading Buddhism and creating a better society. He built hospitals and roads, protected animals, and visited people in rural areas to learn about their needs and teach them Buddhist ways. He also had thousands of monuments called **stupas** built. Shaped like a mound or dome, a stupa is a kind of Buddhist shrine where special religious objects are kept and people can go to worship. The stupas helped spread the ideas and practices of Buddhism. People traveled to visit these holy sites, which increased trade and added to the wealth of the Mauryan Empire.

Ashoka is also known for erecting many stone pillars inscribed with **edicts**, or

public statements. The edicts express Ashoka's policies, accomplishments, and messages about the principles of Buddhism. They also describe his commitment to peace. Meant to instruct and inspire, the edicts encourage Buddhist ideas but do not condemn or forbid other religions.

Find Out the Facts



Learn where pillars with the edicts of Ashoka were built and what they said.

Writers' Corner

Compare the transformation of Ashoka with the story of Siddhartha. What do they have in common? What are some differences?



Vocabulary

stupa, n. a dome-shaped monument used as a Buddhist or Jain shrine

edict, n. a formal pronouncement or command



Monumental sculptures honoring Shiva were made in the Elephanta Caves during the Gupta period.



The Gupta Empire

After Ashoka's death in 232 BCE, the Mauryan Empire grew weaker. The next rulers did not carry on Ashoka's efforts to help people and strive for peace. Conflict and rebellion grew, and the Mauryan Empire eventually split up into many small kingdoms. This period lasted for more than five hundred years. Then a new dynasty rose in the north near the Ganges River.

Under Samudragupta, the Gupta Empire expanded across northern India. Samudragupta conquered many lands but also supported the arts and the Hindu religion. The Gupta Empire built many Hindu temples and patronized Hindu scholars. This helped set India on a path to become mostly Hindu, although some people continued to practice Buddhism and Jainism. Trade picked up, and new cities developed along routes that linked India to other parts of Asia and the Mediterranean world.

The Gupta Empire also saw a new period of learning. Mathematicians developed the study of algebra and created the symbol 0 to stand for the absence of any value. This important concept allowed

the field of mathematics to develop. Gupta mathematicians also created the symbols for the numbers one to nine, still in use today. Astronomers concluded that Earth is round and that it revolves around the sun. Doctors and dentists made many advances. They could treat broken bones and perform surgery, and they even developed a drill for working on teeth. They used herbs and other natural substances to treat illness and sought to understand the physical causes of disease.

Think Twice



Why was a symbol representing zero such an important development in mathematics?

The Gupta dynasty lasted hundreds of years. It began to weaken in the 700s CE. Around this time, Islamic rulers rose to power in the Arabian Peninsula and began to build a mighty empire that influenced many other regions, including India. Hinduism remained the dominant religion in India, but Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity have all influenced Indian civilization for centuries. Likewise, Indian cultural practices, including dances, clothing, foodways, and artistic expression, spread to societies around Southeast Asia and beyond.

Chapter 6

Early China

The Big Question

What were the political and cultural characteristics of early China?



An Enduring Culture

Early China gave rise to several major innovations, including luxurious silk fabric and paper. It was the birthplace of influential philosophical and scientific ideas and a model for political and social life throughout East Asia.

For thousands of years, China has existed as a political and cultural unit. The long-lasting nature of Chinese civilization is almost without equal in history. Though its early history was marked by periods of unity and disunity, China became one of the largest ancient empires.



An artist's idea of Wen, the first Zhou king



Modern China is a vast nation, occupying much of Asia. Because of its massive size, China is a very geographically diverse country. It includes deserts, tropical rainforests, river valleys, coastlines, and high mountains.

China's eastern border is at the edge of the Pacific Ocean. To the north of China lies the Gobi Desert, a huge expanse of dry and rocky land with very cold winters, which stretches into the modern country of Mongolia. To the southwest, China's border with India is formed by the Himalayas. These geographical factors provided ancient China with formidable physical borders that made invasion, or even travel to or from points outside China, quite difficult—a difficulty that later Chinese rulers were very keen to enhance with their own armies and defenses.

The earliest Chinese civilization arose in the valley around the Huang He, or Yellow River, where small villages had developed by at least 5000 BCE. Although the river brought water and silt that supported agriculture, it often flooded, destroying the communities on its banks. Over time, settlements also arose near the Yangzi, China's longest river, and then throughout the larger territory.



Life in Early China

Most people in early China were farmers. In the north, they grew grains like wheat and millet, while rice was a major crop in the south. People also grew many other plants, like soybeans, peaches, tea, and water chestnuts. Some people raised animals, such as chickens and pigs. Near coasts and rivers, people also fished.

Mulberry trees played a vital role in China's culture and economy. While their

berries can be eaten, they are significant because of the silkworms that eat their leaves. These tiny creatures build cocoons in which they develop into moths. The material these worms use for their cocoons can be spun into silk thread, which can be made into a fabric that became a prized commodity throughout the world.

The ancient Chinese also developed one of the world's oldest writing systems. At first, the system used symbols to represent objects. Over time, it became more complex, with symbols that represented ideas and sounds as well.



The Geography of China

Early Chinese civilization was shaped by several dynasties that built strong and sophisticated political states, some of which lasted for centuries. The Xia dynasty is said to have united the villages and towns of the Huang He valley. There is archaeological evidence that rulers existed in the period associated with the Xia. Stories about the Xia abound, particularly the heroic ruler Yu the Great, who is associated with the struggle to control the Huang He.

Yu, who is also called the Tamer of the Flood, is said to have spent thirteen years working out how to build canals that would solve the flooding problem that periodically ruined the lives of his people. One story tells of how Yu refused to rest and did not even spend any time at home with his wife or children until the problem was solved. The story suggests how hard the Chinese people and their leaders worked to address the Huang He's disastrous flooding and how important this achievement was to the development of early Chinese civilization.



Find Out the Facts

Research Yu or other legendary rulers of early China and the stories told about them.



The Shang Dynasty

The Shang rose to power around 1766 BCE. According to tradition, the Shang dynasty was founded by King Tang, who ruled the kingdom of Shang in northeastern China. Tang is said to have overthrown the Xia and taken over the realm the Xia had ruled. For more than seven hundred years, the Shang ruled over the area that is today the modern province of Henan. Shang society was likely organized into city-states. Kings, a noble class, and a merchant and artisan class lived within cities, while most of the population lived in the countryside and farmed.

The Chinese writing system began prior to the Shang period but continued to develop during this time. Some of the oldest known writing in the world was done by making carvings on animal bones. These bones were used for divination, the practice of trying to tell things about the future using rituals and magic. In ancient China, only the king had the privilege of trying to learn the future. A message was scratched onto the bones using a system of thousands of symbols. A priest would then apply heat to the bones and interpret the future from the way the bones cracked.



Daoism

The practice of seeking understanding using bones etched with messages was linked to a larger religious and philosophical system of belief called Daoism. An ancient set of beliefs and practices, Daoism evolved over time. It probably has its roots in the practices of the people who lived under the Shang dynasty. The core of Daoism is the idea that the world works according to a natural order called the *Dao*, or the Way. The Dao connects everything in the universe and keeps the world in balance. To follow the



Chinese writing on a bone used for divination

Dao is to find this natural order and try to live according to it. People wrote on bones to try to gain insight into the order of things and how it would benefit or harm them.

Daoism thus encouraged careful observation of the natural world. Like other ancient peoples, the Chinese studied the stars and planets and began to develop the science of astronomy and mathematical principles related to their observations of the heavens.



The Zhou Dynasty

The Zhou dynasty took power in 1046 BCE and ruled for the next eight hundred years. Zhou kings promoted the idea of **divine right**, or that a king's right to rule comes from the supreme power of the universe. In China, this idea was framed as a right that came from heaven. The ruler was seen as having a **mandate** from

Vocabulary

divine right, n. the belief that kings and queens have a God-given right to rule and that rebellion against them is a sin

mandate, n. a command; a responsibility given by an authority

heaven—that is, heaven’s blessing or endorsement—to rule. Called the Son of Heaven, the king was considered heaven’s representative on Earth with a duty to rule in accordance with heaven’s wishes. If the king neglected his duty to heaven and his subjects, the mandate of heaven could pass to another ruler—one who would rule justly and care for the people.

The first Zhou king, Wen, used these ideas to attack the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, who was accused of abandoning his people to spend his time living in luxury rather than ruling. Wen led a rebellion and started a new dynasty

that lasted for centuries. The idea of the mandate of heaven lasted even longer, underpinning Chinese rulers long after the Zhou themselves had been replaced.

At first, the Zhou period was marked by relative peace and prosperity. Rather than a centralized government, the Zhou developed a **feudal system**. The lands they controlled were divided into smaller, semi-independent kingdoms. Zhou rulers were at the top of the social hierarchy, followed by a class of Zhou nobles. Below these nobles were local rulers and nobles. At the bottom were commoners, the largest group.



Think Twice

How is the mandate of heaven similar to concepts in other ancient cultures?

Vocabulary

feudal system, n. social organization in which kings, lords, and peasants are bound together by mutual obligations



Find Out the Facts

Research what the Zhou said about the last ruler of the Shang dynasty.

The Zhou continued to build on the wealth and culture of the Shang.

Advancements were made in the writing system and the creation of bronze objects and weapons. Over time, the nobility in each of the kingdoms grew more

Writers’ Corner



Using your research, write an official proclamation on behalf of King Wen that presents your case that heaven wants a new dynasty to rule China.

Find Out the Facts

Learn more details about the feudal system in ancient China.



powerful, with their own armies and their own systems of administration and taxation. As long as the kingdoms paid taxes and remained loyal to the Zhou, the Zhou rulers felt that their system was working. But the small states grew increasingly independent.



The Spring and Autumn Period

The Spring and Autumn period is named after the earliest written history of China, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Starting around 770 BCE, the rulers of the kingdoms began to take more and more matters into their own hands. In some ways, this improved the lives of their subjects. Many of the rulers of these semi-independent states sought to outdo their rivals by constructing impressive works of infrastructure such as irrigation systems and roads. Sometimes, the kingdoms cooperated for political and economic gain. And new ideas and ways of thinking emerged.

In other ways, it was a difficult time. The decline of the central government and the increasing frequency of warfare led to a breakdown in the order and stability of society.

c. 1700 BCE
Shang Dynasty
rises to power

Silk production,
begun in
Neolithic times,
remained
important
throughout
the centuries

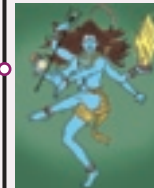


c. 1200s BCE

Ramses rules Egypt

c. 1046 BCE

Zhou Dynasty
begins



Hinduism
develops
(India)

c. 500s BCE

Warring States
Period

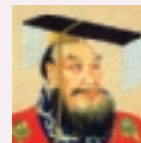


331 BCE

Alexander defeats
Persia

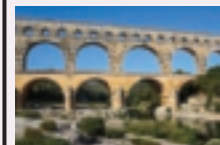
221 BCE

Shihuangdi
becomes emperor



Han Dynasty

Roman Empire
spreads



220 CE

Three Kingdoms
Period begins (China)

The weak imperial government and competition among kingdoms led to increased raiding and wars.



Confucianism

A long-lasting and highly influential product of the Spring and Autumn period is the philosophy of Confucianism, named for the Chinese philosopher Kong Qiu, known as Confucius in the West. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* was written in Confucius's home state of Lu. Confucius worked in the administration of Lu, overseeing public works and justice at various times in his career. Partly inspired by the turbulent times in which he lived, Confucius wrote works of poetry, history, and philosophy.

A core principle of Confucianism is *ren*, the idea of human-heartedness or sympathy for others. This philosophy focuses on human relationships and teaches the “Golden Rule”—that people should treat others as they would wish to be treated themselves.

Confucius also defined five basic relationships and an understanding of how these relationships should govern people's behavior. These relationships are father to son, elder brother to younger brother, husband to wife, ruler to subject, and friend

to friend. While friends were considered equals, in all the other relationships there was a clear difference in the power and status of each person. Fathers, elder brothers, husbands, and rulers were considered to be superior in Confucius's time. Because of this, they were owed allegiance and obedience by the other person, who had a lower social status. In return, the superior person owed protection to the person of lower status. These duties and responsibilities defined the expected behaviors within relationships.

Confucianism emphasizes the family as the basic unit of society. **Filial piety**, or deep respect for one's parents, is the most important virtue. In Confucius's time, the government was seen as an extension of the family. As the head of society, the ruler was like the head of the family. People owed their rulers loyalty and respect, and rulers had a duty to provide the people with a good government.

Vocabulary

filial piety, n. deep respect for one's parents

Think Twice

Do you think governments and families are more similar or more different?



Confucian philosophy also teaches that harmony in the world is related to the harmony of the individual. For example, if a person, especially a powerful person like a ruler, is wicked, then bad things will happen in nature, too. The success or failure of a society depends on people living just, proper, and harmonious lives, with subjects respecting their rulers, children respecting their elders, and rulers respecting and protecting their people. Confucius's thought was hugely influential in later China and East Asia. He came to be viewed as a sort of "holy teacher," and his teachings were a formal part of Chinese government and official culture.

Confucius did not write any texts. Confucian philosophy is primarily based on the *Analects*, a collection of his ideas and teachings written down by his students. Scholars later wrote commentaries on the *Analects*, further shaping interpretations of Confucianism.

Writers' Corner



Write a dialogue between two members of ancient Chinese society to illustrate the ideas of Confucianism.

Warring States

The Spring and Autumn period gave way to a long era of warfare among competing kingdoms (states). The Warring States period lasted from about 481 to 221 BCE. Although the Zhou were technically still in power, kings mostly ignored the dynasty's supposed authority. Zhou rule finally collapsed, and regional rulers competed to assume the mandate of heaven.

The kingdoms' armies grew massively during this time. Some states developed a cavalry for the first time. Most cavalry were archers; they maneuvered quickly around enemies, firing arrows from atop horses. Sturdier iron weapons also began to replace bronze weapons. Cities were fortified with large walls to defend against attack.



A bronze dagger from the Warring States period

The intense competition among kingdoms and the expense of equipping and feeding large armies also sparked wider changes. A class of merchants arose to supply the armies and to help rulers by developing trade networks. An outgrowth of this was that a single system of money—bronze coins with a hole in the middle—began to be used more widely.



Think Twice

How did merchants benefit from the wars?



Find Out the Facts

Why did ancient Chinese money have a hole in the middle?

The first known manual of military theory, *The Art of War*, was written at this time. This text is often attributed to a general called Sun Zi, though it may be the work of several writers. A primary theme is that war is terrible and should be avoided if at all possible. The text urges rulers to always try diplomacy first and resort to conflict only if it is unavoidable—and, preferably, only if the ruler is certain to win.



Think Twice

How does *The Art of War* compare to other ancient political texts?



The Qin Empire

The kingdom of Qin had long been influenced by the work of Shang Yang, who promoted a school of thought known as Legalism. A core Legalist idea was that humans are wicked, so to control the evil that people are capable of, a state has to have strict laws and punishments. Shang Yang also advocated for strong rulers who would do anything necessary to gain and keep control. The idea was that division and war create chaos, allowing wickedness to thrive. A good ruler would take action to win, end conflict, and institute order.

In the Warring States period, Qin kings used Legalist policies to strengthen the central government. They reduced the power of aristocratic families and weakened the feudal system. The government and army also promoted people based on their abilities instead of their birth into elite families. Shang Yang's ideas of law and order helped convert the Qin state into an effective war machine. The other kingdoms still followed their old ways of ruling. They became plagued by corruption and were unable to match the strength of the Qin.



Shihuangdi is remembered as a strong ruler.

The Qin's military strength and skilled class of officials helped the Qin ruler Yeng Zheng finally break the deadlock among the warring kingdoms. He claimed the mandate of heaven, then went a step further and took the title Shihuangdi, meaning first emperor. Shihuangdi ruled over a vast realm that had been divided by centuries of brutal warfare. He sought to bring order to China, unify its regions, and cement his power. Unlike the Zhou, Shihuangdi centralized authority, with his power as emperor



Think Twice

Why would Shihuangdi suppress other philosophies?

absolute. Legalism became the official guiding principle for all of China. All other schools of philosophy were banned, including Confucianism. Books containing alternative ideas and even histories of the past were ordered to be destroyed. Anyone who promoted ideas that did not fit with Shihuangdi's view of how China would be was executed.

He also tried to unify China through great public works such as the Lingqu Canal, built to facilitate trade and transportation of grain. He tore down the fortifications that kingdoms had built as defenses and sent those materials to help build a great barrier against China's northern neighbors. This was the first version of the Great Wall of China, which was built over many centuries.

As a ruler, Shihuangdi was harsh and suspicious of others. To pursue his ambitious projects, he imposed heavy taxes and required forced labor. This led to rebellions that ultimately diminished the power of the Qin. In addition, Shihuangdi's government was not set up to transition smoothly from its founder's death into a stable succession. Shihuangdi's son ruled briefly, but competition for power quickly led to the collapse of the Qin dynasty.

The Terra-cotta Army

Historians know a great deal about the huge and mighty Qin army thanks to an unusual source. Near Shihuangdi's funeral complex, researchers found several pits filled with an enormous set of life-size clay figurines—a whole army's worth of soldiers, weapons, equipment, vehicles, and horses. Today, this collection of more than eight thousand figurines is known as the Terra-cotta Army, after the type of clay used to manufacture them.



Soldiers of the Terra-cotta Army

Still, Shihuangdi did succeed in creating a united realm. This legacy is evident in the word *China*, which is an anglicized version of the name Qin.

Writers' Corner

Explain the challenges Shihuangdi faced, and analyze his methods of addressing them.



The Han Dynasty

While the rule of the Qin dynasty was crumbling, a rebel named Xiang Yu led a movement to completely overthrow its leaders. He wanted to reinstitute a decentralized government, modeled on that of the Zhou dynasty, and hand power back to China's many lords.

Xiang Yu did manage to overthrow the Qin, but one of his fellow rebels, Liu Bang, then rose up to oppose him. Liu Bang had risen to wealth and status by serving the Qin. He used this power to challenge Xiang Yu for control of China and establish the Han dynasty.

The Han ruled China for more than four hundred years, from 202 BCE until 220 CE. They succeeded in part because

they took a much less harsh approach to ruling. At first, Legalism was still the official governing philosophy of Han rulers, but it was implemented with a gentler touch. Eventually, Confucianism replaced Legalism as the guiding principle of the government, especially during the reign of its strongest leader, Emperor Wu.

The Han expanded China's territory and power. Emperor Wu thought China could not be protected only by border walls. He sent armies on the offensive, conquering lands that included Korea and Vietnam. He tried to subdue the Xiongnu, nomads who lived to the north of China and often attacked. Wu was not entirely successful against the Xiongnu, but the approach discouraged raiding and invasions. It encouraged potential foes to consider forging more cooperative ties. This led to increased trading and the development of the Silk Road, an expansive network of trading routes. It started as a trade route that silk merchants traveled to sell China's highly valued silk. Over time, the route expanded far into the west to India, Persia, Arabia, Africa, and Europe. Traders and travelers who used the Silk Road spread both the goods and the ideas of many cultures.

One major result of the increased trade and contact with foreigners under the Han was that Buddhism, originally from India, spread into China. It gradually mixed with existing Chinese religious traditions, especially Daoism. Multiple variants of Chinese Buddhism developed over the centuries.

Think Twice

How can trade bring new ideas and beliefs into a culture?



Find Out the Facts

What other goods were commonly traded on the Silk Road?



The Han presided over a great period of innovation. The Chinese invented paper during this era, made with plant fibers such as bamboo and tree bark. Ink was made from plants and minerals. Writers dipped brushes into ink, then painted characters onto paper. The Chinese also developed the art of calligraphy, or beautiful decorative writing. Paper and ink made writing and copying texts easier, leading to increased production and distribution of texts. Traders on the Silk Road brought paper and ink to the rest of the world, helping fuel bookmaking and print culture.



This tenth-century CE painting shows women handling woven silk.

Sima Qian, considered China's first historian, lived at this time. Previously, Chinese chroniclers had written about particular dynasties. These texts were often intended to help rulers interpret omens, nature, and fate. They were not created to preserve a record of events. Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* provided a thorough, relatively accurate guide to China's past, based in part on speaking to people who had witnessed events.

The Han also developed and refined music and musical theory. Art flourished with the production of sculptures and fine pottery. Technological advancements included seismographs, water wheels used as power sources, water clocks, and sophisticated suspension bridges.

The Han dynasty began to decline in the early 200s CE. The power of the Han emperors decreased, while the power of government officials increased. A famine led to crop failure and starvation. People came to believe that the mandate of heaven had passed from the Han, who were wealthy but did little to help those in need. Rebellion broke out, and local rulers also fought each other.

Eventually, three rulers declared themselves the rightful masters of China, ushering in the Three Kingdoms period, several decades characterized by civil war. A Xiongnu invasion in 311 CE created more upheaval. The instability and disunity continued for four centuries. But China would eventually rise again.

Chapter 7

Rome: From Republic to Empire

The Big Question

What factors caused the rise and fall of Rome?



A Western Power Rises

Rome grew from a small trading post in central Italy into a great military, economic, and political power. It left a rich legacy that includes law codes, languages, ideas about government, forms of entertainment, and notions of how to live a good life.

Roman civilization arose in the central part of present-day Italy, which is on a peninsula in southern Europe that juts into the Mediterranean Sea. The region where the city of Rome formed was called Latium, which is where the word for the Roman language, Latin, comes from. Latium was



Rome's Colosseum still stands today.



in a large and fertile plain where hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters supported farming. Close to the coast, the region was also well positioned to develop trade by sea. The city of Rome is situated on the Tiber River, about fifteen miles inland. Goods could be transported between the city and the coast with ease.

Rome had several natural defenses. To the north, the Alps proved difficult for large armies to cross. In the center of the Italian peninsula are the Apennine Mountains, which run from the north to the south of Italy. This mountain chain sheltered the city of Rome from rivals to the east. The city was built upon seven hills, which also made it difficult to attack and conquer.



Early Rome

Around 700 BCE, Rome was just one of many settlements in Italy. Greek civilization influenced the region. Romans adopted many Greek customs, including the

Greek gods (with Latinized names), art and architectural styles, and the idea of the polis, or city-state, as a self-governing entity. The goods valued and traded by the Greek colonists also influenced the development of the Roman economy and the tastes of Romans, who consumed and traded heavily in products like olive oil, a fish sauce called *garum*, wine, and pottery.

Find Out the Facts



What did the Romans use olive oil for?

The Romans were not always the dominant culture in their region of Italy. Several peoples lived in this land. They spoke languages that were related to, but distinct from, the Latin of the Romans. The Etruscans were the greater political and economic power from the 800s BCE until the early 300s BCE. Like the Romans, they prospered from farming and trading, and they adopted aspects of Greek culture, including the Greek alphabet. The Romans eventually adopted this alphabet from the Etruscans.



At its height, the Roman Empire stretched over two million square miles.

Etruscan art, especially magnificent tomb paintings and architecture, would greatly influence that of the Romans.



An Etruscan fresco depicts dancers and musicians at a banquet.

Rise of the Republic

Like the Greeks, the Romans were initially ruled by kings. Then, in 509 BCE, the Romans overthrew their last king and created a form of government by the people, which they called a **republic**. The word *republic* comes from the Latin words *res*, meaning things, and *publica*.

Vocabulary

republic, n. a government in which the people elect representatives to rule for them

Put together, the word means public affairs.

Rome had a tightly controlled system of social classes that concentrated power among a few families at the top of the structure. Power was held by the members of the wealthiest and most powerful families, the **patricians**. They had the time, money, and power to devote themselves to learning, debate, and politics. Most free Romans belonged to the **plebeian** class. At first, plebeians could not hold most of Rome's political and religious offices. Until 445 BCE, they could not even marry patricians. Rome also had a great many enslaved people, many of whom had been captured in battle or taken captive and sold at markets by pirates and slave traders. Others were born into slavery because the children of enslaved women were themselves always slaves, according to Roman law.

Vocabulary

patricians, n. the wealthiest and most powerful families of Rome

plebeians, n. the majority of ordinary free Romans

Until about the fifth century BCE, the patricians held almost all the power. At the

top of the government were two consuls, who were elected to serve together for one year. To balance their power, each consul could veto, or block, the decisions of the other. No one else in Rome had this power. Consuls made laws and commanded Rome's army. After their term was over, they were eligible to govern one of Rome's territories as a proconsul. The consuls and some other patricians were part of the Senate. While the Senate did not make laws, it conducted debates and provided guidance on major issues. Patricians could also serve as other types of government officials. Many of these posts were religious in nature; such officials oversaw rituals and ensured that religious duties were carried out.



Plebeian Revolt

In 494 BCE, the plebeians grew angry that they had no political rights despite making up the majority of Rome's citizenry—and the majority of its soldiers. At the time, Rome was at war with its neighbors. Plebeian soldiers decided to go on strike until their demands for representation were met. This led to the formation of a new Plebeian Council, and a number of

reforms were passed that gave plebeians greater say in Rome's affairs. After about 450 BCE, plebeians could be members of the body that elected consuls and other high officials, although only if they possessed a certain amount of wealth. The voting was weighted so that the votes of wealthier members counted for more than the votes of less wealthy members.



Think Twice

Were plebeians given an equal voice in Rome's government? Why or why not?



Find Out the Facts

Research details about the lives, rights, and protests of plebeians in the early republic.



Find Out the Facts

Learn about the Pyrrhic Wars and why Rome was able to come back after defeat.



Writers' Corner

Using your research, imagine you are a plebeian on strike in 494 BCE. Write a list of demands.



Conquest and Expansion

Conflict between plebeians and patricians was an ongoing feature of the republic, but Rome still grew and

prospered. It conquered the Etruscans and other peoples of Latium, then turned its attention to the south. In 281 BCE, the people of Tarentum, in southern Italy, begged a mighty Greek ruler called Pyrrhus for help against the Romans. Pyrrhus brought an army across the sea to fight the Romans. He won two major battles but lost so many of his soldiers that he was unable to prevent the Romans from advancing. Ultimately, the Romans defeated Pyrrhus and took control over southern Italy.



The Punic Wars

Rome's next conflict was with Carthage, a great city in North Africa founded by the Phoenicians. Between 264 and 146 BCE, the Romans fought three wars with Carthage. These were the Punic Wars.

When the first war began, Rome had a skilled army but no real naval power.

The Carthaginians had an excellent navy. The Romans built more than three hundred new warships equipped with large boarding ramps. They sailed up to Carthaginian ships, used the ramps to board them, then attacked their crews. After a series of battles at sea and on land, Rome defeated Carthage in 241 BCE.

In 221 BCE, Hannibal Barca took control of the vast Carthaginian army and swore to take vengeance on Rome. He marched a huge, well-equipped army up the coast through Spain and southern France, across the Alps, and into Italy. Not expecting the Carthaginians to cross the Alps, especially not with war elephants in tow, the Romans were taken totally by surprise.



Hannibal stunned the Romans by crossing the Alps.

In 217 BCE, Roman leader Quintus Fabius Maximus decided the best way to defeat Hannibal was not to fight him but to harass his troops and delay them so long that their supplies ran out. The Carthaginians were far from home; without supplies, they would be weakened. But the Roman Senate feared a direct attack by Carthage. They replaced Fabius with new leaders and sent them out to battle Hannibal directly. The result was a crushing military defeat at the Battle of Cannae in 216 BCE, which almost completely wiped out the Roman army. Within the city of Rome, almost every family lost loved ones; fear and grief were so widespread that the city was almost in chaos. Fabius restored order and set out to challenge Carthage again.

