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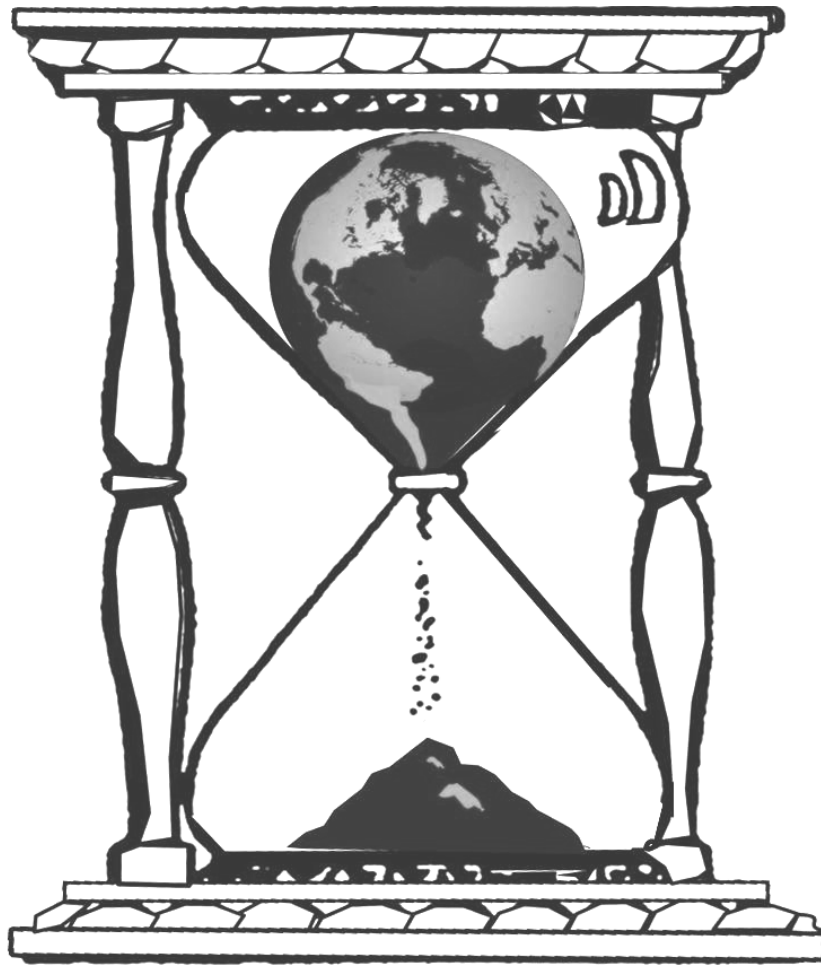
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# i Think: World History

## Ancient Mesopotamia



by Sharon Coletti

\*\* It is the goal of InspirEd Educators to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

