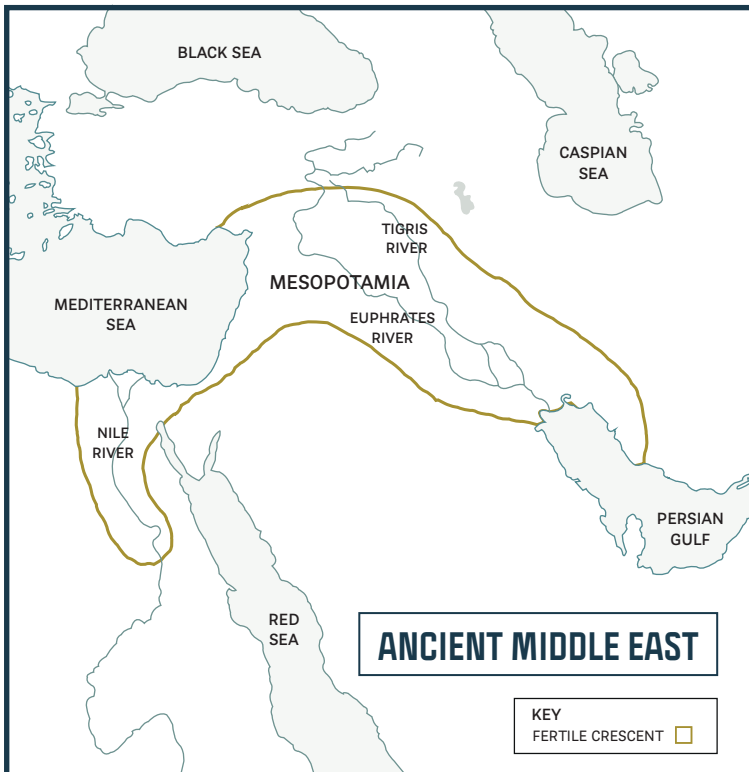


# Ancient Middle East Civilizations: Lasting Contributions



The people of the ancient Middle East built advanced societies. Their lasting contributions spread to neighboring areas and influenced future civilizations.



This map shows some key regions of the ancient Middle East.

The **Fertile Crescent** is a curved slice of land running from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. Several ancient civilizations developed in this slice of land because the fertile soil made it possible to grow crops there.

**Mesopotamia** is the Greek word for "between the rivers," and it refers to the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. So, Mesopotamia is not the name of a civilization. It is a reference to an area within the Fertile Crescent where several early civilizations developed.

**Directions:** Read the list of contributions for each ancient Middle Eastern civilization. Then follow the instructions on page 4.

## Civilization: **Sumer**

**Location:** the southern part of Mesopotamia, now part of present-day Iraq

**Approximate Dates:**  
4500 BCE – 1900 BCE



Sumerian cuneiform



Ziggurat temple

## SUMERIAN CONTRIBUTIONS:




Sample answers

- Developed **cuneiform**, one of the first written languages
- Made improvements to farming, including using the wheel, plow, and irrigation systems
- Created a **number system based on 60**, which established the model for dividing an hour into 60 minutes and a circle into 360 degrees
- Developed transportation technology such as the sailboat and the chariot
- Wrote *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the first surviving story about a human superhero
- Built **ziggurat** temples to honor their gods