Think Twice



Why did Fabius think his strategy of indirectly weakening Hannibal's army would be more effective than fighting the Carthaginians face-to-face?

Despite his win, Hannibal was now facing supply problems. Carthage's rulers would not send Hannibal the supplies or soldiers he needed to achieve widespread victory. Meanwhile, Rome discovered its own great war leader,

Scipio Africanus. Scipio observed Hannibal's tactics and learned from them. After victories in Spain, he decided to invade Carthage itself in 205 BCE; Hannibal begged for peace in 202 BCE. Carthage was forced to give up its navy and its elephants and was prohibited from making war without Rome's permission. Rome gained control of southern Spain.

Carthage broke its peace pact in the middle of the second century BCE by warring with the neighboring kingdom of Numidia without asking Rome's permission. Some Romans began to call for Rome to attack and destroy Carthage once and for all. In 149 BCE, Rome laid **siege** to Carthage, destroying the city and enslaving its inhabitants. The Romans emerged victorious after three years, making them the uncontested masters of the western Mediterranean. They went on to conquer Greece and the Hellenistic kingdoms that had risen after the death of Alexander the Great.

Vocabulary

siege, n. a battle strategy in which enemies surround a place so that those within cannot receive supplies

Life and Culture in the Republic

Within the great cities of the republic, Romans benefited from strong infrastructure. By the 600s BCE, Rome had a sewer system, public toilets, and public bathhouses. Eventually, water was brought to many Roman cities by massive structures called *aqueducts*. Romans attended theaters and circuses, arenas where spectacles like chariot races and fights between gladiators were held. As the city of Rome grew, people began living in buildings called *insulae*, which had up to seven stories. Poorer inhabitants rented the upper floors. *Insulae* were cramped, dirty, and dangerous, but they were the only option for poor citizens. Nevertheless, the lure of city life attracted thousands of people to



Chariot races were a popular form of entertainment.

come and live in Rome and other major urban centers.

Rich Romans lived in private estates in exclusive parts of the city, like Palatine Hill, or in countryside villas away from the noise, bustle, and smell of the city. Their homes had private baths, rooms for entertaining guests, and even their own shops. Wealthy Romans enjoyed a variety of foods from regions that Rome controlled or traded with.

Enslaved people did all the hard work that supported the comfortable lives of the upper class, such as housework, farming, building, and mining. Some also served as teachers, doctors, and architects. Plebeians also worked hard in their skilled roles as farmers, bakers, and craftspeople. They were not paid well, and many were homeless. The city of Rome had so many impoverished residents that the city's rulers began providing free grain to every inhabitant.



Roman Religion

Ancient Roman religion resembled that of the Greeks. Many of the Roman gods were essentially versions of Greek gods that had been given Latin names, such as Jupiter,

the Roman version of Zeus. Roman priests were public officials rather than members of a priestly class. Before battles and other endeavors, Romans sought signs that victory or success was likely, and Romans of all walks of life would ask the gods to bless them or to curse their enemies. As the Roman Empire spread, Romans adopted all kinds of local beliefs, gods, and cults as their own and were generally tolerant of other religions, which made the conquered territories more likely to accept Roman rule. This flexible approach to religion is partly why the Roman civilization was so strong and lasted so long.

Most Romans spoke some version of Latin, but Greek was also widely spoken. Romans greatly admired Greek culture. Like the Greeks, Romans enjoyed theater, poetry, and writing letters to each other. Wealthy Romans pursued careers that allowed them to use their classical learning, knowledge of the law, and ability to write in an elegant style to establish themselves as politicians and people of note. To be a member of the Roman elite, it was important not only to have wealth but also to be educated in philosophy, art, and culture. Greek philosophy, particularly Stoicism and Epicureanism, was highly influential in both the republic and imperial periods.



Find Out the Facts

Find out more about parallels between Greek and Roman gods and goddesses.



Writers' Corner

Write a profile of a Roman deity, monster, or hero.



The Forum in ancient Rome

Roman culture emphasized public life. In addition to entertainment in circuses, much political life happened in the open. The Roman Forum was a large public space that included temples and a place

for political bodies to meet. Powerful Romans liked to be seen in public and be admired and cheered by ordinary people. They also liked seeing their enemies booed or attacked. Victorious military leaders were celebrated in a *triumph*—a great procession in which a victorious Roman leader would be paraded throughout the city. The fact that rich Romans cared about their public

Roman Philosophers

Romans drew upon and expanded many of the philosophical traditions that arose in Greece. The works of Roman philosophers went on to influence many later Western thinkers. Major Roman philosophers include:

- **Cicero** (106–43 BCE), a lawyer, politician, and philosopher who believed virtuous behavior was a key ingredient of a successful republic
- **Seneca** (4–65 CE), a prominent intellectual and politician who wrote many tragedies
- **Pliny the Elder** (23–79 CE), who, influenced by Aristotle, wrote the *Natural History*, a set of thirty-seven books covering topics such as astronomy, math, botany, art, magic, and history

reputations, however, also meant that the plebeians could sometimes gain influence in Roman politics. The plebeians represented the majority of the public. Their affection or disapproval could create or destroy a person's career. In many cases, powerful people used their power to gain the favor of the plebeians.



Roman Families

The family was the basic unit of Roman society. As was the custom in other early civilizations, the father or eldest male relative held the most power. Traditionally, a father could decide whether or not to accept a newborn baby as a member of the family. Fathers named children, customarily waiting nine days before naming boys. At fourteen years old, boys became citizens and began to wear **togas**.

Vocabulary

toga, n. traditional Roman clothing consisting of fabric draped around the body

Girls were usually given a feminine version of their father's family name; multiple daughters in a family would have

the same name followed by a number. Parents typically arranged marriages for their children, with girls often becoming engaged in early adolescence. Freeborn women were citizens but had few legal rights. They engaged in public life but generally interacted only with other women, often staying in particular parts of public buildings reserved for them.

Find Out the Facts

What other traditions did Roman families follow?



The Collapse of the Republic

For centuries, the Roman Republic proved itself to be a stable and successful political regime. It was generally capable of resolving its internal disputes in a way that allowed it to expand and defeat rivals like the Carthaginians. But the expansion of Rome caused strains that would eventually break the republican system of government.

One of the main issues underlying the crisis of the republic was the ownership of land. Rome acquired more territory as it expanded. But most land—which was the basis of agriculture—and wealth were

owned by a small number of families. These wealthy families used their money to buy up more and more land. Eventually, a small group had great wealth while others had nothing. Politics in Rome became split between the interests of the *optimates*, who wanted to preserve Rome's existing order, and the *populares*, who wanted to pass reforms that would benefit the ordinary people of Rome.

Rome also continued to expand its territory. To do so, it introduced a series of reforms that allowed more poor Romans to join the army. This gave ordinary people a chance of gaining a greater degree of wealth and power. One general, Sulla, gained widespread support. In a moment of political instability, Sulla proclaimed himself **dictator** of Rome.

Vocabulary

dictator, n. a ruler who has total control over the country

The Roman dictatorship was not quite like a modern dictatorship. It was an accepted, although not well liked, idea that having a single person in control was a way to restore order during times of crisis. When the crisis was over, the dictator no longer had power. Sulla used his dictatorial power to pass a

series of reforms. He limited the powers of tribunes, increased the size of the Senate, and limited the authority of Rome's generals outside of Italy. Sulla considered his work done in 79 BCE, after which he gave up his powers and went into retirement.

Think Twice

In what ways might a Roman dictatorship have been different from a modern dictatorship?



The First Triumvirate

The beginning of the end of the Roman Empire can largely be attributed to a brilliant and controversial general and politician, Gaius Julius Caesar. A patrician, Caesar had a successful, adventure-filled career in his youth, including an episode in 75 BCE in which he was kidnapped by pirates. Handsome, polished, and ambitious, Caesar turned his military exploits into a successful political career. He was aided in politics by an alliance he made with two other great men of Rome. One was Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, called Pompey, who was a skilled and respected governor and military commander. The other was Marcus Licinius Crassus, who

may have been the richest Roman at the time and was one of the richest men in the whole world. The three worked together to hold power, becoming known as the First Triumvirate. They supported each other's careers, and each man agreed not to get in the way of the ambitions of the others.

The three allies worked together to rule Rome. Caesar was elected consul. He aligned himself with the *populares* and passed policies intended to win the affection of the Roman people. He truly made his name, however, through military conquest. He was given the command of Roman armies that marched north to Gaul (present-day France). Caesar proved himself as a military leader by conquering this vast area between 58 and 52 BCE. He wrote about his exploits in messages back to Rome and soon became a popular hero. Caesar's wars brought him wealth, fame, and the loyalty of the soldiers he commanded.

Caesar Starts a Civil War

The First Triumvirate ended after Crassus was killed while leading a military invasion to the east in 55 BCE. After his success in Gaul, Caesar wanted to be elected

consul again. Pompey, however, no longer trusted Caesar and wanted to block him from power.

Pompey had the support of a narrow majority of the Senate. Its members ordered Caesar to give up his army and return to the city of Rome. Caesar knew that he would be vulnerable without his soldiers and Pompey would likely have him arrested, so he commanded his army to come with him to Rome—despite explicit laws that prohibited him from doing so. When he crossed the river Rubicon, the northern boundary of Italy, he was essentially challenging his enemies and declaring war on Pompey. A civil war had begun.



Crossing the Rubicon was a decisive moment for Julius Caesar.

Pompey and his allies did not have enough troops organized, so they fled. Caesar's army pursued them and

conquered the forces they commanded. Pompey escaped to Egypt but was then murdered. When Caesar arrived in Egypt, he made an alliance with Queen Cleopatra and overthrew her coruler, Ptolemy XIII. Rome's influence in Egypt grew, and Cleopatra and Caesar had a child together.



Think Twice

Why did some Romans consider Caesar's growing influence to be a threat?



Find Out the Facts

Read about Caesar's time in Egypt, especially the political events that unfolded there and his relationship with Cleopatra.



Writers' Corner

Using your research, write an account of the events happening in Egypt during this time from Cleopatra's perspective.

Caesar returned to Rome victorious. He used his power to institute several reforms, including granting land to his faithful soldiers. He made plans to stop corruption, improve the courts, and

prevent people from getting into heavy debt. But he also sought glory. He had coins made with his image on them. He reformed the calendar based on the more accurate Egyptian model and renamed a summer month, Julius (July), after himself. Some people worried that he wanted to become a king and end Rome's proud republican traditions.

In 44 BCE, Caesar pushed the Senate to name him dictator for life. This was unheard of in Rome, where dictators were viewed as necessary only during times of crisis. Caesar wanted absolute power indefinitely. His many enemies argued that he was dangerous and had to be removed for the good of the republic. On March 15, 44 BCE, known as the Ides of March in the Roman calendar, a group of senators ambushed and murdered Caesar. The two leaders of the plot, Brutus and Cassius, declared themselves the leaders and defenders of the republic.

But the senators had miscalculated. Caesar's exploits had made him immensely popular with ordinary Romans, and the senators who had killed him had no clear plan of what to do once they had gotten rid of him. Caesar's loyal general, Marcus Antonius, and his nephew Octavian rose

up against Brutus and Cassius and turned the people of Rome against them. This new conflict struck the final blow to the republic. Brutus, Cassius, and the other senators were defeated by Antonius and Octavian in 42 BCE. Octavian then bested Antonius in a subsequent fight, whereupon Octavian became the undisputed master of Rome and its first emperor, ruling under the name Augustus Caesar.



Find Out the Facts

How did Octavian and Antonius turn the people of Rome against the Senate?



The Pax Romana

Augustus made sure he did not suffer Caesar's fate by being careful with how he portrayed himself and how he exercised power. Wanting others to think he had humbly taken the power offered to him by a grateful Senate, he projected the image of a man who refused the absolute power that his efforts had won him. But Augustus was utterly ruthless. He accepted no challenges to his rule. He ordered the murders of Caesar and Cleopatra's son,

Caesarion, and Antonius's son. As his grip on power solidified, Augustus allowed himself to be shown more openly as the master of Rome. He took the title *imperator*, the supreme commander or emperor.

Augustus ruled over an era of relative peace and growing prosperity after the long years of Rome's civil wars. He reorganized the military, creating two major divisions of Roman soldiers. Each group of Roman soldiers was commanded by a senator. These commanders reported to more powerful senators, who were under Augustus himself. This system was intended to prevent any particular senator from growing too powerful and gaining control of a large group of soldiers, as Caesar had. Augustus also reorganized how the military was funded by establishing a central treasury that distributed money and supplies to generals. Noncitizens were organized into smaller fighting groups and had the opportunity to gain citizenship in return for their military service. This helped integrate non-Romans into Roman society.

With this military, Augustus added several new regions to Rome's empire. He also reorganized Rome's tax system and saw

that the city itself was improved with protections against flooding, fire, famine, and crime. New aqueducts and elegant public buildings were also constructed.

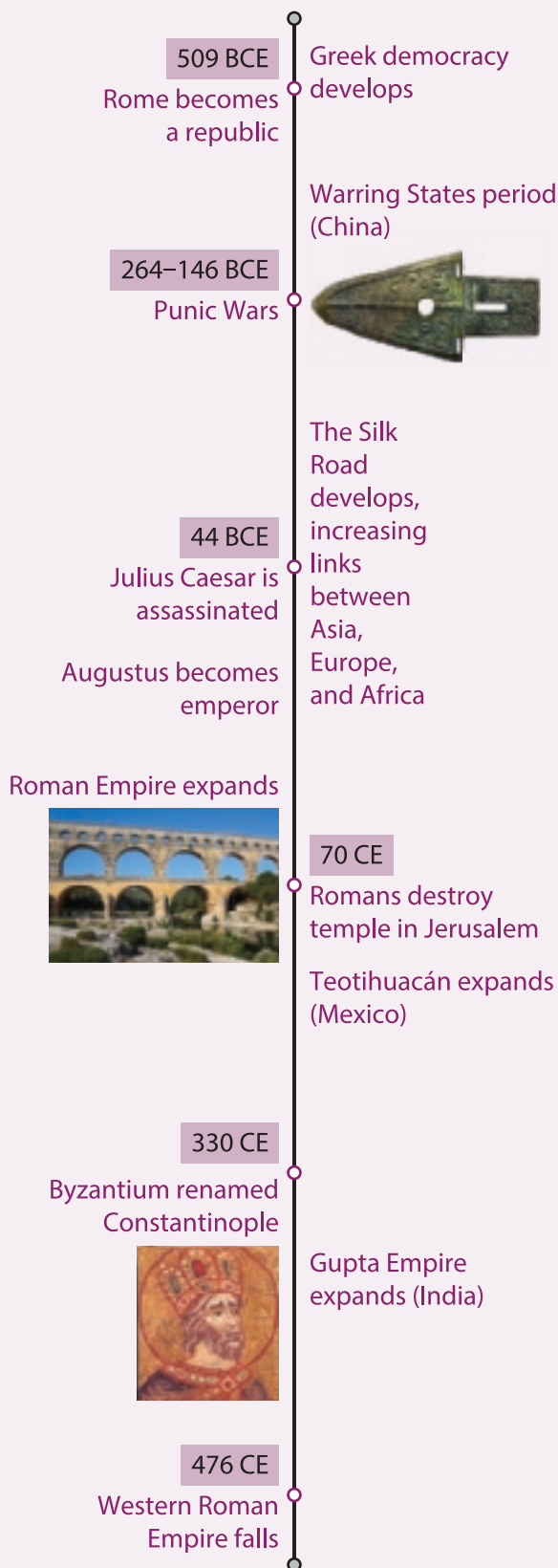
Art and literature flourished. A great epic poem, the *Aeneid*, was composed by the poet Virgil. Inspired by the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it tells a story of the mythical origins of Rome while also glorifying Augustus and his rule. Ovid also wrote texts that served to build up a sense of Rome's magnificent identity. His *Metamorphoses* attempts to recount the history of the world from a Roman perspective. The text includes retellings of many ancient Greek myths. Ovid's writings became some of the best-known versions of Greco-Roman tales.



Find Out the Facts

Learn about the story told in the *Aeneid*.

Although Rome's armies were still heavily engaged in conflict, the rule of Augustus and his successors is known as the Pax Romana, or the Roman Peace. This name refers to a period in which Rome's power was beyond dispute. Because of this stability, Romans experienced the period as one of relative peace and plenty.



The empire succeeded, however, at the cost of the old republican form of government. The emperor was mightier than a mere king would have been. The Senate remained, but it was effectively powerless. With the end of republican government and the ascent of the emperors, Rome's politics lost some of the flexibility and vigor of the early years of conquest and expansion. Nevertheless, the Roman Empire would last for centuries after Augustus's death.



Think Twice

What does the author mean by the sentence "The empire succeeded at the cost of the old republican form of government"?



Building the Empire

At its height, the Roman Empire controlled a huge territory with millions of people under its rule. Permanent military **garrisons** were established at the empire's borders. Defensive walls were built to protect against potential enemies. The

Vocabulary

garrison, n. troops stationed in a town or fort for the purpose of defense

ruins of many of these walls still exist. In Britain, Emperor Hadrian ordered the construction of a massive seventy-three-mile-long wall that stretched along the border of present-day England and Scotland, putting a barrier between Roman lands and the Celts who lived to the north. The most significant border in Europe was along the Rhine River, which separated Roman-controlled Gaul to the west from the regions populated by the Germanic peoples to the east.

To maintain their borders and to ensure that their large cities were supplied with food, the Romans needed an excellent transportation network. They had one at sea in the form of the vast fleets that led the Romans to call the Mediterranean *Mare Nostrum*, or Our



The Pont du Gard, a Roman aqueduct in France

Sea. On land, the Romans built a large and sophisticated network of roads that spanned the length and breadth of their empire. They were built in straight, carefully planned lines, with hard surfaces and regular markers to show distances. The road system allowed the Romans to move military forces and supplies very quickly. Roman roads were so well made that many of them lasted well into the Middle Ages. Romans also built aqueducts, temples, arenas, and other big public projects all across the empire.




An Unwieldy Power

The enormous size of the empire posed many challenges. The first was the difficulty of effectively ruling such a large area. The emperor Diocletian, who ruled from 284 to 305 CE, split the empire into halves, each ruled by its own emperor. The western half was ruled from the city of Rome, while the eastern half was ruled from Asia Minor. This was meant to ensure that each half would be able to respond more swiftly to crises caused by wars and other mischief on the borders and would, in theory, prevent

Rome from being overwhelmed by a single setback.

In addition to outside threats, the empire faced the ongoing issue of corruption among its leaders and a continuous struggle for political power. The emperor Constantine rose to power in 312 CE during one such struggle. He wanted to reunite the empire. But the city of Rome was no longer the grand and well-organized center of power. Constantine moved the capital of the empire to Byzantium (modern-day Istanbul, in Turkey) and renamed it Constantinople. He went on to make other sweeping changes, including a transformation of religious practices and authority in Rome.



Christianity and the Roman Empire

A new religion began to spread around 30 CE. It started in Judah (modern-day Israel), a territory that had come under Roman control in 63 BCE, and was based on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish figure who gathered followers

with his preaching. The Jewish community had a difficult relationship with its Roman rulers. Romans were generally tolerant of foreign religions as long as they accepted Roman authority and did not interfere with the paying of taxes to Rome. Some Jewish groups resisted when Rome conquered Judah. Yet many Jewish authorities feared a violent Roman response. They frowned on messages, such as Jesus's, that challenged the established order. But Jesus had many devoted followers. Even after he was put to death by the Roman authorities, his followers continued to spread his messages and established the religion of Christianity.

It was not uncommon for religious ideas and practices from the eastern parts of the empire to spread among the Romans. The message of the Christians found many followers among the poor, the oppressed, and the downtrodden in the empire, a society that concentrated so much power and wealth in the hands of a few. Roman authorities tried to stamp out the spread of Christianity. Many of the methods used were very brutal, and a great number of Christian leaders and followers were killed. Some Roman emperors realized that they could get crowds of Romans on their

side by launching official **persecutions** of Christians.

Vocabulary

persecution, n. cruel and unfair treatment of a group of people

Governmental attitudes toward Christianity completely changed when Constantine came to power. During his bid to become emperor in 312 CE, he reportedly saw a burning cross in the sky before a battle. Its accompanying message said, "Under this sign you shall conquer." Constantine took this as a sign that if he adopted Christianity, he would win. He had his soldiers paint their shields with the Christian symbol of the cross. After his victory, he became Rome's first Christian emperor.

Constantine didn't just end the persecution of Christians—he made Christianity Rome's official religion. To do so, he ordered church leaders to gather at Nicaea (in present-day Turkey) in 325 CE. He didn't let them leave until they had settled what would become official Christian **doctrine**. The result came to be

Vocabulary

doctrine, n. an official set of beliefs

known as the Nicene Creed. Christianity became an important feature of the Roman Empire and of much of the world that followed.



A mosaic of Constantine

Decline and Fall of the Western Empire

The question of how and why the Roman Empire collapsed is one that historians have asked ever since it happened. There is not one reason or cause; instead, Rome's power declined over centuries. The old

east-west division of the empire was reinstated after Constantine died, and the western part of the empire continued to weaken.

There are several theories about why Rome ultimately fell. One is that the empire became weak and decadent because Romans had so much wealth and power. Another theory is that Rome was weakened by almost-constant outside attacks, particularly by Germanic tribes. In 410 CE, the city of Rome itself was attacked and sacked by the Gothic leader Alaric I. More invasions were led by Attila, leader of another Germanic tribe called the Huns. Other groups, like the Alans, Vandals, German Alemanni, and Saxons, gradually moved into Roman lands. In 476 CE, the last Western Roman emperor was defeated by a Germanic chieftain named Odoacer. The Western Roman Empire fell, and the political and cultural landscape of Europe underwent dramatic changes.

Find Out the Facts



Research different arguments about why the Western Roman Empire weakened and collapsed while the eastern half continued to thrive.



Byzantium

The wealthier eastern half of the Roman Empire existed in some form for almost a thousand years after the fall of Western Rome. The Eastern Roman Empire eventually became known as the Byzantine Empire after the city of Byzantium, which was in an excellent location for trading because it had access to major shipping lanes, it was in territory rich with farmland, and it was on a land formation that meant it could only be attacked by land from the west.

Constantine made the city of Byzantium his capital and changed the name to Constantinople in 330 CE. He remade the city with a huge new palace, a hippodrome (an arena for racing horses and chariots), wide avenues, a great aqueduct, and a large harbor to house a mighty fleet. Public art like statues and columns added to the city's grandeur.

The emperor Justinian, who reigned from 527 to 565 CE, created the Code of Justinian, a set of laws. To do so, he organized an attempt to collect and reform all the laws of the Romans and combine

them into texts that legal experts and lawyers could consult and use. Justinian added his own new laws to these works.

Justinian's reign also coincided with one of the worst outbreaks of plague the world has ever seen. The great number of deaths damaged the Byzantine economy and reduced the number of people available to serve in its army. In the 600s CE, the Byzantines and Persian groups fought a mutually ruinous war that militarily and economically exhausted both sides, leaving them vulnerable to the Islamic rulers who rose to power in Arabia in the 700s CE. Although Byzantine rulers would hold on to Constantinople and some surrounding territories for centuries after, the Romans were no longer a major world power after the seventh century CE.

Think Twice

Do you think it is inevitable that vast, powerful empires eventually decline?



Writers' Corner

Write a report about a leader, artist, or thinker from the Roman Empire.



Chapter 8

Islamic Civilization

The Big Question

What were the hallmarks of early Islamic civilization?



Origins of Islam

Islamic civilization arose in the Arabian Peninsula in the 600s CE, based on the teachings of a prophet called Muhammad. The civilization that developed around Islam eventually fostered not only new religious practices but also new artistic and architectural styles, scholarship, translations, medicine, banking, and more.

Islam emerged within the context of Arab culture. In ancient times, various Arab clans lived throughout the Arabian Peninsula. The Arabic language developed out of the



Islamic rulers supported the development of great libraries and the work of many scholars.



languages spoken by many of these clans. While many of these Arab peoples were polytheistic, monotheism became important in some areas with the spread of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. Islam then became a powerful new religious and cultural force in much of the Arabian Peninsula and quickly spread to parts of Asia, North Africa, and Europe. The spread of Islam also brought aspects of Arab culture to these regions.

Part of the continent of Asia, the Arabian Peninsula is surrounded by the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Persian Gulf and is separated from the Mediterranean Sea by a narrow stretch of coastline. It is the largest peninsula in the world. Mainly a large plateau, it consists mostly of sandy deserts and dry plains, with some mountains and fertile valleys. Rainfall is scarce in most areas except the southern region. The coastal areas are fairly dry most of the year but have very high humidity in the summer, supporting some tree growth and farming.

In the desert, the temperature can reach over 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Sometimes the air in the desert can be perfectly still, but at other times, enormous gusts of wind



The Arabian Peninsula

can create dangerous conditions, moving the sand into huge dunes that cover everything. Rare watering holes are hidden among the desert sands. This kind of place in the desert where water is found, called an **oasis**, supports vegetation in a small area. Oases provided shade and water for weary travelers who crossed the hot sands in caravans.

Vocabulary

oasis, n. an area in the desert where there are water and plants



Pre-Islamic Arabia

Despite the challenging climate, Arabia became a center of trade and culture. Connecting Asia and Africa and close to

southern Europe, the Arabian Peninsula was part of the trade networks that linked several ancient civilizations, including Egypt, Kush, Mesopotamia, Persia, China, India, Greece, and Rome.

The introduction of camels from North Africa also helped develop trade. Better able than donkeys and mules to travel from oasis to oasis, camels facilitated journeys within Arabia and through it to other regions. While the Arabian Peninsula was sparsely populated, numerous Arab clans were scattered throughout the region. Some, like the Bedouin, were nomadic and herded sheep and goats. Others settled and established cities, mostly along the coast, especially in the southern part of the peninsula. Some small kingdoms developed. In the southwest, trees produced valuable frankincense and myrrh. These are **resins** made from tree sap. Many ancient peoples used these fragrant resins as incense and perfume as well as for medicinal purposes. Gold, ivory, animals, and enslaved people were also traded.

Vocabulary

resin, n. a sticky substance made by some plants

Routes of the Silk Road developed across the northern, western, and central parts of the peninsula as traders came from the East carrying silk and spices. Other traders traveled up the western coast of the peninsula on their way to Syria and Egypt. This helped spark the growth of trading centers such as the cities of Mecca and Medina. On the eastern coast, the Dilmun civilization developed as a trade hub with connections to Mesopotamia and Persia.

The northwestern part of the peninsula, near the Mediterranean, was conquered by several powers. Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Alexander and the Hellenistic kings, and Romans all ruled this territory in turn. But Arab clans and cultures continued to thrive.



Think Twice

Why would ancient peoples value spices?

One Arab people, the Nabataeans, ruled for a time in one spot in the northwest. Originally nomadic, they settled around 200 BCE and built Petra, a great city of stone carved into massive sandstone cliffs. The Nabataeans knew how to find underground springs and how to make the most of seasonal streams. They dug huge **cisterns** to hold water and made

Dromedaries

The Arabian camel, or dromedary, has one hump on its back. It is native to the Sahara desert of North Africa. Camels were likely brought to Arabia by Egyptians or the Persians who conquered Egypt. Camels are particularly suited for desert life. Arab poets have called them “the ship of the desert” because camels could carry so much and move through the sands so smoothly. These animals allowed a way of life that would not have been possible otherwise due to their unique physical features. Camels store fat in their humps that allows them to survive when water and food are scarce. Thick fur protects camels from the heat, and wide feet keep them from sinking down too far into the sand. During swirling sandstorms, camels can close their nostrils to prevent sand from getting in, and they have a third eyelid and rows of lashes to keep grains of sand out of their eyes.