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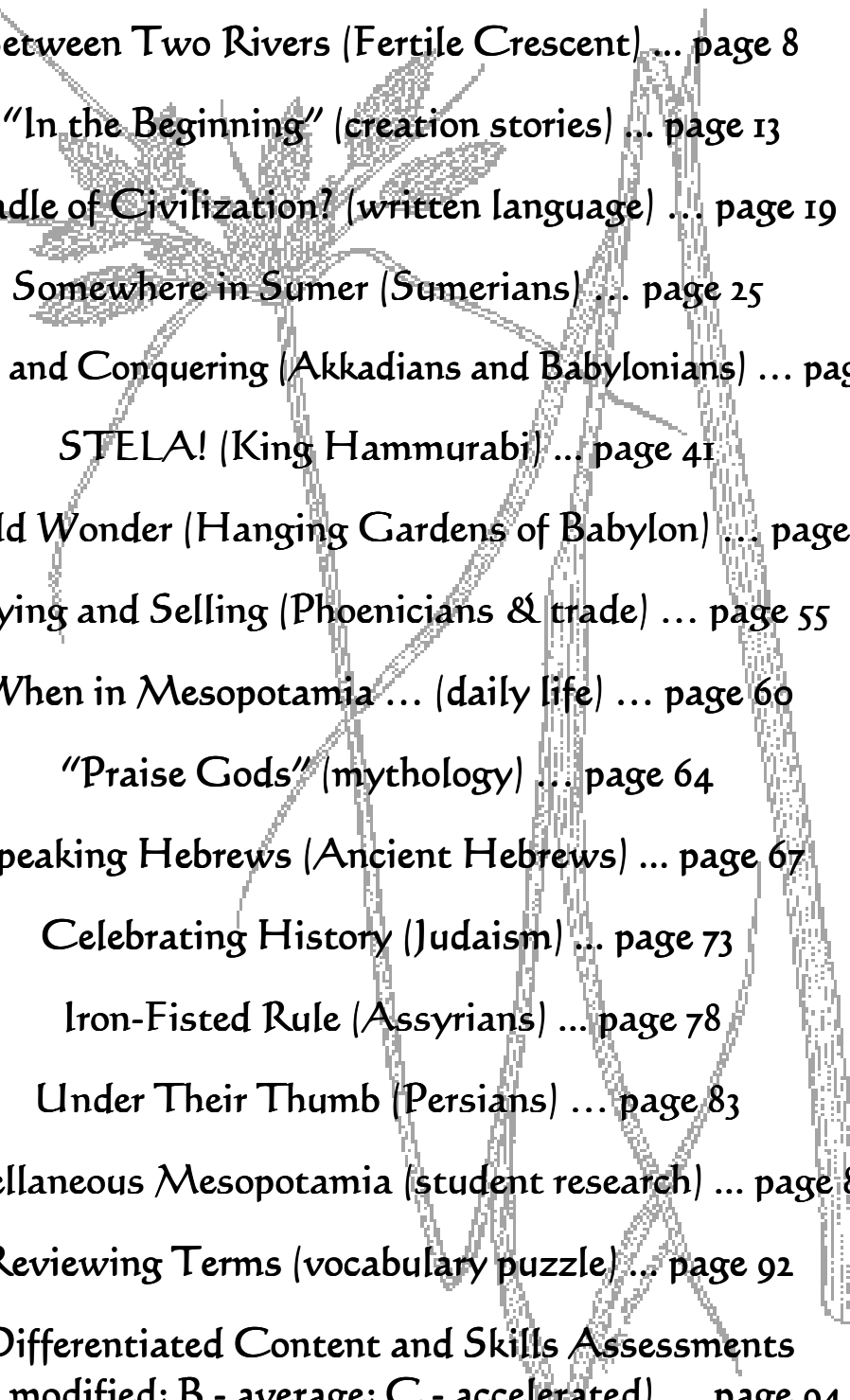
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## Between Two Rivers

### Springboard:

Students should study “The Tigris-Euphrates River Valley” map and answer the questions.

**Objective:** The student will be able to explain why ancient people would have settled in the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley.

**Materials:** The Tigris-Euphrates River Valley (Springboard handout)  
A Rich Land (handout)  
Why There? Why Then? (handout)

**Terms to know:** **Mesopotamia** (also called the Fertile Crescent) - land between and around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers  
**civilization** - an advanced society with high levels of organization and many achievements

### Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that *the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley was home to at least a dozen major ancient civilizations*. Go on to explain that *in this introductory lesson the student(s) will examine the geography of the region to make predictions about the people who lived there*.
- Distribute “A Rich Land” and “Why There? Why Then?” Student(s) should work individually, in pairs, or small groups to study the geographical information and answer the questions to make predictions about the region.
- Have the student(s) share their ideas and discuss. (*Answers may vary and should stimulate some discussion.*) During the discussion, explain that *throughout this unit the students will learn about the people of Ancient Mesopotamia, their lives, and their achievements*.

# The Tigris-Euphrates River Valley

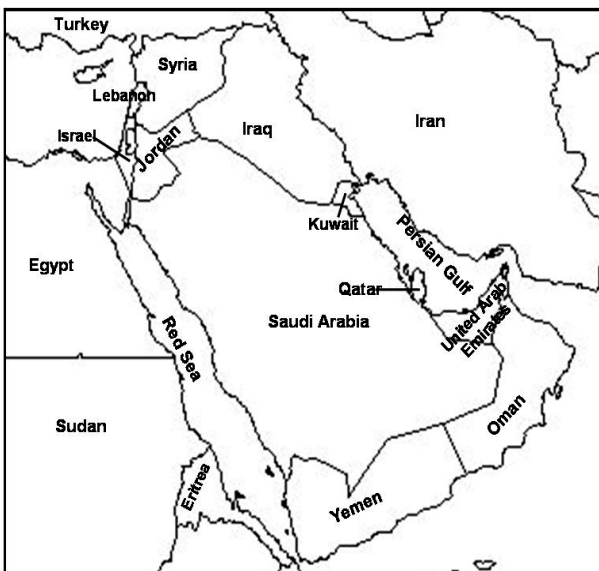


According to the map, the Tigris River flows from the \_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_.