Find Out the Facts



Learn more about the city of Petra at this time.

Vocabulary

cistern, n. a reservoir for storing water

channels to carry the water. These places were hidden from sight, and any travelers who wanted to use them had to pay. Petra became a key stopping point on desert trade routes. The Nabataeans also charged tolls to traders to pass through their territory. Petra thus became quite wealthy. Rome conquered Petra in 106 CE, but the city continued to prosper.



Think Twice

What factors isolated communities in the Arabian Peninsula? What factors made this region a crossroads?



Muhammad's Story

As with other figures whose teachings sparked new religions and philosophies, much information about Muhammad comes from sources that were written after his lifetime. Byzantine and Greek texts from the 630s CE refer to Muhammad and his influence in Arabia, and his image began to appear on coins and in sculptures and illustrations by the 680s CE. Much of the story of Muhammad's life comes from the Hadith, a collection of the reported sayings of Muhammad, and the Sunna, which collects his reported actions as well as early

Islamic customs and practices. Together, the Hadith and the Sunna convey things Muhammad said and did. *Hadith* means report or narrative, and *sunna* means habit or custom. The Sunna is understood to express the way of the prophet Muhammad. The Hadith is the second most important text in Islam. The Quran, Islam's most holy book, is considered the direct word of God, revealed to Muhammad through visions.

Because Muhammad saw it as his mission from God to spread the messages he received in these visions, he is often called the Prophet or the Messenger. Muhammad's visions and teachings were connected to the beliefs, figures, and ideas of Judaism and Christianity. Muslims also call him the Last Prophet, indicating that he brought the final messages from God, adding to and clarifying what Jewish and Christian prophets had revealed.

Think Twice

Why were many ancient teachings first shared orally and not written down until later?



Traditionally, Muhammad is thought to have been born in Mecca, in present-day Saudi Arabia, around 570 CE. His family was part of the Quraish tribe. His parents died when he was a child, and he was

raised by relatives. When he became old enough, he began traveling with his uncle's trading caravan. He eventually married a wealthy widow named Khadija and managed the caravans she sent to Syria. As a merchant, Muhammad saw many things that he considered to be wrong, such as dishonesty among traders, a lack of care for the poor, and rampant greed. At the age of about forty, he decided to seek spiritual understanding, so he went away to pray in a cave. Muhammad believed that God—called Allah in Arabic—and the angel Gabriel spoke to him through visions. God told Muhammad to spread Islam, a word meaning submission or surrender to God. Muhammad began to share his revelations with his wife and close friends.



Muhammad may have managed trading caravans, with merchants and goods traveling through deserts to other regions.

Muhammad worked to spread the messages he had received, but as he preached against serving any gods other than God, he met opposition. In Mecca, many different gods were worshipped, and people became angry with Muhammad. In part, they may have worried that Muhammad would anger the gods who protected their trading routes. Others may have resented Muhammad's challenge to their authority.

For a time, Muhammad was protected by the high status of his uncle and his wife, but things changed after they died. Tensions arose between Muhammad and the Quraish clan of Mecca, and Muhammad and his followers found themselves in danger of persecution in Mecca. They went to Medina, where his teachings were more readily accepted. The flight to Medina, called the Hijrah, is thought to have taken place in 622 CE. This became the first year of the Islamic calendar.

Find Out the Facts



Learn more details about the Islamic calendar and how it is used around the world.

Writers' Corner

Use your research to write a report about the Islamic calendar.



In Medina, Muhammad reportedly received more revelations and built a larger community. This is understood as the moment Muhammad fully broke away from his tribal identity and began a new Islamic society. During this period, conflict among clans was common. Muhammad may have been inspired to help end the conflict, or perhaps he saw an opportunity to become a strong leader for groups that needed one. He was also able to make some alliances. Some of these were forged through his marriages after Khadija's death.

However, conflict between Muhammad's new community and both Arab clans and Jewish groups also continued. Some Arabs in Medina converted to Islam, but others resisted. While the Jewish community of Medina shared many religious ideas with Muhammad and his followers, they mostly did not convert. Eventually, Muhammad rose to power in Medina, conquering or driving out many of the Jewish residents. Muhammad and his followers continued to clash with the Quraish. As Muhammad became more powerful, he organized a fighting force, eventually going back to Mecca and taking it over. The Muslim force smashed idols to pagan gods in a shrine called the Kaaba and made it into an

important site of Islamic worship. Eventually, Muhammad's army helped him spread Islam farther across the Arabian Peninsula.



The black structure in this painting represents the Kaaba, which became the holiest site in Islam.

Find Out the Facts



Research to learn facts and stories about the Kaaba.

Writers' Corner

Use your research to write a story about the Kaaba from the point of view of a resident of ancient Mecca.



The Five Pillars of Islam

Muhammad's teachings form the basis of Islam, and many parts of the story of his life shape Muslim practices. The main tenets of Muslim belief are called the five pillars of Islam. While many branches of Islam have developed over the centuries, these five principles are at the core of the religion.

- **The profession of faith:** Muslims express their most fundamental belief that "there is no god but God, and Muhammad is his messenger."
- **Prayer:** Traditionally, Muslims pray five times each day, at sunrise, noon, midafternoon, sunset, and nighttime. They face Mecca to pray, usually prostrate on a special prayer rug.
- **Alms:** Muslims are called to give money to help the poor and have a duty to help fund mosques, schools, hospitals, and other services that support people.
- **Fasting:** During the month of Ramadan, which celebrates the birth of Muhammad, healthy adult Muslims refrain from eating or drinking during daylight hours.
- **Pilgrimage:** If health and finances allow, a Muslim should visit the city of Mecca at least once, including a holy site called the Kaaba. This pilgrimage is called a *haji* in Arabic.



Think Twice

What elements of the five pillars of Islam are similar to other systems of belief?



Find Out the Facts

Research Ramadan to learn more about this holiday and how it is celebrated around the world.

Writers' Corner



Use your research to create a brochure or infographic about Ramadan.



Mecca, located in Saudi Arabia, is the holiest Muslim city.



The First Caliphs

When Muhammad died, around 632 CE, it was not clear who would be the next leader of Islam. Groups that had made pacts with Muhammad were not necessarily ready to continue peaceful relations with a different leader. Muslims worried that their direct connection to God through Muhammad was cut off. Various people began to claim that they were now the new prophet. All this added up to a great deal of instability and the threat that Islam would be weakened.

Muhammad's closest followers decided to choose a new leader, called a *caliph*, which

means successor. The first four caliphs were friends and relatives of Muhammad. They had been part of his community and were determined to spread Islam. The first caliph, Abu Bakr, was a close confidant of Muhammad and a devoted Muslim. He helped provide unity and continuity to the Islamic community. However, he died after only two years as caliph. Another of Muhammad's close friends, Umar, was then chosen as leader. He ruled for a decade and greatly expanded the territory under Islamic control. He developed a policy of tolerance toward Judaism and Christianity,



The Spread of Islam

based on the fact that Islam shared many of the same beliefs and stories as those faiths. This made Jews and Christians more willing to cooperate with Islamic rulers because they could keep their own religious practices. Some other groups also found Islamic rule less oppressive than that of other powers in the region, such as the Persians and the Byzantine Empire.

The third caliph, Osman, then ruled for twelve years. This was an important period in Islamic culture. Osman conquered even more territory and created administrative divisions to organize the Islamic state that had taken hold in Arabia and beyond. He also oversaw the creation of an official version of the Quran. Multiple versions of the texts of the Quran existed by this time. Osman's standardized version of the Quran became the holy book that still guides Muslims today.

During these early years, tensions and conflict were present within the Islamic community. Osman was accused of favoring those from his clan, the Umayyad clan, also part of the Quraish. He was less prone to use military might to crush rebellions. Then, Osman was attacked and killed. At that point, Muhammad's cousin Ali became caliph.

Ali was a blood relative of the Prophet, which was important in the eyes of some Muslims. However, Ali was faced with increasing unrest. The leader of the Umayyads called for revenge for Osman's death and accused Ali of not taking strong action. The Umayyads and others rebelled against Ali. They were joined by some prominent figures, including one of Muhammad's wives, Aisha. Civil war broke out, and the two factions battled each other. Muslims became divided into two main groups: Shia, who followed Ali, and Sunni, who refused to follow Ali. Over time, the two groups stopped fighting. While they did not always see eye to eye, they agreed on the basic beliefs of Islam and on the goal of spreading it.



Continued Growth

From 660 to 750 CE, the Umayyads ruled over Islam, establishing a capital at Damascus in Syria. They expanded their territory even more, going farther into Asia and Africa and moving into Spain. A century after Muhammad's death, the Islamic Empire was vast and powerful. In its quest to spread Islam, it also spread Arab culture. In the areas it conquered,

many people learned to speak Arabic, which was needed for prayer and study of the Quran. In this way, as the Islamic world grew, so too did the Arab world.

Many cities throughout the Islamic Empire blossomed into major centers of learning and cultural exchange. These included not only Damascus and Baghdad but also Cairo, Jerusalem, Córdoba (in Spain), and many others. Cities were adorned with mosques, libraries, and public baths.



The Umayyads built a great mosque in Damascus.

By around 700 CE, opposition to the Umayyads had grown, particularly among non-Arab Muslims. They objected to the

fact that Arabs paid less in taxes and held better jobs. The unrest grew especially among Shia Muslims in Mesopotamia and Persia. Eventually, they rebelled and brought down the Umayyads, replacing them with the Abbasids. The new rulers moved the capital from Damascus to Baghdad, in present-day Iraq. The upheaval shows that tensions and conflict still existed in the Islamic world.

Conflict with external foes also continued. Since the days of Muhammad, Islamic

leaders had felt called to spread Islam. The complex concept of *jihad*, meaning

a struggle or great effort to fulfill religious obligations, was related to the

determination of Islamic leaders to build an empire. As Islamic conquests began

to erode the Byzantine Empire and took control of Jerusalem and Palestine,

territories known as the Holy Land because they were the site of events in the

Tanakh and the Bible, Christian leaders in Europe began to call for military forces to

be sent to bring the region under Christian control. This led to a series of wars known

as the Crusades. Ultimately, Muslim rulers retained control, but the conflicts roiled

the region from 1095 CE until around 1272 CE. Conflict with conquered peoples also existed in some parts of the Islamic

Empire. In Spain, the Reconquista was a centuries-long effort to resist Islamic rule. However, several places in Spain became important centers of Islamic culture for a period of seven hundred years.



Islamic Golden Age

Despite various tensions, the period from the 700s to the 1400s CE is known as the golden age of Islamic civilization. Muslim merchants were one key reason that the Islamic Empire grew strong. During this golden age, they were an important influence in trade throughout much of Asia, Africa, and parts of southern Europe. Part of their success was due to developments in the practice of banking. Muslim merchants kept detailed records and spread the concept of using checks to buy and sell goods.

The golden age was also marked by the growth of a vibrant tradition of learning and culture. Muslims created the first universities. Islamic scholars made many important contributions to numerous fields. In Baghdad, Abbasid rulers began collecting scientific texts. Baghdad was the site of the House of Wisdom, a center for scholars from different regions and

backgrounds to gather and work. Scholars translated texts from China, India, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Arabic translations of ancient Greek and Roman texts are credited with preserving the ideas of these civilizations after the fall of the Roman Empire.

Muslim scholars worked to develop algebra and calculus. They adopted the written symbols for numbers developed in India, later spreading these numerals to the West. Through trade networks, they began to use paper, an invention brought from China through the Silk Road. Muslim merchants helped spread paper to more regions. This changed the practice of writing. Paper could hold ink more readily than the other materials used for writing, such as papyrus and linen, and it was also easier to make. This led to people writing more books, and also making copies and selling them to a growing population of readers.

Think Twice

How did the growing use of paper and ink impact cultures?



Medical knowledge was explored and written down in volumes that made medical theory and practices available for others to use. Muslim thinkers

incorporated medical understandings from several civilizations, including Rome, Greece, and Persia, and translated texts into Arabic to bring ideas to a wider audience. They expanded on this work with experiments and new theories. To make this medical knowledge more usable, scholars organized the information, approaches, and techniques into encyclopedias.



Think Twice

How did Muslims foster cultural exchange?

One important scholar was Ibn Sina, who became known in Europe as Avicenna. He lived during the end of the first millennium CE, doing much of his scholarly work in what is today Iran. Ibn Sina wrote about philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, geology, chemistry, and physics. He produced a five-volume medical encyclopedia that included knowledge from ancient cultures and newer Islamic practices. This book, called *The Canon of Medicine*, was later translated into Latin and used in teaching medicine throughout Europe. In another work, called *The Book of Healing*, Ibn Sina developed his own philosophical logic called Avicennian logic.

c. 200 BCE
Nabataeans settle in Petra

Arab clans continue to develop trade networks

Maya Classic Period begins (Mesoamerica)



476 CE
Western Roman Empire falls

c. 600–900 CE

Tang dynasty (China)



632 CE
Muhammad returns to Mecca



c. 700s CE
Islamic golden age



c. 1160–1220 CE
Ghengis Khan (Mongolia, China)

End of golden age

c. 1400s CE

Islam continues to spread

1475–1564 CE
Michelangelo (Italy)

He also made contributions to astronomy and created a new instrument to more accurately understand the positions of stars. He wrote poetry as well.



Find Out the Facts

Look for more facts about Ibn Sina's life, work, and influence.

Writers' Corner



Using your research, create an encyclopedia entry about Ibn Sina.

Art and Literature

The art and architecture of the Islamic Empire incorporated influences from several cultures, particularly the Byzantine Empire and Persia. Islam rejects idols, or statues in human and animal form representing gods. This was extended to a general avoidance of artistic representations of people and animals. Islamic art developed new styles based on geometric forms and the natural world. Beautiful mosques with towers called minarets were built across the Islamic world. The minarets had an important

religious purpose. From them, a religious official would make a call to prayer so that Muslims knew when to do their daily prayers. The minarets also became distinctive architectural features of towns throughout the vast Islamic Empire.



Decor in the seventeenth-century CE Shah Mosque in Iran shows motifs of traditional Islamic art.

Writers created enduring works of literature. A collection of stories called *The Thousand and One Nights* contains tales based on the literary traditions of many regions, including Arabia, Persia, China, and India. Many of the tales were written down and published in one volume in the city of Baghdad. The fictional narrator, Scheherazade, weaves tales every evening for the king but never finishes a whole story. This tactic is a ruse—the king is cruel and unjust, and Scheherazade's

life is in danger. By telling a captivating story that is unfinished each night, Scheherazade manages to stay alive—until the king finally falls in love with her. Another important text is the *Rubaiyat*, a collection of poetry by a Persian scholar called Omar Khayyam. Many of the verses explore the idea of enjoying the present moment despite the suffering that is part of human life.



The Thousand and One Nights and the fictional storyteller Scheherazade became hugely influential in the literature and art of many cultures.



The Spread of Islam

At its height, the Islamic Empire reached from the edges of India and China through the Eastern Roman Empire into northern Africa and Spain. During nearly six hundred years of growth, Muslims took their faith to others through military campaigns, pilgrimages, and trading and as missionaries. Arab peoples united in their duty to spread Islam, while the diversity of the cultures that became part of the empire ultimately shaped the form of their civilization.

Over time, parts of the Islamic world broke away from Abbasid rule. New groups of rulers took over in different lands where Islam was the dominant religious and cultural force. The Ottoman Empire emerged when Turks from central Asia took power in some areas. In the 1200s CE, Ottoman Turks had come into Asia Minor. In 1453 CE, the Ottomans conquered the Byzantine Empire. They took over Constantinople, renaming it Istanbul, the name the city still uses today as part of present-day Turkey. A beautiful Byzantine cathedral called the Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque with the addition

of four minarets. Later Ottoman rulers continued to rebuild and expand the Hagia Sophia, which still stands in the modern Turkish city.



Find Out the Facts

Find out more about the origins and history of the Hagia Sophia.

The Ottoman Empire eventually extended into parts of Europe and North Africa as well as Southwest Asia. The Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent went on to conquer even more territory in

the 1500s CE. He also created a unified legal system for the empire, supported artists and artisans, and invested in public works, such as bridges and mosques. The Ottoman Empire survived for centuries. Though its power and territory waned, it continued in some form through the early twentieth century, when it finally crumbled in the wake of World War I.

In northern India, the Moghuls took over in the 1500s CE, setting up an empire based on Islam that allowed people to practice Hinduism and other religions as well. The Moghul emperor Shah Jahān ordered the

construction of a fabulous funeral complex and mosque called the Taj Mahal in the city of Agra.

While the original empire conquered by Muhammad and the first caliphs evolved into several different powers, the influence of Islam continued to grow. As it spread, it incorporated some of the traditions of the cultures it came into contact with. It became one of the world's major religions, influencing the scholarship, art, literature, politics, and cultures of many societies throughout the world and across eras.



The Taj Mahal

Chapter 9

Maya, Aztec, and Inca Civilizations

The Big Question

What characterized early civilizations in Mesoamerica and South America?

Cultures of the Americas

The Americas were home to numerous thriving early civilizations.

In Mesoamerica, the Maya and the Aztec built complex urban societies, while the Inca ruled over an empire in South America.

Mesoamerican and South American peoples created many buildings, pieces of pottery, tools, and other artifacts that reveal much about their civilizations. The Maya, Aztec, and others also wrote texts. Information



A mask from Teotihuacán inlaid with turquoise and other stones



about these cultures also comes from the Spanish, who invaded the region in the 1500s CE and wrote about the peoples they encountered. These accounts must be read carefully, with an understanding that they are written from the perspective of colonizers and conquerors.



Mesoamerica

Mesoamerica is a historical region that stretches from the northwest of modern Mexico southward into the isthmus that joins North and South America. Numerous Mesoamerican civilizations inhabited present-day Mexico and Central America, including the Olmec, Maya, Zapotec, Aztec, and others.

Vocabulary

Mesoamerica, n. historical region of Latin America, stretching from northwest Mexico through Central America

Humans lived in Mesoamerica perhaps as early as 21,000 BCE and certainly by about 11,000 BCE. By about 3800 BCE, people in Mesoamerica had begun to live in villages. They had domesticated corn (maize),



Mexico and Central America

which was a key resource. The earliest growers of corn may have valued it as much for its stalks as for its kernels. It was in later eras that people began to grind up corn kernels to make flour that was then used for corn paste, the fundamental ingredient of tortillas.



Find Out the Facts

Learn about how early Mesoamerican people used corn leaves and stalks.

Corn became the staple crop of the Mesoamerican diet, but early Mesoamericans cultivated a wide variety of foods, including avocados, cacao,

tomatoes, beans, and chili peppers. For meat, Mesoamericans hunted local animals and raised domesticated animals such as dogs, ducks, and turkeys.

Olmecs and Zapotecs

Around 1200 BCE, the Olmec civilization arose along Mexico's Gulf Coast. It is unknown what these people called themselves. The name *Olmec* comes from the Aztec language, Nahuatl, and means the rubber people. The Olmecs figured out how to extract latex from rubber trees, which they used to make all sorts of things, including balls to play games with. They lived in major settlements

along rivers that fed the Gulf of Mexico. The largest of these early centers is now called San Lorenzo. Trade goods found at San Lorenzo, and at other Olmec sites such as Las Limas and the island of La Venta, include precious stones such as obsidian and jade, rubber, skins and feathers from exotic wildlife, and pottery.

The Olmecs were among the first peoples to build pyramids in Mesoamerica. One of the tallest early pyramids is at La Venta. About one hundred feet high, it has a stepped structure with a platform at the top on which religious ceremonies were probably held. The most famous Olmec artworks, however, are enormous carved stone heads. The largest of these heads is more than nine feet tall and weighs about eight tons. Each was carved from a single chunk of basalt (a volcanic rock) and then transported to the site where it now stands. The impressive detail in the carving and the difficulty of transporting the heads show the Olmecs' artistic, technical, and organizational sophistication. Many of the heads include a helmet or headdress, sometimes featuring designs of claws or talons. This might indicate that the heads represent important leaders. Olmec cave art also associates rulers with animal imagery and with maize. Put together, the

art and artifacts of the Olmecs suggest that they had powerful rulers and large settlements grounded in farming and trade.

Find Out the Facts



What animals were used in Mesoamerica as symbols of power and prestige?

The Zapotec civilization was centered in the Valley of Oaxaca in Mexico. Although Zapotec villages in Oaxaca date back to 1600 BCE, a major transition occurred around 500 BCE when a city now called Monte Albán was founded. The city relied on household-based farming, using small-scale water diversion and irrigation



An Olmec head sculpture in San Lorenzo

technologies. Monte Albán endured as a major center for more than a millennium. Its decline around 900 CE was due not to outside conquest but to internal breakdown into smaller political units. Zapotec people still live in Mexico to this day.

Teotihuacán

Between 400 and 100 BCE, a great city arose in the area where Mexico City currently extends. The name of this city was Teotihuacán, or the city of the gods. Teotihuacán had several natural advantages as a city, such as a good supply of water, which served as the basis of an irrigation system for farming. It also had access to large amounts of the valuable stone obsidian, which was used to make tools and weapons and to trade with other cities.

Teotihuacán rapidly grew as a center of trade, power, and religious significance. From the late 300s to early 500s CE, it controlled the surrounding region. It may have received tribute from surrounding areas. Archaeological evidence indicates that much of the city was burned down

around 600 CE, although it's not known who or what caused this destruction.

Teotihuacán's sophisticated governance is evident from its impressive architecture and its system of well-planned streets. Two thousand single-story buildings functioned as multifamily dwellings. There were also many temples, public squares, and elaborate residences. One of the city's widest roads is today known as the Avenue of the Dead because the buildings that lined it were once thought to be tombs. Now, they are known to have been homes, temples, and other public buildings.

The center of Teotihuacán is still dominated by the Pyramid of the Sun, a stepped pyramid that likely had a temple at the top. Near the Pyramid of the Sun is the slightly smaller Pyramid of the Moon. The Pyramids of the Sun and Moon were both built over several smaller pyramids, which



The Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán



Think Twice

What have you learned about the practice of tribute in other ancient civilizations?

indicates that the site was gradually added to over time, and perhaps that the act of building and rebuilding was itself an aspect of collaborative devotion and worship.

One of Teotihuacán's largest buildings is a temple to the feathered serpent god Quetzalcoatl, decorated with symbols of warfare and military victory such as owls and serpents.



Find Out the Facts

Read a myth featuring Quetzalcoatl.



Writers' Corner

Use your research to write a short story imagining Quetzalcoatl as part of the modern world.



The Maya

Like the Zapotecs, the Maya exist to this day in Mesoamerica. Although they no longer maintain a distinct and independent political system, the modern Maya strive to maintain the language, culture, and traditions of their ancestors. Before Europeans arrived, the Maya maintained a large, prosperous realm of linked cities. They made important advances in many

areas, including architecture, astronomy, and mathematics, particularly during the Classic Period, from around 250 to 900 CE.

The Maya also had an elaborate writing system. Maya inscriptions are found in the ruins of their cities and temples and on stone statues, sculptures, and ceramic vessels. The Maya also produced books. Unfortunately, almost all of these texts were destroyed by the Spanish in the early 1600s CE. Only four texts survive, all written after 950 CE. The Classic Period writing system had more than eight hundred symbols, and symbols could be combined to give them multiple meanings.

Think Twice

Compare the Maya writing system to other ancient writing systems.



The territory inhabited by the Maya includes part or all of the modern nations of Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico. During the Classic Period, the Maya lived in more than forty cities, which they had built using stone and earth. The buildings of these cities included dwellings, palaces, temples, and public spaces. At the height of Maya civilization, there may have been as many as two million Maya, and the cities each had a population of between five and fifty thousand inhabitants.

The main cities late in the Classic Period included Chichén Itzá, on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula; Palenque and Calakmul, in Mexico; Caracol, in Belize; Copán, in Honduras; and several large centers in Guatemala, including Tikal. Maya cities were not laid out in a regular grid pattern and did not have a uniform design. Some had defensive features such as moats and earthworks, but most did not. Their buildings do show a great degree of sophistication, however. The most impressive Maya buildings are pyramids, which probably functioned as temples and in some cases were made from blocks of limestone cut by hand and moved into place by skilled workers and architects. The Maya were also accomplished engineers. For example, Tikal had not only a reservoir to hold drinking water but also a system to filter the water to improve its quality and make it safer to drink.

Beginning around 800 CE, these cities began to decline in power, but it's not clear exactly what happened. One theory is that a major war devastated these cities. Another possibility is that there was a decline in agricultural productivity, perhaps due to drought that led to food shortages. There also were shifts in trade patterns, which may have had a role in the weakening of Maya



The cacao bean motif on this pottery indicates the importance of cacao to the Maya.

lords. After 900 CE, the Maya mostly lived in fewer and smaller cities.

Maya Belief Systems

The Maya saw the world as having three distinct but linked realms: the sky, the earth, and the underworld. They believed that the earth was created by the god of the sky and the wind, Huracán, who brought the earth and the sky together. However, because the two were so closely joined, there was no room for anything to grow and live, and so the tree of life was planted in the underworld, Xibalba, a realm of nine layers beneath the earth. The tree grew and stretched, creating room for plants and animals to thrive.

The gods wanted to be worshipped, so they created humans. It took the gods several attempts to make humans properly. They tried making humans out of mud, but these people had no heart and could not honor the gods. They made new humans out of wood, but a flood washed them away. At last, the gods made humans out of maize. The people of maize were well suited to honoring the gods by building temples and holding religious rituals.



Find Out the Facts

What modern word is derived from the name of the god Huracán? How did this happen?

The Popol Vuh

The Popol Vuh is a collection of Maya religious stories. It was created in the 1500s CE by Maya living in Guatemala. The Spanish had begun destroying Indigenous texts, but the Popol Vuh was produced in a region where the attitude toward Maya texts was not so destructive. The authors likely hoped their book would preserve their stories and beliefs for later generations.

Although it was created in the 1500s, the Popol Vuh tells a story that had probably been told for centuries.

Movement and transition were central to Maya beliefs. The Maya believed that everything in the world was in motion, following a repeating pattern of cycles. This is reflected in the Maya gods, who have multiple aspects, or forms and personalities. Similarly, the Maya believed that people moved through different stages of existence. People were not born, and they didn't die; rather, they moved from one stage to another. Certain rituals could help people move ahead a few stages in their journey. For example, it was believed that a person who was sacrificed as part of a religious ritual would move further ahead than a person who died naturally. Thus, bloodletting and sacrifice were part of the Maya religion. To mark important days and events, priests, kings, and queens were expected to spill their blood. They did so using special tools designed for these rituals. The most important rituals involved the sacrifice of humans, especially of very important humans. The sacrifices often involved ritually acting out scenes from religious stories.

The Maya planned their rituals on a regular schedule, using a calendar called the Tzolkin (meaning the count of days). The Tzolkin revolved around a 260-day cycle of rituals and a 365-day year. Days

were named according to their place in both the ritual and yearly cycles. Because the cycles of days and rituals were so important, the Maya became very skilled at observing the night sky, both to look for omens and to get information about the best times to plant and harvest crops. The Maya also used their astronomical observations to plan their buildings: the pyramid at Chichén Itzá was built so that it would cast a particular shadow on the two

Vocabulary

equinox, n. day of the year when the day and night are of equal length



Find Out the Facts

Learn more about the Maya calendar.



The Maya's skill in astronomy led to the development of a sophisticated calendar. This round stone carving shows a priest ballplayer, with signs marking out a period of twenty days.

equinoxes in the year. Maya observations, architecture, and business also led them to develop a sophisticated system of mathematics, including the concept of zero.



The Aztec

After the Maya Classic Period ended around 900 CE, Mesoamerica went through a transition as new population centers arose. After several centuries, another civilization began to rise in central Mexico. The Aztec built an empire centered on their capital city of Tenochtitlán, where Mexico City stands today. From about 1300 CE, the Aztec rose in power through military successes until they had united most of the northern region of Mesoamerica into an empire that, at its height, ruled over eleven million people. It was the Spanish, and the diseases that came with them, that brought the Aztec Empire to an end.

Find Out the Facts

What did the Aztec call themselves?



The Mexica, a group from northern Mexico, migrated south around the 1100s CE. Eventually, they intermarried with peoples

from central Mexico and settled on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco. This new group became known as the Aztec. Legends say that the Aztec sun god had instructed the leaders of their wandering people to look for a sign: an eagle on a cactus holding a serpent in its beak. The sign would indicate they had found their new home. It was believed that the promised eagle was seen at Lake Texcoco. This was where, in 1325 CE, the first buildings of the great city of Tenochtitlán were constructed. It became a major regional trade hub and center of power. When it was founded, Tenochtitlán was one of many independent cities in the Valley of Mexico that were increasingly coming into conflict for resources and power. The rulers of Tenochtitlán forged an alliance with two other cities, Texcoco and Tlacopan. This alliance formed the basis of the Aztec Empire.



In the 1400s and early 1500s CE, Tenochtitlán was one of the largest cities in the world.

Although it had begun as a small island settlement, Tenochtitlán grew into a

flourishing city with a population of hundreds of thousands. The city was designed on a grid plan inspired by the great abandoned city of Teotihuacán. Three causeways (land bridges) linked the main city on the island to the coastline of the lake, and two aqueducts were built to supply fresh water to the city's inhabitants. People used canoes to get around the island city and to travel between the island and the coast.

At the heart of the city was a complex of major pyramid temples. The largest was the Templo Mayor, which was almost two hundred feet high with two shrines at the top. One shrine was dedicated to Tlaloc, the god of rain, and the other was devoted to Huitzilopochtli, the god of the dry season who was believed to have guided the wandering Aztec to find this site. In other parts of the city, people lived in humble lodgings made of mud bricks and reeds. There were also large open spaces used for markets.

The Aztec believed in a pantheon of gods, many of whom were common to other Mesoamerican civilizations. Along with Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec honored the feathered serpent god Quetzalcoatl; Xipe Totec, the god of agriculture; and others. Like the Maya, the Aztec had a calendar system that told them

when to perform certain rituals. They had many rituals, such as weddings and funerals, blessings for the harvest, and requests for good luck. The Aztec also practiced human sacrifice. They believed that the ritual sacrificing of humans would please the gods and keep the sun rising each and every day.

Writers' Corner



Write a business contract for a deal you want to make with a merchant in Tenochtitlán.

The Aztec Military

The Aztec valued skilled soldiers and built up a large fighting force. The Aztec army was not permanent, but every town in the empire had to supply soldiers when called to do so. Young men were trained to use weapons and to fight in units so that when they were called up to serve, they would know what to do. Soldiers from the same village were usually kept together, and these groups formed the building blocks of larger armies. Each soldier was well-equipped with body armor, shields, bows, clubs, spears, and a deadly device called an *atlatl* that could throw darts at high speeds. Some warriors who had been on several campaigns were identified as elite fighters and given special equipment.

Defeated peoples had to accept Aztec rule. Surrender was made formal by the payment of tribute to the Aztec. Conquered soldiers and other prized captives from the war were taken back to Tenochtitlán, where they were sacrificed in a religious ritual. Ties with valued allies were strengthened by marrying the ruling families together.

The Aztec army and the empire as a whole were supported by a sophisticated system of taxation. Officials kept records of what was owed and paid. Merchants had to pay taxes, as did landowners and craftspeople. The Aztec did not have a monetary system, so transactions were carried out by exchanging goods that represented given values, such as feathers, cacao beans, or small pieces of precious metals. Merchants were expected to make contracts to do business, and people who broke these contracts could be punished with imprisonment or slavery.

The Spanish Conquest

The last major ruler of the Aztec was Montezuma. He came to power in 1502 CE, when the Aztec controlled more territory than ever before. Montezuma fought four major wars that expanded the Aztec Empire even more. When not out on a

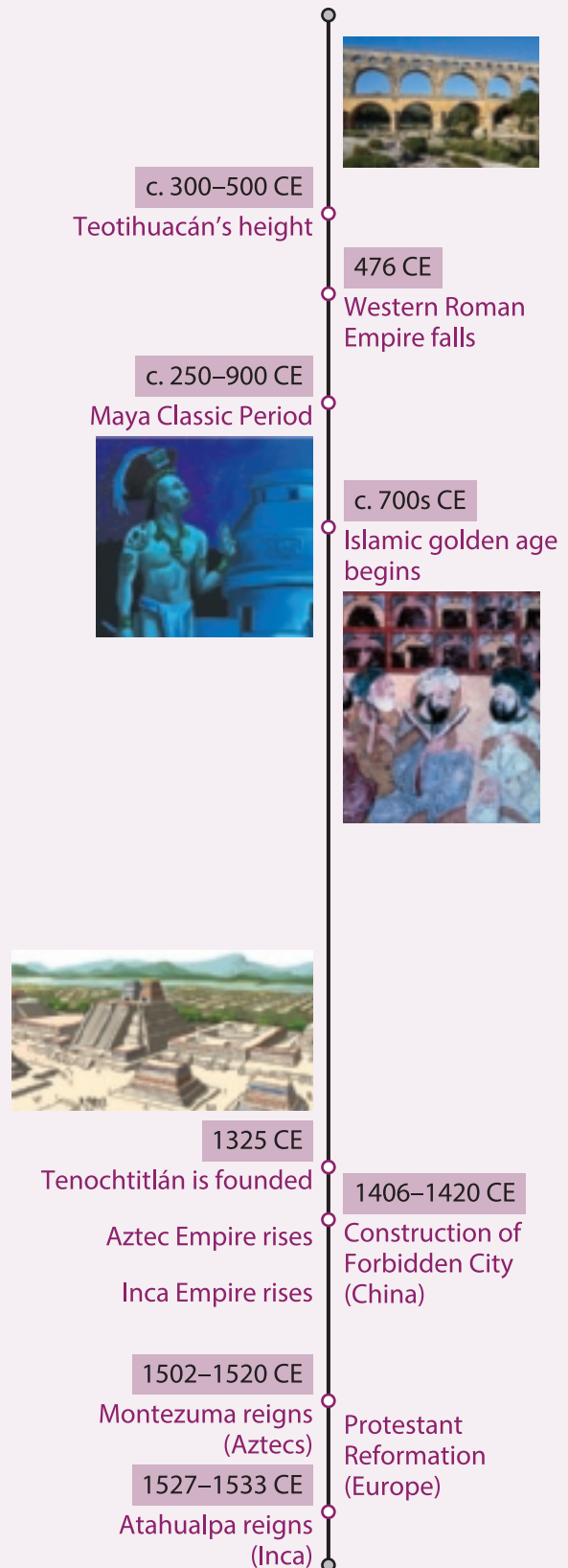
military campaign, Montezuma lived with all the luxuries his vast and rich empire could provide him.

In 1519 CE, the Spanish arrived in Mexico, led by Hernán Cortés. Called *conquistadors*—conquerors—they came to claim land for Spain. They had technologies that were unfamiliar to the Aztec, such as metal armor and gunpowder weapons. Cortés also saw how he could weaken the Aztec by convincing some of their subjects to ally with him against Montezuma. This was a successful strategy, but more effective even than the weapons and alliances the Spanish used were the new diseases they brought. Because diseases such as smallpox were not native to the Americas, the people there had no immune response to protect them from these new germs. It is estimated that diseases introduced by Europeans killed between 60 and 90 percent of the **Indigenous** populations of the Americas.

Vocabulary

indigenous, adj. originally living or existing in a place; native

When Montezuma and Cortés met, after a period of fighting, it seemed at first that they would come to a peaceful agreement.



But then, Cortés ordered his men to take Montezuma hostage and forced the king to submit to the Spanish throne. Some Aztecs decided that Montezuma had given in too quickly and killed him. Cortés then organized his soldiers and his allies to conquer Tenochtitlán. In 1521 CE, the city's defenses failed, and the Spanish and their allies plundered and destroyed it. This was the end of the Aztec Empire. Aztec people still live in Mexico today. Like the Maya and other cultures, the Aztec left a legacy that influenced the societies that came after them.



South America

South America

The world's fourth-largest continent, South America has three major geographical zones. The far western edge of the continent is dominated by the world's longest mountain range, the Andes. The Andes are not just high peaks; the mountains are mixed with plateaus at various elevations. One of these, called the **altiplano**, is in the modern nations of

Peru and Bolivia. This flat region is at an elevation of about twelve thousand feet above sea level. The altiplano is mostly covered with grasses and small bushes that are the main food source for the region's indigenous animals, including llamas and alpacas. These animals were used as sources of wool, fat, food, and labor.

Vocabulary

altiplano, n. a large, high plateau in South America

South America has several major rivers, but it is the Amazon River that creates one of the world's most distinctive geographic and ecological zones. The Amazon is one of the world's two longest rivers. Its river basin includes the modern countries of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, and part of Venezuela. About two-thirds of the Amazon basin is covered by rainforest, a type of extremely thick and diverse forest that occurs in regions with high annual rainfall and a hot, humid climate. The Amazon rainforest is one of the most diverse and rich regions in terms of life anywhere on the planet, home to millions of species.

The third main type of geographic region in South America is the coastal plains. The major coastal plains in South America are in the northeast of Brazil and along the coasts of Peru and Chile on the Pacific coast. Both of these regions have unusually dry climates. The world's driest region, the Atacama Desert in Chile, is in the western coastal plain.



The Inca

The Inca were one of several groups of people who lived in the Andes region. In the late 1300s CE, they began to conquer

their neighbors. Between 1400 and 1533 CE, they established the largest empire in the Americas, controlling a vast amount of territory on the Pacific coast of Latin America from the north of what is now Ecuador to central Chile. The heart of the Inca Empire was the city of Cuzco, in modern Peru. Cuzco is in a valley where several different rivers meet. The rivers and the valley meant that Cuzco's surroundings could be farmed relatively extensively.

The first major ruler of the Inca, Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui, ruled from 1438 to 1471 CE. He conquered the Cuzco valley and then set out to conquer the rest of the Andes. Those the Inca defeated had to pay tribute, in work as well as goods. The Inca rulers used the labor and resources of those they conquered to build a system of infrastructure—in particular, roads and bridges—that stitched together the empire's cities and regions across the often difficult terrain of the Andes.

Inca cities such as Cuzco display the great skill and ingenuity with which the Inca constructed their buildings. The Inca were highly skilled stoneworkers. Almost all Inca buildings were made of stones that were precisely cut and measured and then placed carefully to form walls. A remarkable feature of their building is that the Inca

did not use mortar or cement to bind their blocks together. Instead, the blocks were cut and put together so precisely that they interlocked to create strong structures. This type of construction had the advantage of being very resistant to earthquakes, which are common in the Andes.

In addition to the expansion of Cuzco, Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui also ordered the creation of the great complex at Machu Picchu, in the mountains to the north of Cuzco. The exact purpose of Machu Picchu is debated, but it likely functioned as a royal residence, a fortress, or some combination of these. It appears that Machu Picchu included a shrine to worship the Inca sun god, Inti.



Machu Picchu, in the mountains above Cuzco, Peru

The Inca system of rule was very organized. At the top of Inca society were ten family groups of nobles, who

ruled along with the king. Beneath this layer were another two layers, each with ten more family groups. Under these groups of families existed a layer of administrators. The empire was divided into four parts, with four major governors who commanded local officials. This government ensured that people were counted and taxes collected. Like the Aztec, the Inca had a tax system but no monetary system, so taxes were collected in the form of goods and labor.

The Inca had a somewhat unusual system for storing and communicating information. They used a device called a quipu, which consisted of a wooden bar from which different colored strings were hung. Some quipu had as many as 1,500 strings. Each string could be knotted or woven with other strings, and each way of knotting, weaving, and using different colors could carry a specific meaning.

Think Twice



How were quipus similar to the writing systems of other early civilizations?

Find Out the Facts



Learn more about how quipus were used.



Illustration of a quipu

The Inca imposed their religion on conquered peoples and spread a uniform style of building through their vast empire. They developed a distinctive style of art, characterized by geometric shapes. Some regional influences are seen in Inca art, particularly pottery and textiles. These goods were made and given to Inca rulers as tax payments. Some are identifiable by particular designs that indicate which community produced the artwork. Others use designs found more generally throughout the Inca Empire.

The Inca were not popular with the peoples they conquered. Eventually, they

met a fate similar to that of the Aztec. When Spanish conquerors led by Francisco Pizarro arrived in Inca lands in the 1500s CE, their guns helped power their invasions. They also saw that they could take advantage of the discontent of the people under Inca control by encouraging rebellions and forming alliances. Smallpox and other European diseases also weakened the Inca.

In 1528 CE, the Inca ruler Wayna Qhapaq died of smallpox. In 1532, Pizarro's forces met those of Wayna Qhapaq's son, Atahualpa. Pizarro's men killed thousands of Inca warriors while taking no losses themselves. At first, Pizarro captured and held Atahualpa hostage—and then, when he had received a ransom for Atahualpa's return, he killed him anyway. Pizarro then led his troops to attack Cuzco, and they conquered it in 1533. It took the Spanish some time after Cuzco's fall to conquer all of the Inca's territory because it was so large and the Andes were so difficult to cross. The last Inca ruler was captured and killed by the Spanish in 1572, and the Inca realm was absorbed by the Spanish crown.

Writers' Corner

Write a short story set long ago in one of the civilizations and locations you have learned about.



Chapter 10

Imperial China



A New Period of Unity

After the Qin and Han dynasties, China fell into a period of disunity that lasted several centuries, until the rise of the Sui dynasty in 581 CE. From that point forward, the idea of a Chinese empire persisted, even in times of chaos and crisis.

After the Han dynasty was overthrown in 220 CE, China's government fragmented. China reunited briefly under the Western Jin dynasty but split further after it fell. Four dynasties ruled a region of China south of the Yangzi River, while northern China was ruled by the descendants of Mongolian nomads who had conquered the region. Although north and south were divided politically, they were in close contact culturally. These links, along with increasing trade with India and other neighboring peoples, brought a variety of different cultural influences into China. The southern dynasties maintained

The Big Question

What factors influenced the development of Chinese culture during the imperial period?



The Great Wall of China



religious ideals based on Daoism and Confucianism. Northern rulers, who did not consider themselves Chinese and thus had little interest in Chinese belief systems, turned to Buddhism, which had been introduced to China by travelers from India and elsewhere.

Think Twice



Why might political disunity have helped promote the adoption of new ideas?

North and south were finally reunited by a northern general named Yang Jian. By 581 CE, he controlled the north of China, and he named himself Emperor Wendi, the ruler of a new state called Sui. Wendi gathered a massive army and invaded southern China. By 589 CE, China was united and ruled once again from the old capital, Chang'an.

Because China had lacked a single central government for centuries, Emperor Wendi set about remaking an imperial administration. He removed regional aristocrats from power and set up a new administrative bureaucracy. Some civil servants were selected based on their performance in a series of examinations. This was an early beginning of the idea of meritocracy, or a group of officials who have authority based on proven skills—an

idea that grew in importance in later eras of Chinese history. Under the Sui dynasty, provincial governors could hold office for a maximum of four years. The Sui attempted agricultural reform, trying to protect small farmers from losing their land to wealthy landlords. Late in life, Emperor Wendi fully embraced Buddhism and built a series of Buddhist temples.



Think Twice

Why did the Sui emperor want China to be run by an appointed bureaucracy rather than regional aristocrats?



Writers' Corner

Write a text from the perspective of Emperor Wendi or one of his advisors, explaining to the people of China how your reforms will help them.

Despite their reform efforts and seemingly strong economy, the Sui dynasty did not last very long. Emperor Wendi's son, Emperor Yangdi, was the last Sui emperor. The Sui fall had two main causes: disastrous military campaigns and excessive spending. Sui armies had mounted a series of expensive and

unsuccessful invasions of Korea. These losses cost money and personnel. The Sui also spent resources building palaces and cities for themselves. Rebellions soon followed. Emperor Yangdi was murdered by one of his own officials in 618 CE. In the same year, a rebellious general, Li Yuan, captured the capital, Chang'an. Li Yuan named himself the first emperor of the new Tang dynasty. He became known as Gaozu, a title given to the founder of a dynasty, after his death. The Tang ruled from 618 to 907 CE.



The Tang Era Begins

Gaozu and his son Taizong built on the work begun by the Sui. Gaozu further reformed the imperial administration by dividing the roles of the chief officials and ensuring that each Chinese regional governor could recommend people to serve in the bureaucracy. This continued a system that gave elites access to power, but it allowed local elites to have power, not just one central group of elites. New coins ensured that the money supply in China was reliable and centrally controlled. Gaozu also devised a new legal code. This legal code proved enormously influential

throughout Asia, becoming the foundation for legal reforms in Korea and Japan.

Gaozu and Taizong both acted to limit the spread of Buddhism in China because they felt that it was a foreign religion, but they did not ban it. In fact, they pursued a policy of religious tolerance that allowed Buddhism and a new religion from the West, Christianity, to spread in China.

A Chinese Empress

One of the greatest Tang rulers was also one of the most unusual in Chinese history. Empress Wu Zhao is the only woman to have ruled China as emperor. After Taizong's death, she married Taizong's son, Gaozong, but he suffered from bad health, so she was China's true ruler. Tradition held that women could not be the equal of men, but Wu ignored this tradition. After her husband died, she gave herself the title of empress. She grew powerful as people came to fear and respect her. Wu used blackmail to remove her opponents and incompetent ministers. She sent out military expeditions that conquered the Korean peninsula. She also changed the

education system in China and set up a system of exams to appoint capable military leaders. She directed officials to improve irrigation and create manuals to help farmers learn effective methods. Wu even tried to reform China's writing system by adding new characters.



Wu was ancient China's only empress.

Find Out the Facts

Find out more about Empress Wu and her reign.



Writers' Corner

Using your research on Empress Wu, write a report about her life.



The Tang Golden Age

The successes of the Tang rulers led China into a golden age, primarily during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong in the 700s CE. Xuanzong promoted Daoism because he believed that it encouraged a strong community spirit among the people. He developed programs to build roads, improve the safety of those roads, and support the growth of industries. He also ended the Chinese system of forced conscription into the military, preferring instead to have an army of professional soldiers.

The Tang era was time of great cultural achievements. An enormous statue of the Buddha was carved into the mountain at Leshan. Many works of literature were produced. Two of China's most important poets, Li Bai and Du Fu, rose to fame during this time. New technologies, such as woodblock printing, enabled the spread of written works.



Find Out the Facts

How were early woodblock-printed books made?

Tea also began to play an important role in China under the Tang dynasty.

Tea merchants gained great wealth. This helped spur another important change: the world's first paper money. With so much economic activity, China began to run out of coins. The new "flying money," as it was called, allowed funds to move quickly from one person to the next.



A mural from a royal tomb complex from the Tang period

A number of useful tools were invented or improved upon, including clock mechanisms and agricultural machinery. Gunpowder was actually discovered by accident, by scientists who were seeking something else entirely—the secret to eternal life. These scientists mixed various substances together and learned that a certain mixture produced an explosion. The Chinese first used this discovery to develop fireworks. But other uses, such as in weapons, were clear.

Xuanzong's reign ended with a civil war. In his later life, he became less

interested in governing and allowed others to take over the running of the empire—a responsibility they used to make themselves wealthy. A general in the Chinese army decided that change was needed, and he led his troops in a rebellion that lasted eight years. Xuanzong lost his throne, and the rebel leader was killed. Much of China fell under the control of powerful regional warlords.

This period after the Tang is called the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. The five dynasties ruled the northern half of China, while the south was divided into ten kingdoms. The region around the Yangzi delta, in southeast China, became the wealthiest and most culturally advanced region of the country. The landscape here allowed for productive farming, which provided a great surplus of crops. The region's rivers and streams also allowed the development of more intensive commerce and trade, which brought in money. Meanwhile, the majority of China's military power lay in the north, where China's armies had patrolled the northern **frontier** for centuries. This meant that northern China was militarily strong, while southern China was increasingly rich.



The Song Dynasty

Zhao Kuangyin established the Song dynasty and became known as Emperor Taizu. By 976 CE, he had conquered most of the rest of China's central territories. Taizu reorganized the government and made sure that commanders of the army were rotated regularly to limit their political ambitions. Oversight of the military was given to the **civil service**. Taizu's aim was not only to prevent rebellion but also to limit the power of the military in general. He wanted to put China's government on a stable and peaceful footing after decades of conflicts between rebels and warlords. This effort included reforming the civil service examination system, which became the most important way to choose officials in China and nearby countries for the next ten centuries. Taizu's reforms tried to ensure that candidates were truly selected on the basis of merit and performance. He banned officials from recommending candidates, and he held the final examination at the imperial palace.

Vocabulary

frontier, n. the area at the edge of settled territory

civil service, n. civilian officials who carry out the work of the government

The Song period saw a revival of interest in Confucianism. This was partly due to the increasing influence of Buddhism in China and partly a response to the years of chaos and disunity that preceded the Song. The Neo-Confucians promoted a return to the values and texts of Confucius as a guiding principle not only for people but for politics as well.

China's economy continued to grow under the Song. The increasing use of machinery and advances in agricultural techniques made farming more profitable for landowners. These profits were used to supplement and promote trade. The wealth of Song China also contributed to the development of new technologies, such as the magnetic compass and sternpost ship rudders, as well as the movable-type printing press. Industry in cities allowed for the mass production of weapons and armor.



Find Out the Facts

Find out why the Chinese are considered the inventors of the modern compass.

Economic inequality, however, had long been a problem in China, and it continued under the Song. Most Chinese people remained peasants who worked the land

in very poor circumstances. The Song tried to reform this situation with a program called the New Policies. These rested on the idea that the government needed to stimulate the rural economy by offering low-interest loans to farmers, increasing the amount of money in the economy, and reforming the tax system. The New Policies also created local militias to defend the villages and reformed the examination system to better equip civil servants to understand the law and manage the country.

Think Twice



Why might policies that are good in some ways also be controversial?

The greatest problems for the Song were caused by the increasing power and ambition of China's neighbors. China had, for centuries, been in contact with people beyond their frontiers. Some, like the people of the Korean peninsula, had states that were modeled on the Chinese example. Others were nomads—people who did not live in permanent settlements. One example was the Khitan, a people from Mongolia, who established the Liao dynasty and threatened the Chinese frontier for two centuries. The Liao were eventually defeated, but not by the Song. In 1115 CE, a group called the

Juchen conquered the Liao. Ten years later, the Juchen attacked the Song and drove them out of the north. The Song ruling family abandoned the capital at Kaifeng and moved to a new one at Hangzhou, south of the Yangzi River. The Song emperors still controlled the richest part of China, but they never recovered from the loss of the northern half of their empire.



The Mongols

A man named Temüjin was born in the 1160s CE to nomads who lived on the **steppe** north of China, in the region now called Mongolia. He is now better known as Genghis Khan, a title believed to mean universal ruler, who united the Mongols and began their incredible campaigns of conquest.

Vocabulary

steppe, n. a grassland plain

The Eurasian Steppe extends for five thousand miles from Ukraine in the west to Mongolia in the east. The eastern steppe, where the Mongols lived, is a very harsh land. It is often very cold, and there is very little rainfall. Nevertheless, people have inhabited the steppe for a very long

time. Most of these people are nomads who herd animals such as horses, sheep, yaks, and camels. The Mongols traveled, hunted, and fought from horseback. Horse riding was the essential skill that all Mongols, men and women alike, were expected to learn. They did so from childhood, participating in hunts and in competitions to display skill at horse riding and archery. The Mongols had stirrups, which helped them control their horses and stay atop them. Their saddles allowed great freedom of movement while aiming and firing a bow. Mongol bows were very stiff and heavy but could fire arrows at high speed with incredible accuracy.



This twentieth-century CE painting portrays Mongol horsemen.

Think Twice

What advantages do mounted warriors have over armies of foot soldiers?



Although the Mongols were fearsome warriors, at the time of Temüjin's birth, they were not united. Instead, they were

divided into tribal groups based on family ties. These groups often made temporary alliances and fought with one another.

Temüjin's childhood was a hard one. His father, a tribal leader, was assassinated.

Temüjin was abandoned to fend for himself and then captured by a rival. Bit by bit, battle by battle, Temüjin assembled his own army and defeated local rivals. He showed great generosity to people who voluntarily joined his cause, and he was murderously ruthless to anyone who opposed him.

By 1206 CE, Temüjin had no serious rivals. At a great meeting of the Mongol peoples, the Mongols elected Temüjin as the ruler of all Mongolia. He was now known as Genghis Khan, or the universal ruler. Genghis Khan attempted to solidify the unity of his new nation by creating a law code. He also ordered that the Mongol language be written down. His ambitions, however, were not limited to uniting a new Mongol nation. Beyond the steppe lay a diverse array of rich cultures for the Mongols to conquer.

The Mongols led carefully planned campaigns. Before they launched an invasion, they gathered information from spies, traders, and travelers. They made plans and executed them with precision. They knew they could be defeated in a long, drawn-out fight, so they used small

raiding parties to lure enemy armies into an ambush. The Mongols were also adaptable. When they had to lay siege to cities and castles with strong stone walls, they adapted technologies such as gunpowder to blow up those strongholds. Perhaps most of all, the Mongols knew that their swift attacks and fierce nature could inspire great fear. They were often brutal to the people they defeated. They always left some enemies alive so that they could tell others to fear the Mongols and to surrender rather than fight.

The Mongols launched successful assaults on the cities of northern China. They also attacked the Korean peninsula and lands to the west, in the modern nations of Russia, Ukraine, and Poland. The Mongols swept across Asia and entered eastern Europe. Genghis Khan died in 1227 CE, but his death did not end the Mongol conquests. Genghis Khan's sons each inherited a part of his great empire, and they and their descendants continued their father's empire-building.