- A. Zagros Mountains ... Persian Gulf
- B. Arabian Sea ... the Euphrates River
- C. Mediterranean Sea ... Indian Ocean
- D. Arabian Peninsula ... Strait of Hormuz

About how far is it from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea at the narrowest point?

- A. 10 miles
- B. 100 miles
- C. 250 miles
- D. 500 miles



**Use both maps to answer:**

In what modern Middle Eastern country is most of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley located?

- A. Saudi Arabia
- B. Syria
- C. Iraq
- D. Iran

What country would be crossed going from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean?

- A. Israel
- B. Egypt
- C. Jordan
- D. Yemen

# The Tigris-Euphrates River Valley Answers and Explanations



According to the map, the Tigris River flows from the \_\_\_ to the \_\_\_.

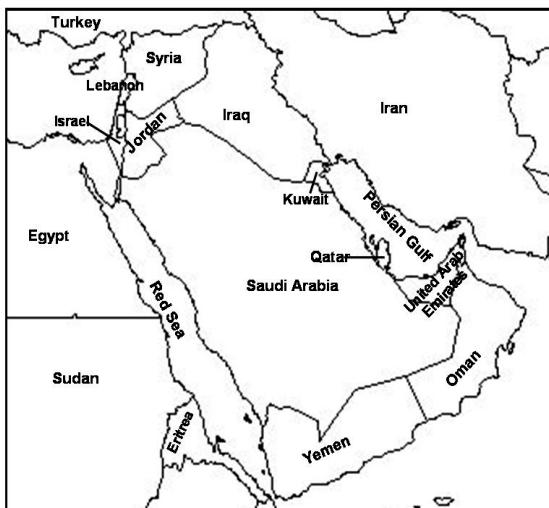
- A. Zagros Mountains ... Persian Gulf \*
- B. Arabian Sea ... the Euphrates River
- C. Mediterranean Sea ... Indian Ocean
- D. Arabian Peninsula ... Strait of Hormuz

*(Most rivers flow from mountains to a sea, and the Tigris is not an exception.)*

About how far is it from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea at the narrowest point?

- A. 10 miles
- B. 100 miles \*
- C. 250 miles
- D. 500 miles

*(The two bodies of water were connected by the Suez Canal in 1869. The waterway is 101 miles or 163 km. long.)*



**Use both maps to answer:**

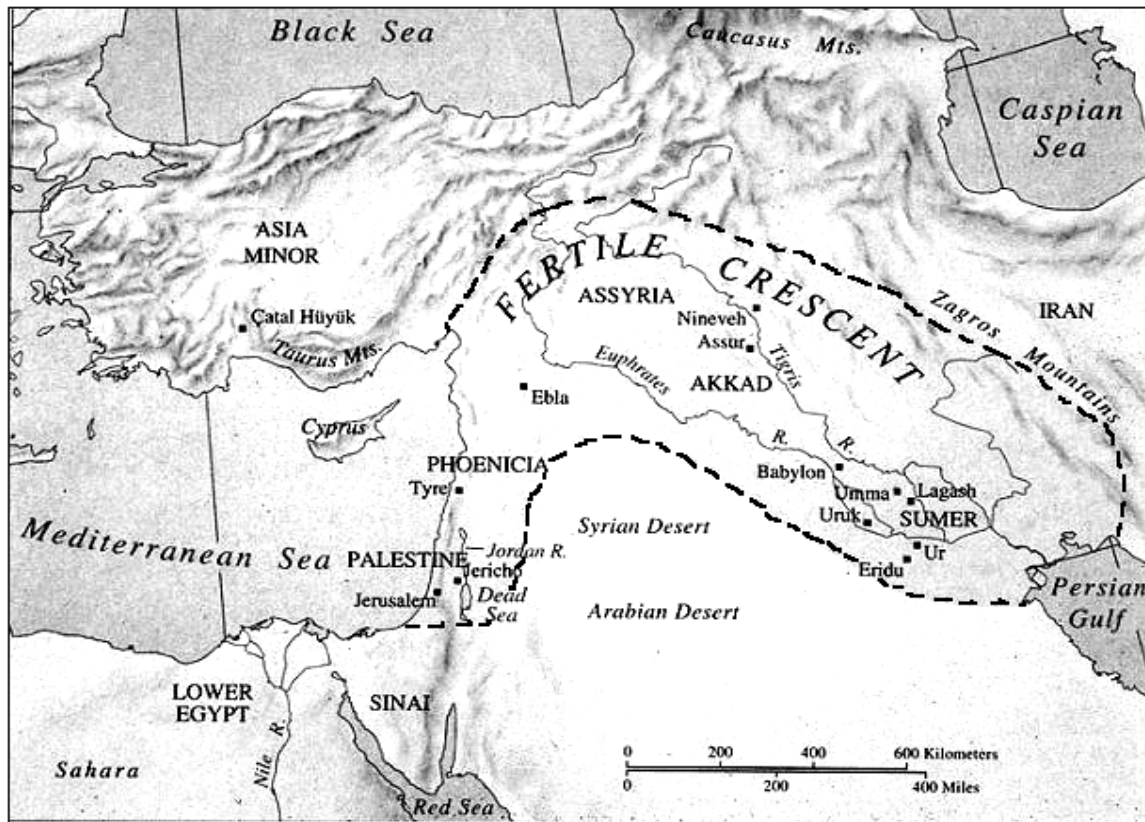
In what modern Middle Eastern country is most of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley located?

- A. Saudi Arabia
  - B. Syria
  - C. Iraq \*
  - D. Iran
- (Most of the two rivers flow through Iraq, but the rivers and floodplains extend into Syria and Turkey.)*

What country would be crossed going from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean?

- A. Israel
  - B. Egypt \*
  - C. Jordan
  - D. Yemen
- (The Suez Canal crosses the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt.)*

# A RICH LAND



The region called Mesopotamia, located between and around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, mostly in modern-day Iraq and Syria, gets its name from a Greek word meaning “between the rivers.” These two rivers flowed southward from the mountains of modern Turkey to the Persian Gulf. Also known as the “Fertile Crescent,” Mesopotamia actually consisted of two main geographic regions: Northern and Southern Mesopotamia.

Northern Mesopotamia was located among hills and plains with very fertile land due to seasonal rains and the rivers and streams that flowed from the mountains. Besides its fertile land, the region also provided timber, metals, and stone for its people to utilize.

Southern Mesopotamia is made up of marshy areas and wide, dry plains. The rivers here would at times overflow their banks depositing rich silt, but floods could also destroy crops and homes in the area. Mesopotamian farmers learned to control the flooding to some degree. They built canals to irrigate the land along the banks of the rivers and help control the water during periods of flooding. Their efforts allowed the people to produce such crops as wheat, barley, sesame, flax, and a variety of fruits and vegetables. Southern Mesopotamia had few natural resources other than farmland, however.

The two rivers in the region differ as well. The Tigris is rough and fast-flowing, unsuitable to river travel and difficult to control. The Euphrates is more easily navigable and its lower banks make irrigation easier. Mountain rains in the north and some rainfall in Southern Mesopotamia were common in winter with hot, sunny weather the rest of the year. For the past two millennia, though, the region’s climate has changed to be dry most of the year.





# Why There? Why Then?

**DIRECTIONS:** Study the lesson information to answer the questions about Mesopotamia and its people.

1. Why do you think so many groups of people established civilizations in Mesopotamia? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Which people lived in the northern part of the river valleys, and what do you think their lives were like? Briefly explain your ideas. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Which people lived in the southern part of the river valleys, and what do you think their lives were like? Briefly explain your ideas. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What do you think might have led to the decline of these civilizations? Briefly explain your ideas. \_\_\_\_\_

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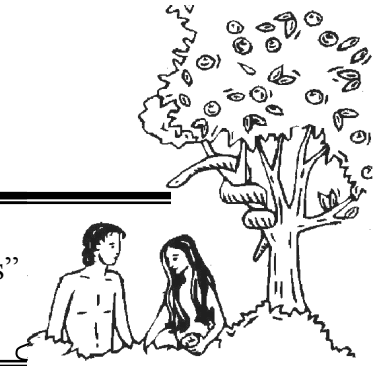
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## “In the Beginning”

### Springboard:

Students should read the excerpt from “Genesis” and answer the questions.