The Yuan Dynasty

Genghis Khan's empire was split into smaller states. Each state was rich and powerful, and the richest and most

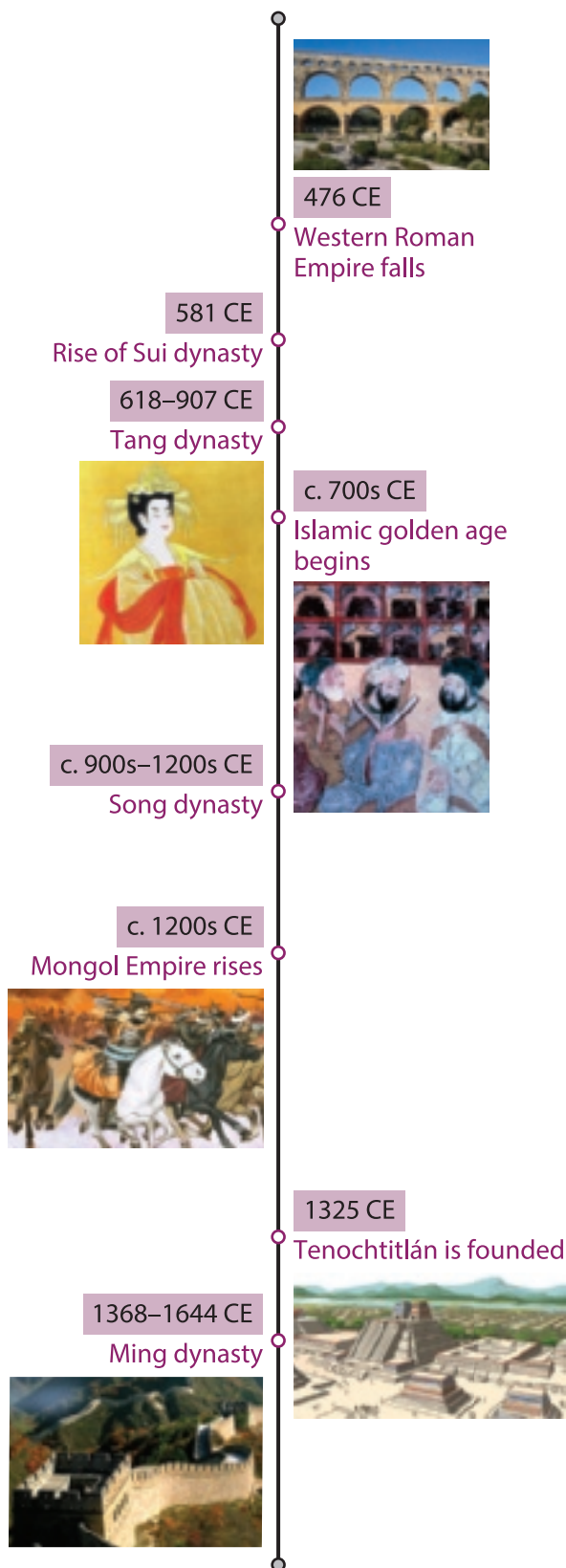
powerful of them all was inherited in 1260 CE by Genghis Khan's grandson Kublai Khan. This was the easternmost state, which included the Mongol homeland of Mongolia and Mongol possessions in Korea and northern China. But the Mongols did not yet control all of China. This was the jewel that Kublai Khan would add to his crown. In a series of attacks between 1260 and 1271 CE, Kublai Khan's forces conquered the Song Empire in south China. Kublai Khan declared himself emperor of China. He established his capital at Beijing, adopted the imperial name Shizu, and gave his dynasty the name Yuan, meaning origin.

Ruling China posed a new challenge for the Mongols. China was a huge country with a sophisticated government, a strong cultural identity, and millions of people. The prestige, wealth, and power of running China would not come simply from forcing the Chinese to pay tribute, and Kublai Khan wanted to be seen as a legitimate emperor. To this end, Kublai Khan and his court adopted Chinese fashions and took over the Chinese system of government. They adapted the government to their own needs, however. Kublai Khan maintained a force of Mongol warriors as the core of his army and his personal bodyguard, and

he eliminated the civil service examination system. Instead, the most important government positions were given to loyal Mongol administrators. The Mongols made it clear throughout the nation that the ethnic Chinese were not the equals of the Mongols, and the southern Chinese were at the bottom of the Yuan social hierarchy. The Mongols kept themselves as a separate ruling group in Chinese society. They kept their own language and traditions, the better to make it clear to the Chinese who was in charge.

The Yuan used their position as the rulers of China to reform and encourage Chinese systems of trade and tribute to get the money and goods they needed for their military campaigns. This expansion of trade made it easier for people from around the world to come to China.

One such visitor to Yuan China was the European adventurer and trader Marco Polo (c. 1254–1324 CE). Polo, his father, and his uncle set off from Venice in Italy, conducting trade as they moved east across the great Mongol Empire until they ended up in Kublai Khan's court. The Polos served the khan in various jobs for a decade and a half before returning to Venice, Marco Polo having been appointed as an ambassador



on behalf of Kublai Khan. Marco Polo wrote of his adventures in a text called *Il milione* (*The million*), which introduced a European audience to the achievements and culture of China and other parts of the Mongol Empire. The tales and descriptions in Polo's book were so extraordinary that many people claimed he had made it all up. Polo insisted that he had only been able to write about half of what he had seen.

Find Out the Facts

Learn more about Marco Polo and his journeys.



The Ming Dynasty

The Yuan dynasty went into decline almost as soon as Kublai Khan died. The main reason was the separate status of Mongol rulers and Chinese subjects. Many Chinese did not accept the legitimacy of the Yuan rulers. They resisted in various ways, from pursuing distinctly Chinese forms of art in defiance of Mongol culture to cooperating with criminals to avoid paying taxes to the Mongol state. The Yuan found it hard to maintain control of China, and their task was made harder by a succession of plagues and famines. Eventually, a large

rebellion arose that defeated the Yuan. In 1368 CE, the rebel leader announced that he was China's new emperor. He took the name Hongwu and established China's new Ming dynasty.

Hongwu was the first ethnically Chinese ruler since the fall of the Song almost a hundred years earlier. He replaced the imperial court rituals of the Mongols with traditional Chinese, Confucian, and Buddhist rituals. He also sought to eliminate the chaos, banditry, rebellion, and other problems that had allowed him to come to power. He crushed internal opponents, got rid of government boards that were meant to limit the power of the emperor, and made loyal family members regional governors. He issued a harsh law code and tightened imperial control of tax collection. Hongwu also limited international trade, viewing it as something that had made China weak and ripe for invasion by foreigners like the Mongols, who had used traders and travelers as spies. Hongwu's measures were successful. He ruled for thirty years and established a dynasty that lasted for centuries.



Find Out the Facts

How did tightening international trade affect China's economy?

Hongwu also valued education. He revived the civil service exam, and schools were created for the many Chinese children who could not afford the private education they needed to attempt the exams. Literacy, literature, and drama exploded in Ming China, helped by the further refinement of the printing press, which accelerated the production of books. **Opera** also became a very popular art form, emerging from forms of theater that had been banned by the Mongols.

Vocabulary

opera, n. a form of dramatic performance involving songs, music, and acting

Art was encouraged but carefully regulated. Ming artists were told to imitate styles that had been popular during the Song dynasty and to favor images from the natural world, such as landscapes and flower patterns. The court created a bureau of design, tasked with ensuring that artists stuck to official, approved styles of expression. The distinctive Chinese style of pottery with blue and white patterns showing natural scenes, painted and glazed onto ceramics, comes from the Ming period. This pottery, as well as other treasures, became increasingly desirable to foreigners, especially Europeans. European nations had set up trading posts and empires

in Southeast Asia and were eager for access to Chinese markets. At the time, China's rulers were able to dictate the terms of trade with the Europeans, and eventually, the Portuguese were allowed to set up a trading post at Macau, on China's southeast coast.

The Ming also tried to ensure that a conquest like that of the Mongols would never happen again. The Great Wall of China that is visible today was mostly built during the Ming dynasty as part of their effort to reinforce China's northern border. The Ming also expanded the capital to form a suitable base for military as well as governmental operations. Within Beijing, the Ming built for themselves a massive new palace complex, suitable for running the great Chinese empire. This complex is known as the Forbidden City. It is called forbidden because only the emperor was allowed to enter all the rooms. Even the imperial family and highest officials had only limited access to the palace. The complex included government offices, residences, the imperial throne room, gardens, and even temples.

The Ming took power at a time when people around the world were becoming more interested in trade, exploration, and colonization. Technological and scientific advances made these efforts easier to carry out. The Ming rulers themselves briefly shared

these interests. An official called Zheng He was put in charge of a great fleet that was sent out to explore, make contact, and collect tribute from around the world. On its first voyage, in 1405 CE, Zheng He's fleet sailed to southern Vietnam, the island of Java, and the coast of India before returning to China. On subsequent voyages, Zheng He went even farther. His fleet made it to the Strait of Hormuz, off the coast of Persia; Mecca, on the Arabian Peninsula; and the coast of Africa. Zheng He's explorations increased Chinese influence and brought back ideas from afar.

The end of Ming rule came as a result of a familiar blend of internal rebellion, government corruption, and weak rule. In 1644 CE, when Chinese rebels seized Beijing, Ming authorities invited a northern nomadic group, the Manchu, to enter China to destroy the rebels. The Manchu agreed and did so, but they did not leave China afterward. Instead, the Manchu remained in control of Beijing, and they established China's final dynasty, the Qing.



China's Last Dynasty: The Qing

Unlike the Mongol Yuan dynasty, the Qing rulers did not set themselves up at the top of a hierarchy. They maintained most of the

Ming system of government but ensured that at least half of the official government positions were filled by Manchus. The Qing worked hard to restore order and stability to China, and their rule was mostly accepted.

Early on, the Qing gained legitimacy by successfully engaging in foreign wars and reforms of the Chinese state. The second Qing emperor, Kangxi, who lived in the late 1600s and early 1700s CE, personally toured his empire and had a direct hand in making sure that works of infrastructure such as the Grand Canal were repaired. He opened four coastal ports to foreign trade, including the major port of Guangzhou. He held debates in the Forbidden City and sponsored a small private school that awarded scholarships to thinkers and artists of exceptional talent from outside the civil service.

Kangxi's scholars produced a dictionary of Chinese characters, a rhyming dictionary, and several encyclopedias. Interested in the world beyond China, Kangxi hired Jesuit missionaries and other Europeans to introduce him to Western ideas, art, and inventions. In return, Kangxi allowed Christian missionaries to work in China.

Another key period of Qing history occurred in the reign of Qianlong, who ruled for a period of sixty-one years, through most of the 1700s CE. These six decades

are considered both the height of Qing civilization and the point at which it began to decline. The province of Xinjiang was added to China's empire, and places such as Myanmar and Vietnam were forced to pay tribute to China. These campaigns enhanced China's ability to extract tribute from its neighbors, but they were also very expensive and put a great strain on the state's finances.

Writers' Corner

As Emperor Kangxi, write a pitch to Chinese scholars about why they should study at your academy and what you hope to gain from it.



Qianlong was also known for both promoting Chinese literature and imposing limits on it. He ordered the creation of collected editions of Chinese philosophy, history, and literature, but at the same time, he also made sure that any texts deemed unfavorable to his rule (or that of the Manchus) were destroyed. Qianlong was one of the last strong rulers of China before the many crises of the 1800s CE. His abdication announcement in 1795 CE made him the longest continuous ruler in Chinese history. The century that followed his death was marked by increasing foreign interference in China's affairs. This interference eventually led to the end of imperial rule in China.

Chapter 11

Civilizations of Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia

The Big Question

What influences shaped East and Southeast Asia?



Civilizations of East Asia

Several early civilizations flourished in the peninsulas and archipelagos of East and Southeast Asia. All were greatly influenced by China but remained independent and developed their own distinct and unique cultures. Their mutual relationships, influences, and rivalries built a great, interconnected story of invention, innovation, war, trade, and art.



Hundreds of Korean Buddha statues made of jade decorate Bohyeon Temple, South Korea.



East Asia and *Southeast Asia* are terms used to refer to an extremely large and varied region that includes parts of China and lands to the north, south, and east of it. Present-day Korea and Japan are typically considered part of East Asia. Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines are part of Southeast Asia. Through trade and conquest, these civilizations eventually became closely linked to China and India and adopted some of the practices of those cultures, including Confucianism and Buddhism. Other parts of this vast region became part of Islamic civilization.

East and Southeast Asia lie in and along the coast of the Pacific Ocean. Because the region is so large, it does not have one definitive climate. East and Southeast Asian land includes numerous peninsulas and archipelagos, many of which are situated in the western curve of the Ring of Fire. This is a belt of volcanoes and frequent earthquakes that stretches in a horseshoe shape up the west coast of the Americas, across the Arctic in the north, and south through the western Pacific Ocean. The tectonic activity in the region can trigger destructive waves called **tsunamis**.

Vocabulary

tsunami, n. a giant wave caused by an earthquake, volcanic eruption, or other destabilizing event



The Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai painted *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* in the 1800s CE.



Find Out the Facts

Find out more details about the Ring of Fire.

In addition to tsunamis, the many coastal areas of East and Southeast Asia also experience **typhoons**, which are whirling storms that form at sea and cause immense destruction when they reach land.

Vocabulary

typhoon, n. a powerful rotating storm with high winds that originates in the Pacific Ocean

Typhoons feature very strong winds, major rainfall, and other hazards that can cause massive damage to property, agriculture, and people's lives. Typhoon season lasts from about May to November.



Ancient Korea

Korea lies on a mountainous peninsula. It generally has warm, wet summers and cold winters. Many early Korean settlements emerged on or near the extensive coastline, which provided access to water, food, and trade. Large-scale

agriculture developed in river valleys and on the relatively limited plains regions. Settlements developed on the Korean peninsula at least six thousand years ago, and it is likely that people were living in the region as early as ten thousand years ago. From about 2000 BCE onward, people began to live in more concentrated farming villages, mostly on hillsides. These Korean settlements were characterized by structures called dolmens (*koindol* or *chisongmyo* in Korean), which are made of massive, heavy stones. More than two hundred thousand of these structures have been found so far, mostly in the southern half of the peninsula. The dolmens are likely markers left at tombs of the dead to commemorate important or wealthy people. This suggests that a societal class structure existed by about 2000 BCE.



The Islands of Japan

Think Twice



Why do monuments like dolmens suggest the existence of an elite social class?

By about 700 BCE, the people of Korea had begun to grow rice as a staple crop. Rice growing was imported from China. People from China and northeast Asia also brought the technology and taste for bronze metalwork to Korea. Koreans in the Bronze Age made weapons like swords, axes, and spearheads as well as some ornaments from bronze. By the 300s BCE, bronze metalwork had given way to iron. Throughout every era, Koreans made jewelry from precious stones like jade, a green mineral, and obsidian, a volcanic glass with a deep black color. Pottery was also common. Pottery and jewelry artifacts indicate that early Koreans traded with their neighbors in Japan and China.

From the 700s to the 400s BCE, some Korean towns were united into the first complex state in the peninsula, Gojoseon. The heart of Gojoseon was the region around the Taedong and Liao Rivers. Chinese influences, and probably Chinese people themselves, came to Gojoseon from the neighboring Chinese state of Yan.

In 108 BCE, the north of Korea was conquered by the Han dynasty of China. After that, during a time that is somewhat confusingly referred to as Korea's Three Kingdoms period (57 BCE–668 CE), four rival states began to emerge on the peninsula. The northern part, formerly the state of Gojoseon, became the kingdom of Goguryeo (or Koguryo). In the southern part of Korea were the kingdoms of Baekje and Silla as well as a **confederation** of city-states collectively known as Gaya. These four states made war and shifting alliances with each other, and with China and Japan, until the 700s CE.

Vocabulary

confederation, n. a group of independent kingdoms or states that work together

Life for most people in this period was defined by their societal class. The kingdom of Silla developed the bone rank system, a rigid social structure based on ancestry that determined an individual's rank in the social and political order. Most aspects of people's lives were dictated by their place in the system. Only people who had ancestry from the highest class could hold official roles in the government or military. The

system also determined tax status and job opportunities, who one could marry, housing, and even details like what kind of architectural features a person's house could have. People in the lowest ranks of society, including enslaved people (often those convicted of crimes or prisoners of war), worked as farmers and soldiers.

Although the Three Kingdoms period was dominated by warfare between the rival states, it was also a period in which the governments, art, and culture of Korea grew in sophistication. Remarkable wall paintings, often seen on tombs, were made in Goguryeo. Baekje likely also produced a large amount of high-quality art, but much of it was destroyed in war. It was also in this period that Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism began to be imported to Korea from neighboring China. Buddhism even became the official state religion of the Korean kingdoms.

After centuries of conflict, Korea was finally unified by the Silla kingdom in the late 600s CE. The Silla triumphed over their neighbors partly because they received aid from the Chinese Tang dynasty. The new, unified Korean dynasty was called the Unified Silla kingdom. It eventually secured its independence from China by turning on its former patrons, the Tang

dynasty, and defeating Chinese armies in 675 and 676 CE.

The Unified Silla monarchs were drawn from the Kim clan. To ensure that the nobles of their defeated former rivals couldn't rebel against them, they relocated other aristocrats to new regions where they did not have family or personal connections or an established power base. The Silla also reorganized their kingdom into nine provinces, each run by a governor appointed by the king. During this period, Buddhism began to influence Korean art and architecture. Silla rulers

promoted Buddhism by building and expanding Buddhist temples.

The Unified Silla kingdom's decline in the 900s CE may have been fueled by the strict social hierarchy enforced by the bone rank system. The rigid system prohibited Silla rulers from responding to social changes, such as aristocrats demanding more chances for advancement or commoners angered by excessive taxes.

Find Out the Facts

Read more about how the bone rank system worked.



Writers' Corner

Write a paragraph from the perspective of someone living under the bone rank system. Explain the problems it has caused you and the system you would prefer to replace it.



A gold Buddha statue from the Unified Silla kingdom

Silla rule had collapsed by 935 CE and was replaced by the Goryeo (or Koryo) dynasty, which ruled until the end of the 1300s CE. The Goryeo developed a more organized and centralized system of government. They helped encourage trade by exporting valuable goods to China in exchange for a great number of Chinese goods like silk, tea, books, and other valuables. The Goryeo supported this trade by minting their own coins, modeled on Chinese types, from

iron and copper. Art and culture flourished as artisans became skilled in ceramics, printmaking, and papermaking. Women had more independence than in many other societies of the time. The maternal line of a family was considered as important as the paternal line. Women could inherit money and property, divorce, and maintain custody of children. Eventually, the Goryeo were weakened by attacks from the Mongols, and their rule ended around 1392 CE.



Think Twice

What factors might have caused Korean culture to flourish in the Goryeo period?



Ancient Japan

Japan is an archipelago consisting of four large islands and more than 3,500 smaller islands. Mount Fuji, on the island of Honshu, is an active volcano and the tallest mountain in Japan at 12,830 feet tall. Humans first came to Japan from mainland Asia around thirty thousand years ago, using land bridges that connected the islands to mainland Asia and were subsequently submerged in the ocean. Early groups mostly hunted and fished. Eventually, people

began cultivating rice, which was likely introduced from Korea.

The Yayoi period began in 300 BCE, when people in Japan began to grow more rice and vegetables after the introduction of irrigation systems, which provided water for rice paddies, and granaries, which were used to store the rice. As the settlements of the Yayoi period grew, they became regional hubs for trade and exchange. The Yayoi people were divided among about one hundred clans who had mutual rivalries and alliances. They competed for status, land, and resources. It was also in the Yayoi period that contact with other places, especially China, began to intensify. Visitors from China in 240 CE are said to have been greeted in Japan by a great female ruler they called Himiko, whom they described as a powerful magician who had made herself a great ruler through success in warfare.

The Kofun period lasted from 250 to 538 CE. It takes its name from the distinctive burial mounds in which people during this time interred their dead. The **material culture** of

Vocabulary

material culture, n. the objects made and used in a society, including tools, art, buildings, clothing, toys, and other goods

this period shows advances in sophistication compared to earlier periods in Japanese history, especially in the quality of pottery.

The Kofun period also saw the development of a new religion. Shinto, which means the way of the gods, is the oldest religion in Japan. According to Shinto beliefs, the world and all its phenomena are associated with thousands of gods and spirits who are known as *kami*. *Kami* are not a single category; *kami* can refer to gods, spirits, lesser gods, monsters, ghosts, and even some particularly notable humans. There are around eight million *kami*. The most important goddess in Shinto, however, is Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun, who rules over the realm of the *kami*. Initially, Shinto practice involved respecting and worshipping the *kami* found in nature. Over time, dedicated shrines, temples, priests, and monks arose to guide Shinto religious practices. Shinto temples are marked by large, bright red gates called *torii*, which mark the boundary between the everyday world and the sacred space of the shrine.



Find Out the Facts

How has the symbolism of the sun been used throughout Japanese history?



The Shinto shrine of Kusado Jinja in Fukuyama, Japan

The tombs and shrines of the Kofun period are evidence of the Japanese aristocracy's rise in power and wealth. One clan in particular, the Yamato, seems to have established power in the regions around present-day Kyoto, Nara, and Osaka. The power of the Yamato and their supporters was cemented and expressed by their role in performing major rituals to bless people and appease the *kami*. As the Yamato grew in power, they also established more consistent contacts with neighboring Korea and China. In exchange for gifts of tribute sent to China (through

Korea), the Japanese received immigrants who brought with them particular skills and cultural forms that the Japanese adopted and innovated on. One of the most momentous products of this cultural exchange was the introduction to Japan of the Chinese writing system and Chinese texts, which form the basis of the writing system still used in Japan today.

The Yamato were supported by neighboring clans; other clans ruled other parts of Japan. Clans were family groups that resembled a small local government or state, similar to a small feudal kingdom or **fiefdom**. These clans would persist for a long time in Japanese history.

Vocabulary

fiefdom, n. a particular territory ruled by and passed down within a family

Imperial Japan

Although Japanese legends say that the first emperors date back as far as the 700s BCE, the first ruler of Japan for which there is historical evidence is Emperor Kimmei, who ruled between 539 and 571 CE. This was the beginning of the

Asuka period, which was named after the capital city from which the emperor ruled. Japanese emperors were believed to be direct descendants of the sun goddess Amaterasu. Treated as gods, they were the heads of the Shinto religion as well as the rulers of the Japanese people. Although the title of emperor was inherited by male descendants, there were several female emperors.



Emperor Kammu, the fiftieth emperor of Japan, ruled from 781 to 806 CE.

The rise of the emperors coincided with the growth of a more complex Japanese government that was heavily influenced

by Chinese ideas and cultural forms. These influences included the concept of a powerful emperor and a well-organized **bureaucratic** government. One of the most important reformers in the Asuka period was Prince Shōtoku, who ruled as a regent when political machinations put a woman, Empress Suiko, on the throne. Shōtoku supported the spread of Buddhism and Chinese learning in Japan. He also set up a more formal structure for the Japanese government. Called the cap system, it designated an official's status and rank by the color of hat they wore. Shōtoku's reforms also established that only the emperor had the right to collect taxes, which strengthened the power of the central government.

Vocabulary

bureaucratic, adj. based on the formal organization of government and offices held by appointed officials

Emperors ruled from the city of Nara from 710 to 794 CE, promoting the arts and the construction of large wooden Buddhist and Shinto temples. Emperor Shomu, who ruled from 724 to 749 CE, established a Buddhist temple in every province of Japan. The project proved

ruinously expensive and caused great complaints about taxation. Interestingly, Buddhism and Shinto were viewed as compatible religions, and emperors' support of Buddhism did not change their role as the head of the Shinto faith. As with the construction of Buddhist temples, the royal court continued to promote the construction of major Shinto shrines.

The Heian period marked the creation of a major center of imperial rule at the city of Heian-kyō, now called Kyoto. Kyoto means the capital, and the city was home to the imperial court for centuries after it was established in 794 CE. Kyoto imitated Chinese capitals and included not only the imperial palace but also several major shrines, gardens, government offices, and public walkways.

Japan under the Heian government had a population of seven million people. The government's increasing complexity and power did not actually ensure a positive outcome for the majority of the people. One example was the practice of handing out public lands to people at regular intervals, which led to a small number of Japanese families owning more and more of the country's farmland. By the 1200s CE, about half of all farmland was owned by private landlords, who grew rich off their

landholdings partly because they were given exemptions from taxes they were supposed to pay to the imperial court. As the wealth of these landlords increased, so did their power. Meanwhile, the majority of common people had to suffer with little money, little land, and no power. As the powerful families exercised more of their power, they ultimately diminished the authority of the emperor.

The Heian nobility were behind several major cultural achievements, including the establishment of a Japanese writing system that was used to compose works of poetry, diaries, and the text considered to be the world's first novel, *The Tale of Genji* (written around 1020 CE). *The Tale of Genji* is a story about Prince Genji and his adventures, especially his romantic encounters. The author of the novel was Murasaki Shikibu, a woman who was a member of the Fujiwara clan and the daughter of a governor. Murasaki Shikibu lived in the imperial court, and her novel is filled with details and observations about the Heian court and what the Japanese nobility believed about life, its struggles, and its triumphs. Women like Murasaki Shikibu were educated and trained to play music and compose poetry, partly so that they could be entertaining companions

(and potential brides) for the emperor. As a result, a lot of Heian court literature and artwork was produced by aristocratic women.



The Shogun and the Samurai

The concentration of wealth and power in the hands of private landlords during the Heian period produced a social change that had consequences for Japan's government and society for centuries to come.

Before the Heian period, the emperor could call upon an army that was composed of people who were **conscripted** to serve. This system ended in 792 CE. As the regional landlords grew in power and wealth, they raised private armies of warriors to serve their interests and protect their lands. These warriors were referred to by a word that originally meant simply attendant or servant: *samurai*. Samurai were professional warriors who were bound to serve the regional lords, called *daimyo*, by

Vocabulary

conscript, v. to oblige or force to enter military service

oaths they swore to their lord's service in return for food and lodging. Powerful and important samurai were also allowed to own and manage castles and fortifications to defend their lord's territories. Unlike most people in Japan, this special status meant that samurai had the money and the support needed to train and fight effectively. They learned how to fight with spears, bows, and swords; how to ride

and care for horses; and how to buy and maintain well-made weapons and armor. The daimyo could also force peasants to fight in their armies, but in general, these armies were made up of poor, badly trained, and poorly equipped men.

Writers' Corner

Why is access to a good diet so important for a class of warriors?



This painting imagines Minamoto Yoritomo's training at the age of thirteen.

The samurai didn't just protect their daimyo's land. They also waged war against rival daimyo. Many of Japan's daimyo were descendants of the imperial family. By the twelfth century CE, many of the most powerful daimyo had a claim to the throne. They fought a great war to see which of them could control the emperor and Japan's government. The Genpei War (1180–85 CE) was fought between backers of the powerful Taira and Minamoto families. After five years of fighting that included massive battles punctuated by natural disasters, the Minamoto family and their supporters were triumphant over their rivals. To cement his victory, the leader of the Minamoto faction, Minamoto Yoritomo, declared himself *shogun*. *Shogun* was

a military title from ancient Japan that was usually given to the leader of an army sent out on a specific campaign. Yoritomo's shogunate, however, was more like a military dictatorship. As the real central government, the shogunate (or *bakufu*) was in charge of policy making and implementation. The emperor became a figurehead and was relegated to his ceremonial and religious duties. The daimyo had to follow the commands of the shogun, who appointed his own regional governors and administrative officials.

The samurai developed their own code of ethics and cultural practices that helped bind them together as a class and offered a set of justifications and rituals for their military role. This is known as *bushido*, the way of the warrior. Bushido was not a fixed set of ideas, and it varied across time. It took a lot of influences from Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism, a form of meditative Buddhist practice. It also incorporated Confucian ideals and the obsessions and skills of a professional warrior, such as bravery, skill at arms, and respect for fellow warriors.

Early samurai were expected to shout their name and their deeds at their opponents during battle as a kind of announcement

of how honorable and skilled they were. Eventually, samurai took to inscribing these statements on their banners. By the 1500s CE, wealthy samurai owned specially made suits of armor that included lavish decorations like helmet crests and masks fashioned in the image of monsters. This allowed them and their skills to be easily recognized.

At the heart of bushido was the idea that the samurai owed their daimyo their absolute loyalty—a loyalty that would override any other duty, including that of a son to his parents. Samurai were meant to uphold their reputations as noble and respectable warriors throughout their lives. Samurai who wanted to display the utmost loyalty to their lord took their own lives in a ritual act of suicide called *seppuku*. Dishonorable samurai and members of a losing faction might die this way also.

Women were not expected to serve as warriors, but some noblewomen received training in the use of weapons. The wife of a lord would sometimes take command of a castle's defenses if the lord was away.

Writers' Corner

Write a short story from the point of view of a samurai.



Minamoto's shogunate is known as the Kamakura period. It lasted from 1192 to 1333 CE. The shogunate was a product of the rising warrior landlord class, whose rituals and priorities were reflected in the period's culture. Zen Buddhism appealed to and was promoted by the samurai under the shogunate because it was a very stripped-down, fundamental practice that focused on meditation, simplicity, and straightforward action in the present moment. Distinctive Japanese cultural rituals like the tea ceremony and ink-brush calligraphy were also developed in this period by samurai who wanted to express their values and beliefs. The Kamakura period also saw improvements in Japanese infrastructure, namely roads, and an increase in trade with China that led to the introduction of a strain of rice that was more resilient and produced more reliable yields.



Find Out the Facts

What does the traditional Japanese tea ceremony involve?



The Mongols and Dynastic Changes

As with China, Korea's and Japan's histories were shaped by the great invasions of the Mongols, a nomadic people from the

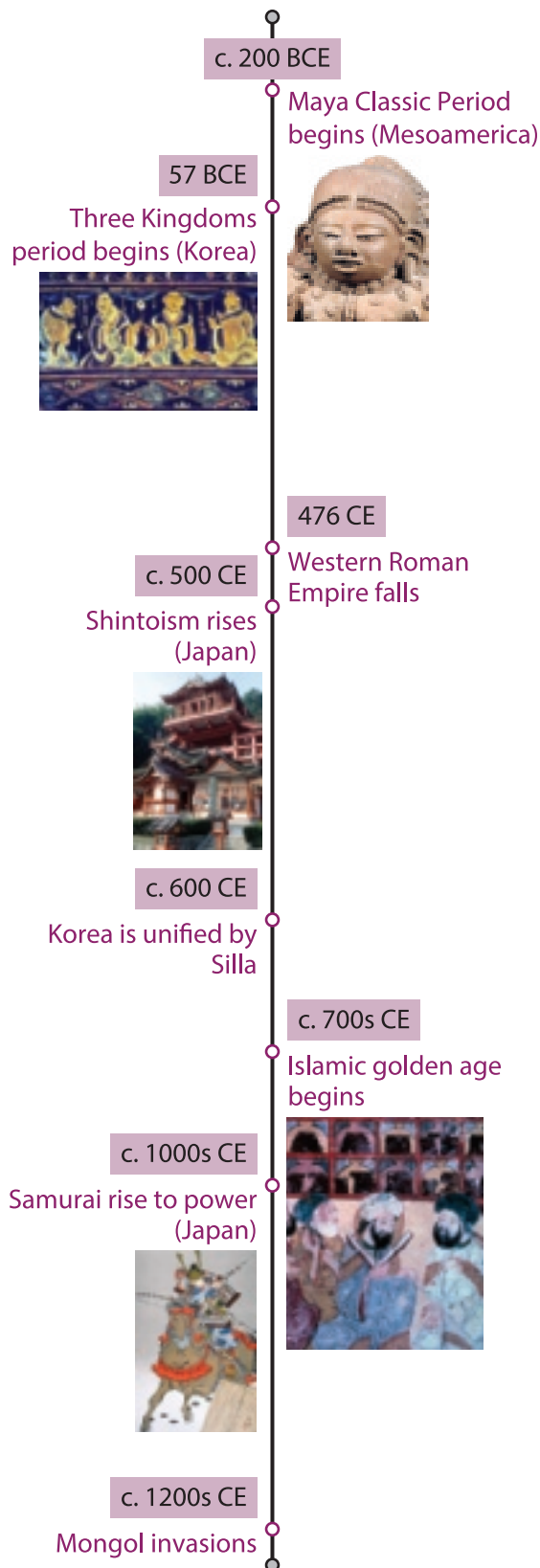
land to the north of China. Mongol leader Genghis Khan came to power in 1206 CE. Within five years, the Mongols had conquered areas of northern China and had begun attacking the Goryeo dynasty of Korea. Led by Genghis Khan's son Ögödei Khan, the Mongols' attacks weakened the Goryeo, forcing them to move their capital to an island in 1231 CE. Eventually, the Korean people, who had been left behind to face the Mongol attacks while the government sat in isolation on their island, had enough. They rebelled and forced their king to make peace with the Mongols. One condition attached to the peace was that Korea had to supply the Mongols with ships, which would be used to attack their next target: Japan.

Writers' Corner

Imagine you are a commoner in Korea during the waves of Mongol attacks. Write a speech calling on others to persuade your leaders to accept the Mongols' conditions for peace.



The Mongols, who now ruled a huge empire that included China, Korea, and many other regions, attempted to invade Japan in 1274 and 1281 CE. The Mongol ruler, Kublai Khan, sent diplomats to Japan



demanding tribute. The Japanese ignored the diplomats, and the Mongols invaded in 1274. The Japanese successfully resisted the invaders until the Mongols launched a second invasion in 1281. This time, the Mongols pushed deeper into Japan with an even larger army. The Japanese received a sudden stroke of luck when a typhoon smashed into the bay where the Mongol fleet was anchored, killing perhaps half of the entire invading army. The Japanese believed that the wind had been sent by Hachiman, the Shinto god of war, to whom they had prayed for deliverance. The typhoon was called the *kamikaze*, or the divine wind.

Japan had avoided conquest by the Mongols, but its reaction to the invasion still managed to destabilize the Kamakura shogunate. The shogun worried that the Mongols would invade again. As a result, he kept his armies on full alert. The long years of defensive preparation damaged the economy, which exhausted the shogun's ability to pay for soldiers. The Mongols did not attack again, but an already damaged Japan became even more unstable.

Think Twice

Why were the Japanese worried they would be invaded again?



The Mongol Empire weakened after Kublai Khan's death, and a new dynasty rose to power in Korea. The Joseon (or Choson) dynasty lasted from 1392 CE until 1910. Its founder, Yi Song-Gye, was a general in Goryeo when the Ming dynasty took power in China in 1368 CE. At the time, the elites of Goryeo were split. Some wanted to support the new Ming dynasty; others wanted to support the Mongol rulers. Yi, who supported the Ming, defeated his rivals and made himself the new king of Korea. He set up a new capital where the modern city of Seoul is now. Yi's reforms included redistribution of land to give a wider array of people a share in the new kingdom. He also strengthened ties to China by replacing the official state religion of Buddhism with Confucianism. Shoguns continued to reign in Japan, even though the central government had little power outside of Kyoto and the surrounding areas. Eventually, the shoguns' authority diminished as the power and independence of the regional daimyo grew. Some Japanese villages began to organize and govern themselves. Many of these communities were guided by Buddhist principles. Because people did not have to pay taxes to the central government, which did not have the

ability to collect them, they were wealthier than many Japanese peasants of the past.

Power struggles between regional rulers became widespread over time, and Japan entered the Warring States period (1467–1615 CE), a period of ongoing civil war. This era of instability coincided with Japan's first European contact. In 1543 CE, Portuguese sailors were aboard a Chinese ship that ran aground in western Japan. The sailors brought with them the first firearms to reach the island. Christianity also came to Japan through trade with the Portuguese.

The Tokugawa clan took power in the early 1600s CE and ruled from the city of Edo (present-day Tokyo). The Tokugawa shogunate (also called the Edo shogunate) used its military might to restore power to the central government. These shoguns went on to oversee a period of two and half centuries of order and growing prosperity. However, they also closed off Japan to the rest of the world. Christian missionaries were banned, as was most trade with Westerners. Japanese agriculture expanded during this period, and so did manufacturing and internal trade, which prompted the growth of the cities of Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto.



Southeast Asia

To the south of China, Korea, and Japan lies Southeast Asia. This region is characterized by numerous peninsulas and archipelagos, mountainous areas, and fertile river valleys. Multiple ethnic groups emerged in this region, which was fairly isolated due to its distance from other parts of Asia and mountain chains that deterred travel. However, by 100 CE, Indian traders had established links to Southeast Asia and introduced Hinduism to the region.



Southeast Asia

The modern country of Vietnam is located on the Indochinese Peninsula. The Viet people rose to prominence around 200 BCE. China's Han and Tang dynasties also held sway in the region, but the Viet eventually defeated Chinese forces in 938 CE. The independent state of Dai Viet that formed was greatly influenced by Chinese culture. Confucianism was the official teaching, and the government was modeled on China's well-organized bureaucracy.

In what is now Cambodia, the Khmer ethnic group grew strong and built an extensive empire. Hinduism and Buddhism, which had spread from India, prevailed in this civilization. The Khmer were wealthy and created impressive buildings that reflected both the might

Find Out the Facts



Learn more about Angkor Wat.



Think Twice

How do you think regional geography influenced the civilization of Southeast Asia?

Writers' Corner

Using your research, write a visitor's guide for Angkor Wat.



of the Khmer and their close ties to India. One of their best-known buildings, Angkor Wat, was constructed in the 1100s CE. A huge complex, it served as a temple and a royal tomb and included an observatory for studying the heavens.



Angkor Wat is richly decorated with elaborate sculptures.

The Khmer Empire ended after Angkor, its capital, was captured by Thai people in 1432 CE. The Thai ethnic group originated from farther north on the peninsula, near the border with China, and eventually migrated and settled in the area that is present-day Thailand. Buddhist monks from India introduced Buddhism to the region, which already had a Hindu presence.

Around 1350 CE, a Thai kingdom called Ayutthaya rose to power. Its capital was where Bangkok, Thailand's modern capital, is now located. The Ayutthaya kingdom ruled over a large area of Southeast Asia for four centuries. It became a center of Buddhist learning as well as a hub of trade.

The Malay people emerged in the Malay Peninsula and surrounding islands, where the modern country of Indonesia now exists. The Malay eventually ruled over the islands of Java and Sumatra and benefited from the trade that passed through the straits around these islands. By the 800s CE, Muslim traders and missionaries had brought Islam to parts of Southeast Asia. From that point on, the islands of Indonesia became an important part of the Muslim world.

China and India continued to influence Southeast Asia, but the peoples in this area of the world adapted many of the practices that came from their neighbors and made them their own. Although the vast region encompassing East and Southeast Asia became more interconnected over time and eventually developed some ties with the West, each civilization continued to develop as a distinct society with its own identity, culture, and practices.

Chapter 12

Europe and Russia in the Middle Ages



What Were the Middle Ages?

The Middle Ages were ten centuries in Europe that followed the fall of the Western Roman Empire. It was an interesting time filled with castles, beautiful churches, knights and ladies, artisans, and peasants. It introduced inventions such as the mechanical clock, the printing press, and new types of governments and trade.

Also called the medieval period, the Middle Ages lasted from about 500 CE to 1500 CE.

The term *Middle Ages* designates an era of European history between the classical period of ancient Greece and Rome and the Renaissance. Because Renaissance artists and thinkers saw themselves as rediscovering and connecting to the ideas and beliefs of the classical era, they viewed the years between the classical period and the Renaissance as a time of backwardness and decay.

The Big Question

What ideas and practices characterized the Middle Ages?



Conwy Castle in Wales



That's why they called this period the Middle Ages.

Modern historians recognize the tremendous advances, inventions, and developments that were brought to life during this period. They generally break the Middle Ages into three periods: the early Middle Ages (500–1000 CE), the High Middle Ages (1000–1300 CE), and the late Middle Ages (1300–1500 CE).

Think Twice



Why is it important to understand who coined the term *Middle Ages*?

Several important groups shaped medieval Europe, including the aristocracy; the commons, which included the middle class and the peasantry; and the Church. The aristocracy originated from Roman nobles or the warriors who were followers of a particular king. Aristocratic status was hereditary, although very occasionally non-nobles moved into the aristocracy. This group held most of the land throughout Europe and virtually all military and political power.

The commons included everyone who was not aristocratic. Commoners could be wealthy merchants, extremely poor landless vagabonds, or anyone in between. Commoners in the middle class generally

worked a trade and lived in a free town—that is, a town not under the control of a lord. Craftspeople, merchants, traders, and bankers were middle class. The size of this group had increased enough by the High Middle Ages to be perceived as a distinct class in society, separate from the rest of the commons.



Early Middle Ages

The Roman Empire established many aspects of social structure and order, such as unified laws, trade, and an organized military. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, these disappeared, and society had to find a way to survive. By the late Roman Empire, many people had settled on great estates owned by nobles who had military training and were able to protect them.

Without the Roman army, society fractured into more localized structures. There was more crime and lawlessness. Cities declined in size, and many smaller towns disappeared altogether. Literacy declined throughout Europe from around 500 to 700 CE. People who could not read books took less care of them, so many of the existing books were lost or destroyed—eaten by insects or rodents, allowed to get damp and rot, or

ripped up to use for other purposes. Long-distance trade, which had thrived under the Roman Empire, disappeared. There was no longer much contact between regions of Europe and even less between Europe and the Middle East, North Africa, or Asia.

Groups such as the Alemanni, Franks, Angles, Saxons, Vandals, Visigoths, and others began to migrate into the empire's territory in the third century CE. They established their own regional cultures, and some even formed their own kingdoms. In 496 CE, the Franks conquered the Alemanni and became the dominant new kingdom in Europe.

The Church in Europe

With the decline of the Western Roman Empire, the only European-wide system was the Christian Church, which was referred to as the Church. After Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 380 CE, the Church organized itself with a structure similar to that of the old Roman government. Regional headquarters were located in major cities; bishops oversaw all the churches in a region. Any church where there was a bishop was called a cathedral. The most important bishop within the

hierarchy of the Church was the bishop of Rome, better known as the pope. The pope oversaw all Christianity in Europe. In the sixth and seventh centuries, most European cities had Christian churches. In the countryside, Christianity was still largely unknown. Religious beliefs were numerous and varied, spanning everything from regional practices to paganism. These differences began to disappear with the rise of monasticism in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Monasticism is a religious practice that involves a group (rather than one person) dedicated to living according to spiritual beliefs. People settled together in a community, often in a remote area, to live simple lives of prayer and contemplation. They usually shunned material goods and avoided luxuries, wore basic clothing, ate plain foods, and lived in simple housing. Members of these groups, who were often men, were called monks. Separate groups of women formed later. Those women were called nuns.

Members of monastic communities found that in a world where it was difficult for individuals to survive, they thrived by helping each other, working together, and sharing possessions. Monasteries, where monks lived and studied, also became repositories of books and centers of



This fifteenth-century CE Italian painting shows monks studying.

learning in an era when schools were rare and universities did not yet exist in Europe.

Men often joined monasteries to become educated, for safety, or for spiritual reasons. Most monasteries followed a set of rules that gave guidance for how the monastery should operate and how monks should live their daily lives. These rules often specified what clothing should be worn, what food should be eaten, and when activities should take place. The rules also meant that monasteries became centers of stability in medieval Europe.

Writers' Corner

Write a short story set in medieval Europe in which the main character explains to their family why they want to join a monastic community.



They provided an orderly, educated, economically successful life. Monasteries probably provided the best living standards in all of medieval Europe, even better than the aristocracy attained.

Charlemagne

In the eighth century CE, the kingdom of the Franks was one of the strongest in Europe. One of its kings rose to such power that he became known as Charles the Great, or Charlemagne. When Charlemagne first came to the throne, Europe was fractured into many small kingdoms. The overall population of Europe was low, the economy was almost entirely agricultural and localized, and few people were literate. Charlemagne himself

never learned to read, but he recognized that books were important. He brought scholars from all over Europe to his court at Aachen, in present-day Germany, and ordered them to find and make copies of books. This helped monastic libraries grow from small collections to hundreds of titles.

Charlemagne also encouraged a new form of script writing that was clear and easy to read. It is the basis for modern printing type. People began to transition from using papyrus scrolls to books, which led to an increase in the production of beautifully decorated books called illuminated manuscripts. Artists would add pictures or elaborate decorations in an array of colors, including silver and gold, which made the illustrations shine and gleam.

Charlemagne's Empire



Much of Charlemagne's influence came from his very successful conquests of nearly all surrounding territories. He would ensure that his army was larger than the enemy's, that they were better equipped and supplied. His soldiers frightened the enemy with large, dragon-like pennants carried on lances, which were stuffed with flammable material and lit on fire. His tactics worked so well that Charlemagne's territory eventually included most of the western half of the old Roman Empire.

Charlemagne went to Rome to have his son baptized by the pope in 800 CE. According to legend, the pope surprised Charlemagne by crowning him emperor. From then on, Charlemagne was known as the emperor of the Romans. He expanded his territory and built up the intellectual, political, and military institutions. Although he did not quite restore the level of organization that had existed under the Roman Empire, he brought Europe into a new period of greater unity and stronger institutions.

Charlemagne's son Louis took power after Charlemagne's death in 814 CE. Eventually, the empire was divided between Charlemagne's grandsons Lothair and Charles. Their territories eventually become the lands of Germany and France.

Europe was wracked by attacks from the Franks during Charlemagne's reign, but Charlemagne's military might have kept the outsiders at bay. After his death, Europe once again descended into regional governance and saw a decline in population, literacy, and long-distance trade.



High Middle Ages

A new period of greater calm began in Europe around 1000 CE. Attacks from the outside subsided, and warmer weather increased crop yields. Many regions in Europe doubled in population, and overall life expectancy increased. New towns were established, and existing ones were expanded. All of this resulted in the growth of the Church's influence and of church buildings themselves. Bigger populations and economies also increased the need for governments to coordinate this growth and expansion. By 1000 CE, all these changes had sparked the need for a revised social, political, and administrative structure.

Feudalism

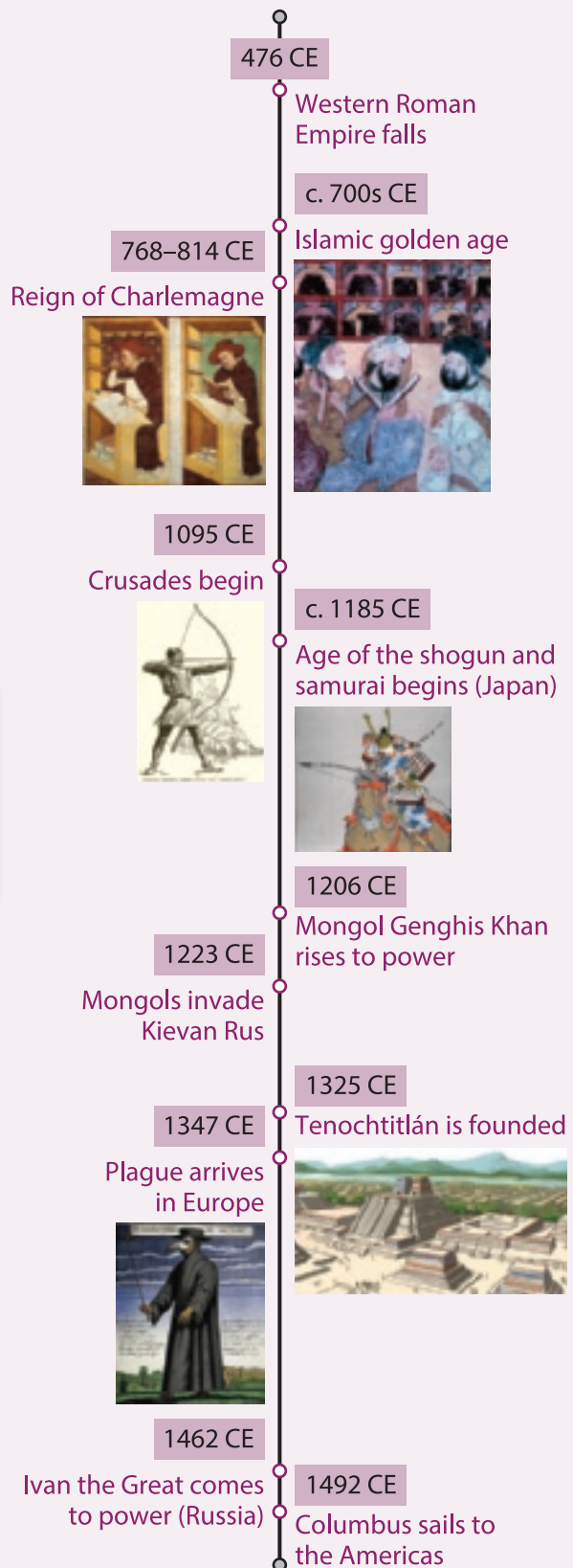
The High Middle Ages saw the development of an organized feudal system. European feudalism changed over time, shaping much of medieval society

and evolving into a complex hierarchy dominated by royalty and nobles. Kings and other aristocrats were called lords. They granted parcels of land called fiefs to nobles who fought for them. These nobles also took an oath to fight for their lord whenever called upon. In return, the lord promised to protect the noble, called a **vassal**, if needed. This bond of loyalty was a defining feature of feudalism. A duke could be a vassal to a king, but the duke could also be a lord to an earl, a noble of lesser status. The earl would be a vassal to the duke.

Vocabulary

vassal, n. a person who receives land from a lord and in return promises to fight for the lord

The tie between lord and vassal was a political and military bond that also had legal, social, economic, and religious implications. To break the bond in either direction would bring penalties, especially for the vassal. A vassal who ignored a call to fight for their lord could face legal action and social rejection. They could also face economic ruin. The vassal's only source of income was the land that had been granted by the lord, and it could easily be taken away. Breaking the bond could also result in excommunication from



the Church, which meant that a person could not receive the rite of communion. Excommunication was a most serious consequence, and it was believed to result in punishment in the afterlife.

Feudalism provided order. The king could order his vassal dukes to come to his aid and go to war. Each duke might be commanded to bring with him a certain number of fighting men. The dukes then sent out orders to their vassal earls to bring men, and so on. The result was the accumulation of an army. Each of these men received not only the protection of the lord above him but also a grant of land that could then be doled out to peasants to farm. Each noble in the hierarchy of feudalism had peasants farming their lands, providing them with the necessary foods and goods to sell for their income. This system created a moderately stable environment for society to exist and even grow. Everyone was provided some protection so that the peasantry could do their work and provide the food necessary for society.

Writers' Corner



Imagine you are a lord. Write a letter commanding your vassals to come to your aid, and remind them of what it would mean for them to break their oath to you.

Knights and Castles

The military structure of the High Middle Ages was dominated by the shock combat of mounted knights and the building of castles. Castles are strongholds. Most castles were built for one lord, or a lord and his family, as a house strong enough to withstand attack with the help of few defenders. Some castles were built of wood, but wood can be overcome by chopping or burning. Stone was a much better option. Castles, which were built by a lord's peasants, were protected by moats and had no real windows. Their few small openings were wide enough for defenders to shoot arrows from but narrow enough to prevent an attacker from successfully shooting in from the outside.

Attackers would storm a castle by throwing and shooting objects and scaling the walls. Huge machines were constructed to help attackers hurl objects at the castle. Catapults were used to throw relatively small objects; trebuchets could hurl large stones or objects to batter down castle walls or the defensive walls of a town. The most effective way to take a castle was usually by laying siege, or surrounding and starving out the inhabitants. That's why castles needed to have enough supplies of food and water inside to last some time.



Castles were attacked with huge machines such as this trebuchet.



Find Out the Facts

Learn more details about how castles were attacked and defended.

Medieval castles were dark, cold, damp, cramped, and smelly. In the castles owned by wealthier lords, there might be cloth hung over the walls to cover the dampness and help keep in the heat. Toilets were sometimes built into an overhang so that waste fell outside the castle. The space inside the structure was open to grow vegetables and herbs. Some royal castles were home to not only the lord and his family but also knights and servants. These, too, were unpleasant accommodations. Monasteries were almost always more comfortable than castles.

Medieval Combat

The most important fighters of the High Middle Ages were knights, who fought on horseback and wore heavy metal armor. Unlike a cavalry, where the purpose of riding on a horse was to get warriors to the site of combat faster or to slice into infantry with a lance on a rapidly moving horse, knights clashed directly with other knights. Mounted knights were the essence of medieval warfare, although infantry were still the greatest number of soldiers. Units of knights often led the attack with infantry following and dealing with the majority of the battle. Knights also showed off their skills and provided entertainment by competing against one another in tournaments.



A lord or king would make someone a knight in a ceremony. The person being knighted would kneel, and the lord would touch the person's shoulders lightly with a sword.

The English introduced an important change in warfare in the fourteenth century CE. During one campaign of the Hundred Years' War against the French, the English army brought longbowmen. Longbows were six feet long and normally used for hunting. These simple devices could be made quickly and were powerful enough to fire arrows great distances with great accuracy. The increased use of longbows led to a shift away from mounted warfare because longbowmen could rain down arrows on mounted knights long before the knights were close to the enemy line. Gunpowder brought another change in warfare. Probably copying the Chinese, who used it in fireworks, Europeans were using gunpowder in offensive weapons by 1326 CE. Handguns appeared in the

Hundred Years' War, but they were not very effective, as both the powder and the guns themselves were unreliable. Cannons were in use by the latter part of the fourteenth century CE, but they were unwieldy to move and to fire.

The Crusades

In the High Middle Ages, Europeans had expanded interest in the lands where Christianity began, called the Holy Land. However, the rise of Islam from the



The longbow's size allows the archer to draw the arrow back farther, which imparts greater energy into the projectile so it can fly farther and with more force.

seventh century CE onward had limited the interaction between Europe and the Holy Land. In 1096 CE, the pope called for a crusade to take back the Holy Land for Christianity. The call gained immediate support. A large army, mostly from France, headed to Palestine and defeated a surprised Muslim army. The Christians captured Jerusalem in 1099 CE.

The Knights Hospitaller was a monastic military order. Its main purpose was to care for wounded or ill knights, but it also became known for its members' fighting abilities. Branches of the Knights Hospitaller were established all over Europe. The Hospitallers provided a model for the establishment of an even more powerful and influential monastic military order, the Knights Templar. The Templars were a Christian military order founded around 1118 CE to protect **pilgrims**, or people who journey to a sacred place, as they traveled to the Holy Land. Pilgrims immediately began to travel to Jerusalem after its conquest, but the path was very dangerous. Many hundreds of pilgrims

were killed. A small group of knights began to protect the pilgrims. They wore a distinctive white tunic with a large red cross on the chest. Their symbol was two knights riding on one horse, which referenced their impoverished state as a monastic order. The Knights Templar became so renowned that money and new recruits poured into the order. The pope awarded the Templars rights that allowed them to travel anywhere without restriction or taxation. Even though they developed enormous financial influence throughout Europe and the Middle East, their fame was primarily due to their military success as mounted knights.

Manorialism

Peasants were not technically part of the feudal structure, which was a political and military arrangement, but they were hugely important to all of medieval society. By the High Middle Ages, most peasants were bound to the land by a contract that they agreed to with the lord of a manor. A manor was a rural, self-contained farming unit consisting of several families who produced all their own food and materials. The lord held the land as a grant or fief from someone

Vocabulary

pilgrim, n. a follower of a religion who travels to a shrine or other sacred place

above him in the social order, who held it from someone above him. Peasants had almost no social power, yet it was they who provided all the agricultural products that fed everyone in medieval society.



A manor house, a church, a mill, serfs' houses, and fields were all part of a typical manor estate in the Middle Ages.