**Objective:** The student will contrast the monotheistic, Old Testament creation story with other creation stories from the Middle East.

**Materials:** Genesis (handout)  
Babylonian Creation (handout)  
Islamic Creation (handout)  
Comparing Creations (handout)

**Terms to know:** **Old Testament** - the holy book of Judaism, which tells the history of the Hebrews (Jewish ancestors)

### Procedure:

- During review of the Springboard, explain that many people believe that the “Garden of Eden” referred to in the Old Testament of the Judeo-Christian Bible was located in Mesopotamia. Have the student(s) generate explanations as to why people may think that. (*Answers may vary, but the area had such fertile land that many groups of people, including the Hebrews who are responsible for writing much of the Bible, settled there.*) Go on to explain that while the Old Testament story is told and read by many people, others in Mesopotamia had their own versions of how creation occurred there.
- Distribute the two creation stories and explain that the Babylonians were a group of people who lived in Mesopotamia around the same time as the Hebrews. The Muslims, who populated the region later, developed the Islamic version of the story. Have student(s) work individually or in small groups to read and analyze the stories to complete “Comparing Creations.”
- Have them share their answers and discuss. (*Similarities include having deities as creators, creation of sky and land, animals, one God as creator in Old Testament and Islamic version, etc. There are differences in the God or gods and how the creation was affected.*)



In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters and God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God separated the light from the darkness; He called the light "Day" and the darkness "Night." And there was evening and there was morning -- the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a great dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the dome which separated the waters below it from the waters that were above. God called the great dome "Sky," and there was evening and morning -- the second day.

Then God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear." God called the dry land "Earth" and the waters that were gathered together he called "Seas." And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants that bear grain and those that bear fruit," so the earth produced all kinds of plants. And there was evening and morning -- the third day.

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky to separate the day from the night; let them be signs for the seasons and for the days and years. Let these shine in the sky to give light to the earth." God made two great lights, the sun to rule over the day and the moon to rule the night; He also made the stars. There was evening and morning -- the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters be filled with living creatures and let the sky be filled with birds." He blessed all the creatures and told them, "Be fruitful and multiply," and there was evening and morning -- the fifth day.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things large and small," and it was done. Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image and likeness and let these humans have power over the fish, the birds, and all of the animals that move upon the earth."

So God created humans, male and female, like Himself; he blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all of the animals that move upon the earth. I have given you all kinds of grain and all types of fruit for you to eat, but for all of the birds and beasts I have provided grass and plants for food."

Then it was done and God looked at everything He had made, and He was pleased. There was evening and morning -- the sixth day.

Based on the reading, which word would be a synonym for "genesis"?

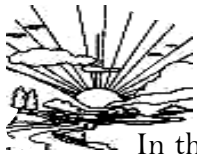
- A. earth
- B. passage
- C. beginning
- D. morning

According to the reading, the earth

- A. had animals before plants.
- B. created the land and sky.
- C. began as a solid mass.
- D. was formed by God.

This story could **BEST** be described as

- A. scientific.
- B. religious.
- C. deceptive.
- D. fictional.



# GENESIS - ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters and God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God separated the light from the darkness; He called the light "Day" and the darkness "Night." And there was evening and there was morning -- the first day.

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Then it was done and God looked at everything He had made, and He was pleased. There was evening and morning -- the sixth day.

Based on the reading, which word would be a synonym for "genesis"? (*The genesis of something is its beginning or creation.*)

A. earth	C. beginning *
B. passage	D. morning

According to the reading, the earth

A. had animals before plants.	<i>(This answer should be fairly straightforward since A, B, and C are all false.)</i>
B. created the land and sky.	
C. began as a solid mass.	
D. was formed by God. *	

This story could **BEST** be described as

A. scientific.	<i>(This question is also obvious since God is referenced throughout.)</i>
B. religious. *	
C. deceptive.	
D. fictional.	