Think Twice

What were some advantages and disadvantages of living as part of a manor?

The small surplus that was produced by each peasant family was used to pay rent for occupying the land. The lord of the manor used all of that surplus as his source of income. The lord also had his own pieces of land on the manor that the peasants who were bound to him were required to work. Some peasants were free and did not owe work obligation to the lord, but most did,

and they were known as **serfs**. According to the conditions of their contract, a serf might owe the lord one day of work a month, one day of work a week, or anything in between. This work obligation was hated by most peasants because it kept them from working their own land and was seen as a sign of their servitude. As the population grew, more peasants needed land to farm. Increased demand meant that lords could require higher rents and increased work obligations.

Vocabulary

serf, n. a peasant who is not free; a person living on a feudal estate who was required to work for the lord of the manor

Medieval Innovations

Between 1000 and 1300 CE, the peasantry was increasingly crushed by greater work obligations, higher rents, and decreasing amounts of available land, which meant less food produced for a peasant's own family. The increasing population and better weather for growing food encouraged peasants to increase the amount of land that could be used for growing crops. Forests were cleared for agriculture, and lakes and marshes were drained to create



Mills generated power for the manor by taking some of the energy created by moving water.

new agricultural land. A new type of plow, the heavy plow, was developed to break up the moist and heavy soil found in much of Europe. It turned over the dirt to help it dry out and created a slightly mounded strip of land that allowed any excess water to drain toward the edges.

Planting methods also changed. In the early Middle Ages, most of the land was in a two-field rotation. Half of a manor's land would be planted while the other half sat fallow, or unplanted. This allowed the soil to regain nutrients from weeds that were plowed back into the dirt. As the population increased, many regions shifted to a three-field rotation. One-third of the land was left fallow, and another third was planted in the

autumn with crops such as wheat, rye, or barley. The final third was planted in the spring with oats, barley, or legumes such as peas or beans. Three-field rotation nearly doubled the yield of crops, including oats. A more plentiful supply of oats as feed, as well as the introduction of the padded horse collar, contributed to the replacement of oxen with horses as the draft animal of choice. Horses are considerably faster than oxen at pulling a plow, which meant more land could be plowed or tilled in one day. This increased society's food production capacity, which supported the growing population.

Several machines that performed tasks previously done by hand were

introduced during the High Middle Ages. The most common and most important technological development was the mill, which used either water or wind as its source of power. Although mills were not invented in the Middle Ages, they became an important source of power. On a manor, the lord owned the mill, and peasants had to pay to have their grain ground. Monasteries often owned numerous mills. In towns, individual tradespeople could own a mill. Sometimes, even towns owned their own mills. Larger towns might have dozens of mills, especially if there was a substantial river.



Find Out the Facts

Learn about how windmills and water mills worked in the Middle Ages and how they were used.

Towns

The High Middle Ages brought about the growth of towns. These were distinctly different from manor villages, where almost all residents were peasants whose main work was farming. Towns hardly had any peasants. Their residents were tradespeople, including blacksmiths, bakers, brewers, weavers, carpenters, and grocers. Very large towns like London and Paris had even

more specialized tradespeople, including goldsmiths, cloth dyers, fishmongers, candlemakers, wheel makers, tailors, shoemakers, and more. In large towns, many of these trades were grouped together because they needed to be near other members of their craft. Location was also chosen based on the layout of the town and its natural resources. For instance, brewers needed to have a good source of water to make ale or beer. Butchers needed to be able to dump their waste products into a stream or river. This meant that brewers were usually upstream from the butchers.

By the twelfth century CE, many trades had formed **guilds**. There were guilds for goldsmiths, brewers, wheel makers, and many other types of workers. These guilds set up regulations that ensured that anyone claiming to be a master member knew how to perform all of the necessary tasks very well. Typically, a young person would become an **apprentice** and slowly

Vocabulary

guild, n. a group of craftspeople who control a certain craft

apprentice, n. a person who trains for a job or skill by working under the supervision and guidance of an expert in the field

learn all of the skills over a required number of years. At the completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice would have to produce a product that was as good as one made by a master of the guild. This product was known as the apprentice's master piece. If the master piece was good enough (and if a substantial fee had been paid), the former apprentice became a master of their craft, with all the rights to perform and sell that craft and to take on their own apprentices. This system ensured the high quality of the trade and also limited who could perform it, which ensured that there was always enough work for those who were masters. Contrary to many other areas of medieval society, where women had very limited power, women could be members of a guild and own a business. The most common route to ownership, however, was inheritance from a husband or father.



Think Twice

How is a master piece similar to a masterpiece? How is it different?

Towns were constructed to pack people into a small space. Buildings stood side by side with no space in between. Because street frontage was valuable and expensive, building fronts were narrow.

Buildings were frequently three stories high with a shop on the first floor. The second floor was living quarters for the shop owner and family, and possibly an apprentice or servant. The third floor was storage for shop materials and foods such as grains. Sometimes, the third floor also had more living space for apprentices or servants. The streets of medieval towns were often sloped down toward the center, and all waste, including human waste, was thrown out the windows. Rain washed it to a center gutter in the street. Some entrepreneurial peasants paid for the right to cart away the waste and muck to put on their fields as manure.

Many European towns in the High Middle Ages enjoyed freedom from the restrictions of feudalism. Lords who owned towns encouraged free trade because it brought them money. The actual running of a town was often the duty of guild masters. In some towns, only masters could elect officials or be a mayor or councillor. This meant that even though towns were somewhat free from the aristocracy, the government was still run by the wealthy townspeople or masters. Some towns became wealthy enough that they were able to buy their freedom from the lord and become autonomous, or a free town.



Medieval towns were packed with people working in many trades. Foul odors often rose up from a center gutter in the town.

Serfs who ran away from a manor to a free town were considered permanently free if they managed to live in the town for a year and a day without being caught.

Expanding Trade

In the High Middle Ages, churches, monasteries, and aristocrats recognized the opportunity to make money by establishing fairs on their land. Fairs were usually held on religious holidays. At the landowner's request, merchants from near and far would come to sell their goods. Each merchant would be charged a fee

or tax, and so the church, monastery, or aristocrat who owned the land would make money. Other merchants and local residents would come to shop, gather with friends, and enjoy the entertainment.

Fairs started to become more organized in the 1300s CE. A French noble organized six fairs in four different towns. Each fair lasted about six weeks, and there was time between fairs so merchants could resupply their wares. In all, the cycle of fairs covered almost a year. Although a variety of things were sold at the fairs, each fair had a different focus, such as horses, cattle, cloth, leather, or spices.

Merchants came from as far away as Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Interregional European trade was reinvigorated as merchants met one another and goods crossed long distances. These fairs also encouraged the development of banking. It was inconvenient to transport large amounts of cash over great distances, but banking firms, especially those in Italy, could provide notes of credit to merchants for buying large quantities of goods at a fair. Italian cities such as Genoa, Venice, and Florence had maintained trade with North Africa and the Middle East after the fall of Rome. By the twelfth and thirteenth

centuries CE, trade across Europe was flourishing. The increased demand for luxury goods also led to an expansion of trade outside of Europe. The Silk Road continued to be an important route for bringing goods and ideas into Europe.

High Middle Ages Church

The Church reached its greatest influence in the High Middle Ages. Nearly everyone's life revolved around the Church. Some people went to prayers at their local church several times a day, and most attended a service at least once a week on Sunday. It was believed that only the **clergy** could interpret the Bible. This was in part because many people could not read. Clergy were the main source of education and held great social and political power.

Vocabulary

clergy, n. in the Christian Church, people, such as priests, who carry out religious duties

The look and feel of churches themselves began to change in the High Middle Ages. In 1140 CE, the abbey church of Saint-Denis, located north of Paris, was built in a new architectural style that felt open

and luxurious. Thanks to pointed arches and flying buttresses, which reinforce a building from the outside without touching the ground, interiors could be taller and windows could be larger. These window spaces were filled with extraordinary stained glass windows. To people of the time, these interiors looked like heaven itself. Across the region of present-day France, multiple churches and cathedrals, including Notre-Dame, were built or altered to fit the new style. These spaces created a sense that their builders and keepers had a real connection to God. The new churches gave the Church more authority and power and brought in more money. The pope and all the higher levels of clergy were among the wealthiest and most powerful people in Europe during the High Middle Ages.

One of the great medieval technological inventions, the mechanical clock, was developed for the Church in the second half of the thirteenth century CE. Before that, time could be told with some accuracy by the sun, but at night this was impossible. In fact, for the medieval mind, only the daylight period was divided into hours. Nighttime did not have hours except in anticipation of daylight coming. The original mechanical clocks did not have a face with dials but instead registered the time so

that a bell could be rung to call for prayer. A mechanical clock does not distinguish between day or night, so for the first time, hours and minutes were tracked during both day and night. With the invention of the clock and specific times for the bells of a church to ring, entire towns—and all the work performed within those towns—began to follow the rigid mechanical rhythm of the clock rather than the seasonal timing of the sun.

English Parliament

In the High Middle Ages, Europe was politically divided into kingdoms (ruled by a king) and principalities (ruled by a prince, duke, or count). Although the ruler's authority was supreme, many rulers had groups of individuals, drawn from the aristocracy, that they could call on to advise them on important decisions, such as whether to go to war or to raise money through taxation. These gatherings were called parliaments, from the French word *parler*, which means to speak. In late thirteenth-century CE England, the king also invited some individuals from the more important towns to come and speak with him. This was the first formal meeting of commoners speaking with a king. Because the people invited were generally wealthy

merchants, they were often able to provide money for the king's needs. This led to the permanent establishment of two bodies of the English Parliament, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. This widened the input of advice for the king and enabled the common people—albeit just the wealthy ones—to have a way to voice their needs to the king.

Universities

Education throughout the early Middle Ages took place in monastery or cathedral schools. These schools, like the Middle Eastern madrassas, were for religious education. In the late eleventh century CE, a new form of higher education arose in Europe: the university. The first, founded in 1088 CE, was in Bologna, Italy. Many of the medieval universities had somewhat uncertain foundation dates, as universities were gatherings of students who hired an instructor, which happened without great notice or fanfare. As universities became more formally established, they were given a charter by the pope or the regional ruler. The University of Paris was in existence by 1150 CE but was chartered in 1200 CE.

By the end of the thirteenth century CE, there were at least a dozen universities in Europe; by the end of the Middle Ages,

there were more than eighty. Some of these universities specialized in medicine, law, or theology, but most offered a basic arts education, which comprised seven subjects: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Students ranged in age from twelve to thirty and, after completing examinations, could attain a bachelor's degree in three or four years and a master's degree in six. All courses and examinations were in Latin. Poor people usually didn't know Latin or have the money to attend school, and the aristocracy did not feel the need to have a university education, so most students were from the middle class. They could go on from university to work for the Church, in government, or in developing international trades such as banking.



Late Middle Ages

Europe's population growth began to slow around 1300 CE. There were several reasons for this. Shifts in the weather caused record-breaking droughts followed by wet, cold summers, neither of which was good for agriculture. In addition, the population had grown to such a size that it was too large for the amount of farmable

land available. Major famines between 1315 and 1322 CE started the population decline. Those who survived were probably malnourished and weakened.

This made the arrival of the plague, or the Black Death, in 1347 CE more severe than it might have otherwise been. The plague was spread by fleas that traveled on rats and other mammals. It had circulated before, but the outbreak in the mid-fourteenth century CE was especially catastrophic. Around 30 to 60 percent of the entire population died within five years of the arrival of the plague. This is not only a far higher death toll than that of the recent COVID-19 pandemic but also far higher than the deaths of World War II or any other war or pandemic. The plague created chaos and instability in all parts of society, as those who died included many of the people who grew food. This meant fewer crops to sell, which meant that lords had less income, which they tried to recover by raising rents and increasing work obligations. Towns were impacted as well. Some smaller towns disappeared entirely, and larger towns got smaller. Production of cloth, wheels, bread, and every other type of good declined. Administrations of towns and countries were in confusion.



Find Out the Facts

Learn about what life was like for those who survived the plague.

Writers' Corner



Using your research on the plague, write a report, poem, or short play.

There was no medical treatment for those infected with the plague. Doctors did try to attend to the sick, but medieval physicians had no knowledge of germs. There were many theories about the causes of illness, including the idea of miasma, or bad smells that spread through the air and caused disease. This spurred people to find ways of dealing with trash and waste, such as burning or burying it. This likely improved sanitation conditions and decreased the supply of food waste eaten by rats that spread the plague, which would have reduced their numbers. The theory of miasma also shaped the behavior of plague doctors. They wore beaked masks that were filled with dried flowers, herbs, spices, or cloth soaked in vinegar. The aromas of the mask filling were thought to counteract or remove the bad smells that caused disease. In reality, the masks helped prevent transmission of germs.



Plague doctors wore beaked masks filled with aromatic substances.

The Church struggled to respond as people looked to it for explanations and hope. Its official position was that the plague must be the will of God for the evils of humankind. Because no one understood the cause of the disease, many individuals became more devout than ever and gave donations to the Church in the hope of getting to heaven when they died. Some people even quit their occupations and joined monasteries. But there were also people who decided that because they might be dead soon, they might as well live for today. They turned to parties and frivolous enjoyment,

ate gluttonously, and drank large quantities of alcohol.

Some people also lashed out at groups they perceived as threats or outsiders. Jewish people had settled throughout Europe by this point. They were the target of suspicion, accusations, and brutal attacks. Many Christian Europeans believed that Jewish people were less susceptible to the plague. They thought this revealed something sinister about Jewish people, but in reality, Jewish rituals and practices likely supported better hygiene, which provided better protection against the plague.

A Changing Society

Overall, the late Middle Ages has been seen as a period of decline. All the turmoil helped fuel conflicts such as the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453 CE) between the kings of England and France as well as regional revolts such as the Peasants' Revolt in England (1381 CE). But there is another side to the story. With less pressure on the farmlands, peasants were often released from feudal work obligations, which gave them more time to work their own lands. The reduced population also meant that peasants

could focus their efforts on the best, most productive land. So the peasantry actually produced a greater amount of food **per capita**, meaning there was more food available for each person, and people were actually better nourished.

Vocabulary

per capita, adv. for each person

Some peasants, even those under contract to a lord, took advantage of the societal chaos to leave their manor. They went to towns where work opportunities were plentiful after the deaths of so many workers. To keep enough peasants to work their land, lords had to make some changes. The most hated part of feudalism was the work obligation that serfs owed to the lord. As lords began removing those work obligations, the system of feudalism began a decline that would take another century to conclude. At the moment, peasants were still needed to work the land, but now they had to be paid. Their rents were lowered, their living standards rose, and they had more time to spend working their own land.

The decline of feudalism also meant a decline in the relative power of the

aristocracy. Although the aristocracy remained the top class and owned most of the land, that land was not as valuable because it no longer brought in high rents or the free work of feudal serfs. The middle class, on the other hand, rose in power, as the goods and services they provided were still needed even in a population of reduced size. The guilds increased in power and authority in many towns. They displayed their wealth with ceremonies, parades, elaborate clothing, and extravagant dinners.

Towns were smaller after the plague, but the per capita wealth was higher. This led to a higher level of literacy and a greater number of people going to university. Latin and Greek texts were in high demand to educate all of these students. In some ways, this was the beginning of the Renaissance, which started at different points in different places and overlapped with the end of the medieval period. The demand for more texts also led to the invention of the movable-type printing press by Johannes Gutenberg around 1440 CE. This tremendously increased the ability to produce documents and books and pamphlets and flyers.



Medieval Russia

Russia lies to the east of Europe. Long ago, Russian civilization started out in small villages in and near eastern Europe. The territory impacted by Russian history and culture stretches all the way from the eastern edge of Europe to the Pacific Ocean. Some of the patterns that defined medieval Europe were also part of medieval Russia, but there were ways in which Russia was quite different. While many peoples lived in the region in and around Russia, the Slavs and the Rus were two groups that became important.

Slavs who settled in Russia came into contact with Vikings from northern Europe who were moving south to conquer new territory and seek trade. The Slavs called the Vikings the Rus, which is where the word *Russia* comes from. Slavs and Vikings did come into conflict, but they eventually mixed together. This largely happened along the Dnieper River between Novgorod, Russia, and Kyiv, in modern Ukraine. In the Middle Ages, this area was called Kievan Rus.

The European decline after the death of Charlemagne didn't have much of an impact on Kievan Rus. It continued its extensive trade partnerships, with partners ranging from Scandinavia in the north all the way to the Byzantine Empire in the south. Byzantine missionaries brought Christianity to Russia around 900 CE. While it didn't take hold immediately, in 988 CE, Kievan Rus under Prince Vladimir adopted a version of Christianity that was much closer to the Eastern Orthodox Christianity of the Byzantine Empire than the Christianity of the Church of Rome. By the eleventh century CE, Kievan Rus was stable and had advanced beyond much of the rest of Europe. Its economy incorporated more long-distance trade than the West, and the cultural touchstones of art, literature, and architecture were more developed.



Think Twice

How did Russia's geographical location contribute to the advancement of its society during this turbulent period?



Find Out the Facts

Learn more about the Great Schism, which was the split of the Christian Church into the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.



Vladimir I of Kyiv adopted the practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The weakness of the Kievan Rus was its political structure, which was a loose confederation of lands under the princely family members of the Rurik dynasty. By the thirteenth century CE, Kievan Rus had disintegrated into smaller principalities. It could not organize effective resistance against the invading Mongols, who defeated the Rus in 1223 CE. Much of Kievan Rus culture disappeared under the weight of the Mongols, who created the largest contiguous empire the world

has ever known, stretching from China to the western edges of Russia. The Mongol Empire connected Europe to China and India, but their rise was to the disadvantage of Kievan Rus.

Moscow and Ivan the Great

The Mongol invasion of Kievan Rus in 1223 CE left Russia with only a few small areas, such as Novgorod, remaining outside of Mongol control. The prince of Novgorod, Alexander Nevsky, maintained independence by negotiating with the Mongols. From this arose a new country, the Grand Principality of Moscow, or Muscovy. As Mongol control declined, Muscovy expanded and gained more power.



Find Out the Facts

Research the Golden Horde, the Mongol state that took over most of Russia. What events factored into the Golden Horde's decline?

A strong ruler named Ivan became the grand prince of Muscovy in 1462 CE. It was a period of continual warfare; conflicts occurred between different groups and even different factions of the same family. After defeating his enemies, Ivan turned his attention to expanding Muscovy. He became known as Ivan the Great for his military and political strength. He was a harsh ruler who issued strict laws and punished anyone who might be an enemy. He kept a tight grip on power and ordered great building projects in Moscow to reflect his grandeur. A strong central government took shape during his reign, laying the foundation of the powerful state that Russia would ultimately become.

Find Out the Facts

Find out more about the life and reign of Ivan the Great.



Writers' Corner



Imagine you are a peasant living in Russia during the transition between the Golden Horde and Muscovy rule. Write a letter to an acquaintance in another town about how your life is changing.

Writers' Corner

Use your research to make a slideshow or poster about Ivan the Great.



Chapter 13

West African Kingdoms

The Big Question

What characterized the great empires of West Africa?

A Wealth of Resources and Cultures

The vast continent of Africa has a great diversity of landscapes, resources, and cultures. Between the sixth and sixteenth centuries CE, several civilizations in North and West Africa served as important centers of trade and cultural exchange. The three great West African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai rose to power in part because they controlled gold mines, salt mines, and the trade routes that linked these valuable resources to the rest of the world.



This illustration from the *Catalan Atlas* (1375 CE) portrays Mansa Musa, the most powerful ruler of the ancient Mali Empire. He is shown holding a large piece of gold.



The empires of West Africa had great economic wealth and a rich mix of cultural influences. Connected to multiple other regions through trade, West African empires embraced Islam and adopted some Arab practices. They also influenced and were influenced by other African cultures to the north, east, and south.

Origins of Human Societies

Africa is the world's second-largest continent, after Asia. The very first humans lived in eastern and southern Africa and appeared around two hundred thousand years ago. About fifty thousand to sixty-five thousand years ago, people in Africa began to develop distinct types of social behavior, such as making tools and art.

Over time, early prehistoric peoples formed settlements. Civilizations and cultures eventually took shape. While ancient Egypt was one of the first very large, complex, and continuous civilizations, other societies arose throughout Africa. Gradually, civilizations in different parts of the continent were linked through sea routes to other regions. The Mediterranean Sea connected North Africa to southern Europe and Southwest Asia. The Red Sea and the Sinai Peninsula

Geography of Africa



Africa has a great diversity of geographical features and climate zones. The sandy Sahara desert and Sahel transitional zone dominate the north of the continent.

linked northeastern Africa to Southwest Asia and to land routes that reached farther into Asia. The Indian Ocean gave passage to India, China, and Southeast Asia.

Diverse Geography and Climate

There is a great diversity of climate and geographical zones across the continent of Africa. In addition to coastal areas, Africa has large desert regions, grassy savannas (which cover around half of the continent), and rainforests. Two enormous, sandy deserts, the Sahara in the north and the Kalahari in the south, have hot and arid climates. The Sahara has little vegetation due to extremely low rainfall, but some low trees and shrubs grow in the Kalahari, especially in the northern part, where rain is more frequent. The Sahel is a transitional zone between the Sahara and the savannas to the south. When the West African empires were prominent, the Sahel supported some hunting and herding but was too arid for agriculture.

The Nile, Niger, and Congo Rivers supported the development of early civilizations. The Niger River

waters the region south of the Sahara. It supported the flow of trading caravans that crossed the desert and the boats that took the traders' goods to cities all along the river. Tropical rainforests along the lower West African coast and the Congo River are lush with plants and host a great diversity of plant and animal species. These regions receive a great deal of rainfall and are humid and warm most of the year.

In the north, the Atlas Mountains create a boundary between a strip of coastal area in northwest Africa (home to the coastal regions of present-day Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) and the Sahara. In the eastern part of the continent, in present-day Tanzania, a dormant volcano called Mount Kilimanjaro stands alone. It is the highest peak in Africa and the tallest freestanding mountain (one that isn't part of a mountain range) in the world.

Off the coast of southeastern Africa lies the fourth-largest island on the planet, Madagascar. Madagascar's geography includes grasslands, mountains, and tropical rainforests. It is home to a rich diversity of plants and animals, many of which cannot be found elsewhere on the planet.



Find Out the Facts

Research to learn more details about one of Africa's geographical zones.



Writers' Corner

Create a slideshow, web page, or poster for a presentation about one of Africa's geographical zones.



Africa During Europe's Medieval Period

The term *medieval* originally designated a period of European history. While keeping in mind that the characteristics of other medieval societies were quite different from those of European cultures, understanding events happening in other regions of the world during this period is helpful.

In Europe's medieval period, the vast and powerful Roman Empire gave way to smaller kingdoms. Power and trade became smaller and more localized. Fewer people traveled, and Europe's regions became less connected to one another. At the same time, several African civilizations enjoyed incredible prosperity, growing trade, and cross-

cultural connections. This growth was helped by greater contact between Africans and the empires that ruled the regions surrounding Africa. The spread of major religions illustrates the greater connection of some African regions to wider networks of trade and power. In the sixth century CE, the region of the Sudan, located south of Egypt, was ruled by Nubian kingdoms. Close links between Byzantium and Nubia were forged when the Byzantines sent missionaries to convert Nubia to Christianity. The Nubian kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria, and Alwa, which thrived from about 500 to the 1200s CE, all adopted the Byzantines' Eastern Christianity, which was widely practiced until the Ottoman conquest of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 CE. Christianity was not the only faith brought to the region by major empires. After the Muslim conquest of much of North Africa in the



Between the fourth and fourteenth centuries CE, this building from the kingdom of Makuria served as a royal stronghold, a church, and then a mosque.

seventh and eighth centuries CE, Muslim traders visited and passed through the markets of Sudan, bringing their religious ideas as well as their wealth and goods.

Trans-Saharan trade fueled the rise of three mighty empires in West Africa. The Ghana, Mali, and Songhai Empires emerged in succession between the 400s and the 1400s CE. Each empire benefited from the region's deposits of gold and salt, which were prized throughout the world. Gold was valued because of its rarity and beauty as well as its malleability, or its ability to be shaped into many beautiful forms, including jewelry. It was also used for making coins,

clothing, and illuminated manuscripts. Salt was extremely valuable because it provided an essential nutrient and could be used to preserve food. This was crucially important prior to the invention of refrigeration in the early twentieth century. Salt was even more valuable in hot climates such as West Africa, where constant perspiration meant that salt continually needed to be replaced in the body.

Think Twice



Why would people in hot, dry climates benefit from having salt as part of their diet?



Gold was prized throughout the world and used in many ways. This page from a North African illuminated Quran dates from the twelfth century CE.

Those who controlled the gold and salt mines amassed great wealth and controlled the trading routes that developed around them. In addition to gold and salt, these routes were used to transport a myriad of goods and resources, such as iron, ivory, rhinoceros horns, feathers, spices, live animals, textiles, and foods. Trading routes were also used to transport enslaved people, which impacted the social structure and economy of many societies. West Africa was an important regional trade center that connected different parts of Africa as well as China, India, Arabia, and Europe.



Ghana Empire

The origins of the first powerful West African empire are obscure. Situated south of the Sahara in the relatively less arid region of the Sahel, the Ghana Empire began as a regional kingdom of the Soninke people, who were part of a larger ethnic and language group called the Mande. The people called their realm Wagadou. *Ghana* is likely a term that meant ruler or warrior king and eventually became widely used to designate Wagadou. According to oral tradition, the kingdom emerged when the Soninke joined together under a strong leader named Dinga Cisse. He is said to have brought other regional kingdoms under his control to create a powerful dynasty. He is still considered the ancestor of all Soninke people today.



Find Out the Facts

Learn more about the history and traditions of the Soninke.



Writers' Corner

Use your research to write an encyclopedia entry about the Soninke.

The ancient Ghana Empire eventually stretched between present-day Senegal and Mauritania. Most of what is known about the Ghana Empire has been passed down through either oral tradition or texts written by Arab merchants. The stories and texts described a realm of stunning wealth that was due largely to the abundant gold deposits controlled by the Ghana Empire's rulers. Traders from Africa, Europe, and Southwest Asia came to exchange goods for gold. Around the world, gold beads and other decorative objects became highly desired. The king kept nuggets of gold for himself; his people were permitted to keep and trade only gold dust.

The Ghana Empire grew into a strong empire thanks to its gold, salt, iron ore, and copper. Taxes on salt and other products, as well as tributes from conquered lands, added to its wealth. Another key to its success was that by around 300 CE, West Africans had domesticated the camel. This gave them an advantage in developing trading routes that crossed the Sahara. Trade networks continued to expand as Arab merchants and others adopted camels as beasts of burden.

The Ghana Empire's control of trading routes and its monopoly on the region's

The West African Empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai



The wealth of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai was built on gold and salt mines in West Africa and their strong trading links along rivers and across the deserts.

Saleh, the empire was a collection of provinces that functioned as vassal states to the empire.

The people of the Ghana Empire originally practiced an animist religion, as was common throughout West Africa. **Animism** can take many forms but is characterized by the belief that plants,

gold mines helped it grow into a dominant power. It is likely that the main city was Koumbi Saleh (located in present-day Mauritania), which was home to thousands of people. Koumbi Saleh was impressively large and complex, particularly given its location in the arid Sahel. Engineers and city planners created an urban center with many wells that provided water for daily and agricultural use. The social structure included a large class of workers, who constructed an expansive palace complex and elaborate public buildings. The Ghana Empire also built a large and effective army, which was described in admiring tones by Arab travelers. Beyond Koumbi

Vocabulary

animism, n. the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence

Think Twice

What does it mean for an area to be a vassal state?



streams, and other parts of the natural world are sacred. They are seen as spirits or as inhabited by spirits. In the Ghana Empire, religious beliefs centered on forest spirits and sacred groves that only priests were allowed to enter.



As Islamic civilization began to spread in the 700s CE, more and more Muslim merchants, diplomats, and others made their way to the Ghana Empire. They introduced some Arab cultural practices and also brought Islam to the region. By the end of the twelfth century CE, the Ghana Empire was an Islamic society. Twelve mosques were built in Koumbi Saleh. They were centers of religious life and were used for the work and intellectual exchanges of Muslim scholars and scribes.

It was around this time that other groups throughout North and West Africa began to challenge the Ghana Empire. Conflict with various external groups weakened the empire, as did a change in climate and weather patterns. The Sahel became even drier in the 1200s CE, a hardship that may have fueled the conflicts that Ghana faced. Eventually, the Sosso people defeated Ghana's rulers, but their success was short lived. They were soon overtaken by West Africa's next great power: the Mali Empire.

Mali Empire

The West African kingdom of Mali began in 1235 CE when a Mandinka leader called Sundiata Keita (which means Lion Prince

or Huncher Lion) defeated the Sosso king. Sundiata Keita became the *mansa*, or emperor. His strong army conquered an extensive territory. Sundiata Keita also fortified trade routes and took control of the gold mines. He allowed far-flung provinces to have some autonomy over their own governance. As part of the central government, he created an assembly of representatives to discuss matters of the empire. The thirty-two members of the assembly, who came from various Mandinka **clans**, also advised him.

Vocabulary

clan, n. a group of families claiming a common ancestor

The city of Timbuktu became an important cosmopolitan center of the Mali Empire. Located on the Niger River near the northern edge of the Sahel and bordering the Sahara, it was well-positioned to benefit from growing trading networks. Its location meant that traders from many regions passed through, bringing or seeking a wide array of goods. The Mali Empire taxed the goods that came through Timbuktu and their other cities, sold great quantities of its own valuable resources, and was able to buy imported goods and sell them for a healthy profit.

Mansa Musa

The most powerful ruler of the Mali Empire was Mansa Musa, who reigned from 1312 to 1337 CE. He led conquests of new territory and doubled the size of the empire. The Mali Empire's wealth, based on mining of gold and salt and trade in ivory, reached its greatest height during this period, and Mansa Musa was one of the richest people in the entire world. He is even considered one of the richest people ever to have lived. Around 1324 CE, Mansa Musa undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca. The hajj is an important journey for any Muslim, but Mansa Musa's trip across North Africa and into Arabia was a lavish and spectacular affair. He traveled with an entourage of at least a thousand people and a hundred camels loaded with gold. He spent freely in the cities he passed through and made gifts of his own gold. His donations were so great that the regional price of gold dropped dramatically. Word of his fantastic wealth and grand style spread throughout many regions of Africa, Southwest Asia, and Europe. This may have contributed to increased European interest in the resources of Africa, which only continued to grow over the next centuries.



This twentieth-century CE painting depicts Mansa Musa being carried on a litter, a type of vehicle, by some of his chiefs.



Find Out the Facts

Learn more about Mansa Musa's journey to Mecca.



Writers' Corner

Using your research, write two or three detailed paragraphs about Mansa Musa and his importance as a historical figure.

Mansa Musa left his mark in several cities, building houses in Cairo and Mecca that not only accommodated his large entourage but also created a lasting impression of the grandeur of West Africa.

With a group of Muslim scholars and architects in tow, he returned from Mecca determined to bring the fruits of the Islamic golden age to the Mali Empire. He also brought books. Back in the Mali Empire, he supported the construction of mosques, Islamic schools, libraries, and universities.

Timbuktu was at the center of this cultural and economic growth. The city's Sankoré mosque and university housed a library full of accounts of travel and culture as well as religious texts. These texts were largely about Islam but also covered astronomy, logic, and history. It is estimated that the library held between four hundred thousand and seven hundred thousand manuscripts. Students learned from an **imam**, or Muslim worship leader, or from other learned Islamic scholars. Instruction usually took place in a courtyard or small room. The program of study included learning to read and write Arabic, which was used throughout the Islamic world. The Quran itself was written in Arabic, and Muslims were expected to learn the verses in that language regardless of their native tongues.

Vocabulary

imam, n. a Muslim worship leader



The ancient Sankoré mosque in Timbuktu

A combination of factors led to the eventual decline of Mali's power. Internal power struggles in the 1400s CE weakened Mali's rulers. Rival kingdoms began to expand and gained control of crucial trade routes. Portuguese merchant ships, which had recently started traveling up and down Africa's west coast, posed stiff competition to the trading caravans that had long transported goods across the Sahara to the Mediterranean. Combined, these internal and external events weakened the Mali Empire, making it ripe for conquest by the Songhai Empire around 1468 CE.



Find Out the Facts

Research to learn more about the rival kingdoms that challenged the Mali Empire.

Ibn Battuta

A geographer and avid traveler, Ibn Battuta was a fourteenth-century CE Muslim scholar from Morocco. He is known for traveling to the major caliphates of the Islamic golden age. His first journey was a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1325 CE, after which he traveled for the next twenty-four years. Ibn Battuta visited an astonishing number of places across a huge amount of territory at a time when travel was still quite challenging. His many journeys took him to North and West Africa, Arabia, much of Asia, and southern and eastern Europe. He wrote detailed accounts about his experiences and drew maps of his voyages. These texts are valuable sources of information about the societies he visited. His travels in West Africa took

Find Out the Facts



Find out more about the life and travels of Ibn Battuta.

Writers' Corner



Using your research, write an imaginary journal entry from the perspective of Ibn Battuta. Where has he gone? What has he seen? Where is he going next?



Ibn Battuta's fourteenth-century CE voyages took him to many regions of the world.

place from 1349 to 1354 CE. While Ibn Battuta was not himself West African, his writings have helped historians learn more about the civilizations of that region, particularly the Mali Empire.

Griots and Oral Tradition

Griots are important figures in West African cultures. They serve as historians, genealogists, storytellers, poets, musicians, praise singers, and authority

figures. Griots played an important role in many West African societies, including the Mali Empire (and still do today). The region's rich oral tradition is in large part a legacy of the work of griots.

The role of griot was hereditary and a position of honor. Griots told social and family histories that were passed down from one generation to the next through stories and songs. Instruments such as the kora (similar to a harp) and the balafon (similar to a xylophone) accompanied the words and lyrics. Griots also kept and

passed along societal traditions, in part through telling epics such as the tale of Sundiata Keita. The tale of Sundiata Keita was preserved by griots for centuries. In the late 1950s CE, one griot told the story to a Guinean writer, Djibril Tamsir Niane, who wrote it down and published it. Griots also functioned as recordkeepers for births, deaths, and marriages. Respected as trustworthy, wise, and talented, griots also served as advisors and spiritual guides to their communities.

The word *griot* likely came from Europeans. One theory is that it originated from the Portuguese word *criado*, which means servant. This likely reflects a misinterpretation of the griot's position as an esteemed figure supported by patronage. *Criado* was then transformed

by French speakers into *griot*. Africans had multiple terms for this role, including *jali*, but the term *griot* was the most widespread.

Find Out the Facts



What other stories have been preserved by oral storytellers around the world?

Vocabulary

griot, n. a West African historian, storyteller, praise singer, poet, and/or musician who maintains a culture's oral tradition



Think Twice

What might the influence of Portuguese and French terms on West African languages indicate about the history of West Africa?



Griots serve as historians, entertainers, praise singers, and figures of authority.



The Songhai Empire

The kingdom of Songhai emerged around the 800s CE. East of the territory controlled by the Ghana Empire, the Songhai people lived in a region around the city of Gao.

Gao became a rich city because it was on a key stretch of the Niger River that was used by many traders and travelers. The wealth of the city grew so much that it was conquered by the Mali Empire in about 1325 CE. Mali's control of Songhai was never particularly strong. Songhai's wealth and the importance of Gao as a trading post meant the rulers of Songhai could maintain some of their wealth and power. As the Mali Empire began to weaken, Songhai's rulers saw a chance to gain their independence back. Songhai kings attacked and raided Mali cities. One of them, named Sunni Ali, took this strategy a step further, deploying his strong army and naval force to control travel on the Niger. By 1468 CE, Sunni Ali had conquered most of the territory once held by the Mali Empire.

By 1500 CE, the Songhai Empire stretched even farther to the north and east than Mali had. Like the Ghana and Mali Empires, the Songhai Empire made its wealth from

trading, getting tribute from local tribes, and mining for resources like gold. The Songhai Empire controlled more territory and was probably richer than the Mali Empire had been. The two great cities of the Songhai, Timbuktu and Gao, remained centers of trade and learning.



Songhai king Sunni Ali (top image) wrested regional power away from the fading Mali Empire. After defeating Sunni Ali's son in a battle for the throne, Askia Muhammad (bottom image) pushed the Songhai Empire to become a strict Islamic state.

Askia Muhammad, the first Songhai emperor, developed more trade with Asia and Europe. He also introduced weights and measures for regulating trade as well as a system of currency. Askia Muhammad went on pilgrimage to Mecca, and when he returned, he sought to increase the influence of Islam in the empire. He supported the building of mosques and brought many Arab scholars to the university in Timbuktu, which created a golden age of learning in the region. Askia Muhammad also replaced ethnic Songhai officials with Arab Muslims in order to spread Islam. The Tomb of Askia, a grand structure that is part of the Great Mosque of Gao, is said to be his place of burial. It is the largest historical monument in West Africa, reflecting Askia's status as a figure of major cultural significance.

In the late 1500s CE, internal strife, drought, and disease began to fray the Songhai Empire. As a powerful and wealthy state, it had also attracted the attention of multiple external rivals who sought control of regional trade and resources. The leader of Morocco at the end of the sixteenth century CE, Ahmad al-Mansur, was a powerful and

ambitious man. Al-Mansur set his sights on conquering the territory controlled by the Songhai Empire. He sent an army, armed with guns, to attack and conquer the Songhai Empire. Al-Mansur's forces conquered Gao and Timbuktu in 1591 CE. The conquest of these rich trade routes and the gold mines of the region led to al-Mansur becoming known as al-Dhahabi, the golden. Morocco could not control all of the territory that had been part of the Songhai Empire, however. While it commanded the major cities, the rural regions in the countryside turned into a series of smaller, independent kingdoms.

Think Twice

What have you learned about the invention and development of gunpowder weapons?



The European Onslaught

New influences entered West Africa as Portuguese and other European traders and explorers gained the ability to travel to the region in the 1400s CE. One effect of these outside influences was a change in the trade of enslaved

people. As in many premodern societies, slavery was an institution in the cultures of West and Central Africa. People were enslaved because they had been captured in war or because they had committed crimes. Owning slaves was a way in which powerful and wealthy people could display their wealth. Enslaved people were also traded back and forth along the Saharan trade routes. People enslaved in West Africa could be sold in markets as far away as Arabia or India.

The arrival of Europeans changed the form and scale of the African slave trade. Portuguese explorers and traders began to set up trading posts on the African coast in the 1440s CE. They traded in goods that the local trading networks produced. This included enslaved people. The first enslaved Africans were brought to Portugal in about 1445 CE. At first, they were viewed as an oddity. By the late fifteenth century, however, Portugal was building an empire of overseas colonies, including islands off Africa's coast such as São Tomé and Príncipe. These colonies were set up to produce crops on plantations that could be traded for a profit, like sugarcane. To work on these plantations, the Portuguese wanted

more enslaved Africans. The small crews and populations of the Portuguese ships and plantations enslaved some people themselves, but primarily, they began paying Africans for more enslaved people.

As other European nations began to set up their own colonies, they, too, generated a great demand for enslaved Africans to work on their plantations. This demand was far greater than had been present in the medieval Saharan trade networks, and it increased between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries CE. Some African rulers saw an opportunity to acquire wealth and power by providing lots of slaves to Europeans. The Oyo Empire, on the Guinea coast, became a strong kingdom in the eighteenth century because they were willing to raid to enslave people and sell them to Europeans. Because slavery was such an effective way of getting or maintaining wealth and power, the trade in enslaved people led to continuous cycles of war among many African kingdoms.

Glossary

A

alliance, n. a group that works together toward a common goal (13)

alphabet, n. a set of letters that symbolize sounds and can be combined to make words (62)

altiplano, n. a large, high plateau in South America (180)

animism, n. the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence (247)

apprentice, n. a person who trains for a job or skill by working under the supervision and guidance of an expert in the field (229)

archipelago, n. a chain of islands (75)

artifact, n. an object used during a past period in history (4)

artisan, n. a person with a certain skill in making things (17)

atonement, n. making up for or repairing offenses or injuries; taking action to earn forgiveness (73)

autonomy, n. self-governing; having the power and freedom to make choices (68)

avatar, n. the form a Hindu god takes on Earth (107)

B

Babylonia, n. an ancient historical region in Mesopotamia that included the city of Babylon (25)

bandit, n. a robber who roams areas outside of cities and attacks and robs travelers (22)

barracks, n. buildings where soldiers live (89)

blockade, n. a military strategy aimed at preventing people and goods from entering or leaving an area (97)

bureaucratic, adj. based on the formal organization of government and offices held by appointed officials (207)

C

canal, n. a channel dug by people, used by boats or for irrigation (7)

carnelian, n. a hard, red stone (103)

caste, n. a division of society based on differences in wealth, social status, and occupation (106)

cataract, n. a shallow area c of a river where the water moves fast over rocks or other obstacles (29)

cavalry, n. troops who fight on horseback (92)

chariot, n. a carriage with two wheels pulled by horses or other animals (17)

cistern, n. a reservoir for storing water (155)

citizen, n. in ancient Greece, a person with legal rights and responsibilities in a city-state (83)

city-state, n. a city that is an independent political state with its own government (13)

civilization, n. a society, or group of people, with similar religious beliefs, customs, language, and form of government (5)

civil servant, n. a person employed by the government; a public official (17)

civil service, n. civilian officials who carry out the work of the government (189)

clan, n. a group of families claiming a common ancestor (249)

clergy, n. in the Christian Church, people, such as priests, who carry out religious duties (232)

colony, n. an area settled by people who come from elsewhere (82)

commodity, n. something that is bought or sold (36)

confederation, n. a group of independent kingdoms or states that work together (202)

conscript, v. to oblige or force to enter military service (208)

covenant, n. an important agreement or promise (57)

cryptic, adj. having a hidden meaning (81)

cuneiform, n. an ancient form of writing that used a system of symbols carved into wet clay tablets (16)

D

defile, v. to spoil; to make unclean or unholy (69)

deity, n. a god, goddess, or similar being regarded as a supreme power (14)

delta, n. land created by silt deposits at the mouth of a river (29)

democracy, n. a form of government in which people choose their leaders (84)

descendant, n. someone who is related to a person or group of people who lived in the past (57)

dharma, n. in Hinduism, an individual's duty, which is met by observing specific customs or laws (109)

diaspora, n. the migration of people to different areas outside their homeland; the members of a group living outside the group's homeland or place of origin (67)

dictator, n. a ruler who has total control over the country (142)

dike, n. a wall or barrier built to prevent flooding and direct the flow of water (12)

divine right, n. the belief that kings and queens have a God-given right to rule and that rebellion against them is a sin (122)

division of labor, n. the breakdown of work into specific tasks performed by different people, often considered a way to make workers more efficient (5)

doctrine, n. an official set of beliefs (149)

domesticate, v. to tame and use for agriculture or other purposes (102)

dynasty, n. a series of rulers who are all from the same family (19)

E

edict, n. a formal pronouncement or command (116)

embalm, v. to prepare a body to prevent decay (41)

empire, n. a group of countries or territories under the control of one government or ruler (19)

epic, n. a long, complex tale that tells the story of a hero's adventures (24)

equinox, n. day of the year when the day and night are of equal length (176)

ethics, n. rules based on ideas about right and wrong (61)

exile, v. to force someone to live outside of a place as a punishment (86)

Exodus, n. the story of the Israelites' escape from ancient Egypt; a departure of a large group of people, especially migrants (60)

expansionist, adj. seeking to conquer or acquire more territory (50)

F

fable, n. a short, cautionary tale, often featuring animals that speak and act like humans as the main characters (95)

famine, n. an extreme shortage of food that results in widespread hunger (58)

fertile, adj. able to support the growth of many plants; capable of producing new life (10)

Fertile Crescent, n. an arc of land stretching from the Nile River valley to southwestern Asia, characterized by rich soil and climate conditions that supported the development of early civilizations (9)

feud, n. a long conflict between two people or two groups of individuals, often involving violence and acts of revenge (20)

feudal system, n. social organization in which kings, lords, and peasants are bound together by mutual obligations (123)

fiefdom, n. a particular territory ruled by and passed down within a family (206)

filial piety, n. deep respect for one's parents (125)

flee, v. to run away (60)

fresco, n. a type of painting done on wet plaster (77)

frontier, n. the area at the edge of settled territory (189)

G

garrison, n. troops stationed in a town or fort for the purpose of defense (147)

griot, n. a West African historian, storyteller, praise singer, poet, and musician who maintains a culture's oral tradition (253)

guild, n. a group of craftspeople who control a certain craft (229)

H

heir, n. a person who will legally receive the property of someone who dies; the person who will become king or queen after the current king or queen dies or steps down (34)

Hellenic, adj. related to the culture of ancient Greece (79)

helots, n. oppressed underclass in Sparta (89)

hereditary, adj. passed down from parent to child (17)

hieroglyphics, n. writing based on pictures rather than letters (44)

historical region, n. a geographical area that at some point in history shared a language or other cultural or political traits (10)

historiography, n. the methods historians use to study, interpret, and write about the past (4)

hoplite, n. an ancient Greek foot soldier (92)

hybrid, n. something that is a combination of two or more other things (39)

I

imam, n. a Muslim worship leader (250)

immortal, adj. able to live forever; not able to die (24)

indigenous, adj. originally living or existing in a place; native (179)

inscribed, adj. etched or carved into a hard surface (19)

irrigation, n. bringing water from a well, a river, or a lake to a place where it does not rain enough to grow crops (7)

isthmus, n. a narrow piece of land that connects two larger landmasses (75)

K

karma, n. the force created by a person's actions, believed to determine what will happen in the person's next life (108)

kosher, adj. in accordance with Jewish dietary laws (68)

L

lawgiver, n. an authority figure who provides a code of laws and ethics to a people (61)

legacy, n. something of value that is passed down from another person, generation, or civilization (19)

legitimate, adj. in accordance with the law or established standards (47)

legume, n. a type of seed, usually softened by cooking in hot water, such as lentils and chickpeas (31)

liberator, n. a person who frees others from oppression (61)

locust, n. a large grasshopper-like insect; in large swarms, locusts can cause widespread crop damage (59)

logic, n. the study of ways of thinking and making rational arguments (87)

M

mandate, n. a command; a responsibility given by an authority (122)

material culture, n. the objects made and used in a society, including tools, art, buildings, clothing, toys, and other goods (204)

meditate, v. to focus attention on one's mind and thoughts in order to gain new understanding or spiritual growth (111)

menorah, n. a candleholder that holds nine lights and is used in observance of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah (69)

Mesoamerica, n. historical region of Latin America, stretching from northwest Mexico through Central America (169)

Mesopotamia, n. historical region around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers where some of the earliest civilizations emerged (10)

metic, n. a foreigner living in an ancient Greek city (88)

moat, n. a deep, wide ditch surrounding a town, castle, or fort, usually filled with water; its purpose is to defend against attack (21)

monotheistic, adj. related to or characterized by the worship of or belief in a single god (48)

monsoon, n. a wind from the south or southwest that brings heavy rainfall to Asia during the summer months (102)

N

narrative poem, n. a poem that tells a story (25)

navigation, n. the act of planning and directing the movement of a ship, plane, or other vehicle (62)

nirvana, n. a state in which the human soul has attained perfect peace (112)

nomadic, adj. moving around often in search of food; not settled in one place (55)

O

oasis, n. an area in the desert where there are water and plants (154)

oligarchy, n. a government controlled by a small group of people from aristocratic and wealthy nonaristocratic families (84)

opera, n. a form of dramatic performance involving songs, music, and acting (195)

oracle, n. a person who gives wise advice or tells prophecies (81)

orator, n. a public speaker (87)

ostracism, n. in ancient Athens, forcing a person away from the city; today, shunning or ignoring (86)

P

papyrus, n. a tall plant that ancient Egyptians used to make paper and other useful goods, such as sandals and rope (45)

patricians, n. the wealthiest and most powerful families of Rome (135)

peninsula, n. a piece of land sticking out into a body of water so that it is almost surrounded by water (29)

per capita, adv. for each person (236)

persecution, n. cruel and unfair treatment of a group of people (149)

phalanx, n. a group of soldiers who attack in close formation with their shields overlapping and spears pointed forward (92)

pharaoh, n. a political and religious leader of ancient Egypt (33)

pilgrim, n. a follower of a religion who travels to a shrine or other sacred place (226)

plague, n. something that harms a large number of people, such as a sickness or insects that kill crops (59)

plateau, n. a large, flat area of land that is higher than surrounding lands (101)

plebeians, n. the majority of ordinary free Romans (135)

plunder, v. to take something by force (69)

polis, n. a city-state of ancient Greece (82)

polytheism, n. belief in or worship of more than one deity (14)

primary source, n. a firsthand account of a historical event (4)

propagandist, n. someone who puts out information to promote a person or cause (50)

prophet, n. someone chosen by God to bring a message to people (59)

proverb, n. a wise saying; a brief observation that offers guidance or insight (65)

province, n. an area or region; an administrative division of a country, kingdom, or empire (22)

psalm, n. a sacred song or poem (64)

R

rabbi, n. a Jewish religious leader and teacher (72)

recede, v. to slowly move back or away (35)

reed, n. a tall, thin grass that grows in wet areas (16)

regent, n. a person who governs a kingdom in the place of a young or absent king or queen (46)

reincarnation, n. rebirth in a new body or form of life (108)

republic, n. a government in which the people elect representatives to rule for them (134)

reservoir, n. an artificial lake or other place where water is collected and kept (53)

resin, n. a sticky substance made by some plants (154)

revolt, n. a rebellion; a rejection of authority (25)

rhetoric, n. the skill of using words effectively in speaking or writing (87)

S

Sabbath, n. a day of rest and worship observed by members of a religious group (66)

sacred, adj. related to religion; holy (17)

savanna, n. a flat grassland that also has a few trees (51)

scribe, n. a person whose job is to write or make copies of written information (18)

secular, adj. not religious (105)

serf, n. a peasant who is not free; a person living on a feudal estate who was required to work for the lord of the manor (227)

settlement, n. a place where a group of people live together permanently or for extended periods of time (5)

shadoof, n. a crane-like tool that uses a pole and bucket to lift water (31)

shrine, n. a place considered holy because it is associated with a holy person or event (40)

siege, n. a battle strategy in which enemies surround a place so that those within cannot receive supplies (138)

silt, n. small particles of rock, minerals, and soil carried in water (11)

stupa, n. a dome-shaped monument used as a Buddhist or Jain shrine (116)

status, n. one's position or rank within a group (35)

stela, n. a tall stone or wooden slab inscribed with words or designs (64)

steppe, n. a grassland plain (191)

strait, n. a narrow waterway that connects two large bodies of water (93)

subcontinent, n. a major subdivision of a continent (101)

surplus, n. an extra amount, beyond what is needed (6)

symposium, n. in ancient Greece, a meeting for drinking, music, and intellectual discussion; today, a meeting or conference for discussion of a topic (87)

synagogue, n. a Jewish temple or house of worship (66)

T

Tanakh, n. the collection of Jewish holy writings; sometimes called the Hebrew Bible (56)

tectonic, adj. related to the movement of Earth's crust **(76)**

terra-cotta, n. baked or hardened brownish-red clay **(103)**

toga, n. traditional Roman clothing consisting of fabric draped around the body **(141)**

tribute, n. payment of money or goods by a people or their ruler to another country or ruler that has conquered them, or in exchange for protection **(21)**

tsunami, n. a giant wave caused by an earthquake, volcanic eruption, or other destabilizing event **(199)**

typhoon, n. a powerful rotating storm with high winds that originates in the Pacific Ocean **(200)**

U

uniform, adj. following one pattern; always having the same form or characteristics **(20)**

V

vassal, n. a person who receives land from a lord and in return promises to fight for the lord **(222)**

verse, n. writing arranged with a specific structure and rhythm; poetry **(25)**

Z

zeal, n. passion; eagerness **(70)**

ziggurat, n. an ancient Mesopotamian temple with a pyramid shape, consisting of several levels and characterized by staircases on the outside walls **(15)**

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Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) from 'The Alexander Mosaic', depicting the Battle of Issus between Alexander and Darius III (399-330 BC) in 333 BC, floor mosaic removed from the Casa del Fauno (House of the Faun) at Pompeii, after a 4th century BC Hellenistic painting by Philoxenos of Eritrea (mosaic) (detail of 154003) / Roman, (1st century BC) / Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Campania, Italy / Bridgeman Images / 99

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Bracelets of Sheshonq II, from the grave of Sheshonq II, Tomb of Psusennes I, Tanis, Third Intermediate Period (gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian & faience) / Egyptian 22nd Dynasty (945-715 BC) / Egyptian / Egyptian National Museum, Cairo, Egypt / © Sandro Vannini / Bridgeman Images / 42

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Colossal statues of Ramesses II, from the Temple of Ramesses II, New Kingdom (stone) / Egyptian 19th Dynasty (c.1292-1187 BC) / Egyptian / Abu Simbel, Egypt / Bildarchiv Steffens / Bridgeman Images / 33

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Corean Art: Buddha statuette in gold. Silla period, 8th-10th century. National Museum of Korea / Korean School, (8th century) / Korean / National Museum, Seoul, Korea / Photo © Photo Josse / Bridgeman Images / 203

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Dominican Monks, detail from the Cycle of Forty Illustrious Members of the Dominican Order, 1352, by Tommaso da Modena (1326-1379), fresco, Chapter Hall of the Dominicans, the Episcopal Seminary (formerly the convent of St Nicholas), Treviso, Italy / Modena, Tomaso da (Bassi) (late 15th century) / Italian / San Nicolo, Treviso, Italy / © NPL - DeA Picture Library / Bridgeman Images / 219

Early Egyptians using a system of weights and poles called shadoofs to get water from the Nile / Jackson, Peter (1922-2003) / British / Private Collection / © Look and Learn / Bridgeman Images / 31

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English Archer Armed with the "Long Bow" (engraving) / English School, (19th century) / English / Private Collection / © Look and Learn / Bridgeman Images / 225

Esther scroll (mixed media) / Italian School, (17th century) / Italian / The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel / © Israel Museum, Jerusalem / Gift of Jakob Michael in memory of Erna Sondheimer-Michael / Bridgeman Images / 56

Etruscan musicians, copy of a 5th century BC fresco in the Tomb of the Leopard at Tarquinia (fresco) / Etruscan / Private Collection / Bridgeman Images / 134

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Gold statue of Amen / Hook, Richard (b.1938) / English / Private Collection / © Look and Learn / Bridgeman Images / 40

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Illumination of a menorah, from the Jewish Cervera Bible, 1299 (vellum) / Ha-Zarefati, Joseph (fl.1299) / Spanish / Instituto da Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon, Portugal / Bridgeman Images / 69

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