★
■
●
■
★
▲ ■

# Ancient Middle East Civilizations: Lasting Contributions

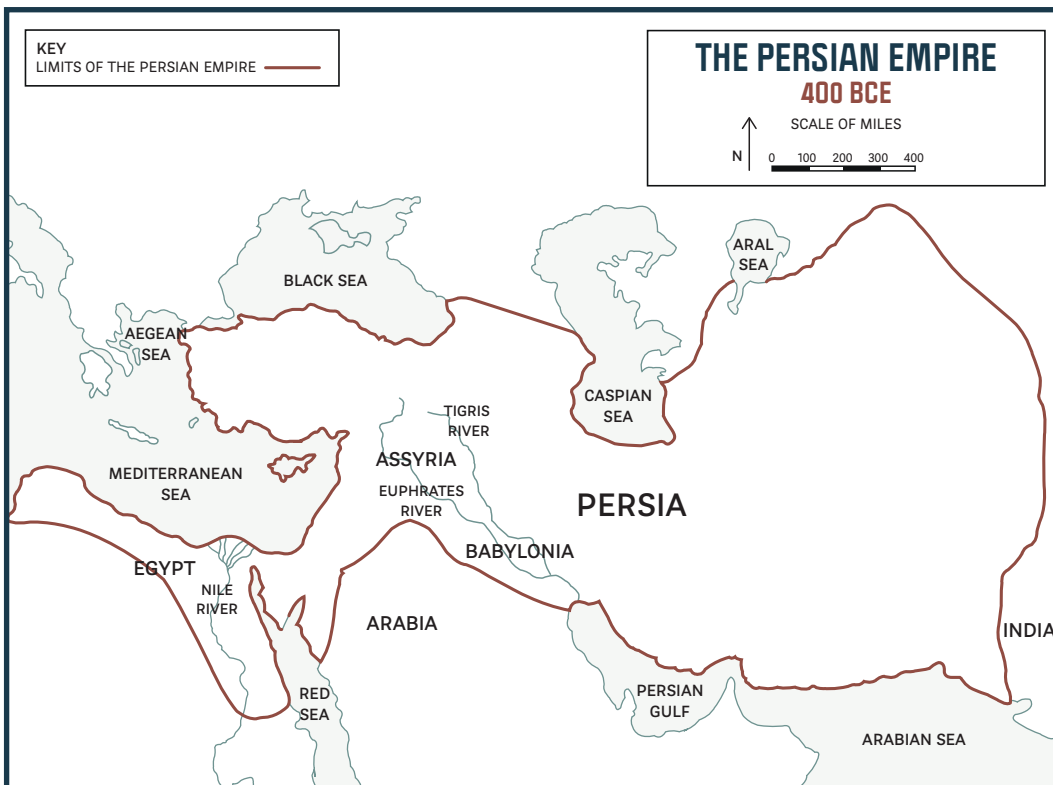
**Keep going!** Read the list of contributions for each civilization. Then follow the instructions on page 4.

<p><b>Civilization: Babylon</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> based in the central-southern part of Mesopotamia, now part of present-day Iraq and Syria</p> <p><b>Approximate Dates:</b> 2000 BCE – 600 BCE</p>  <p><i>Hanging Gardens</i></p>	<p><b>BABYLONIAN CONTRIBUTIONS:</b> <span style="float: right;">Sample answers</span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established <b>Hammurabi’s Code of Laws</b>, with clearly defined crimes and punishments (“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”) <span style="float: right;">▲</span></li> <li>• Built the <b>Hanging Gardens of Babylon</b>, one of the Seven Ancient Wonders, using water pumps and irrigation systems to support flowers and vegetation <span style="float: right;">■</span></li> <li>• Advanced mathematics and <b>astronomy</b>, studying comets, eclipses, and the position of stars <span style="float: right;">●</span></li> <li>• Calculated the length of a year within days <span style="float: right;">●</span></li> </ul>
<p><b>Civilization: Assyria</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> the northern part of the Fertile Crescent, now parts of present-day Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey</p> <p><b>Approximate Dates:</b> 900 BCE – 600 BCE</p>  <p><i>Nineveh Library</i></p>	<p><b>ASSYRIAN CONTRIBUTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created an advanced army using <b>iron weapons</b> and a calvary <span style="float: right;">■</span></li> <li>• Built roads to allow armies to move more quickly <span style="float: right;">■</span></li> <li>• Built a <b>library</b> in their capital city, Nineveh, preserving and archiving over 22,000 Sumerian clay tablets written in cuneiform <span style="float: right;">★ ■</span></li> </ul>
<p><b>Civilization: Phoenicia</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> the western Mediterranean coast of the Fertile Crescent, now parts of present-day Lebanon, Syria, and Israel</p> <p><b>Approximate Dates:</b> 1500 BCE – 300 BCE</p>  <p><i>Phoenician traders</i></p>	<p><b>PHOENICIAN CONTRIBUTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Known as the “<b>carriers of civilization</b>” for their role in spreading goods, ideas, and religious and cultural practices through trade <span style="float: right;">★ ■ ▲ ●</span></li> <li>• Developed a purple dye made from tiny sea snails and used it to create the exclusive purple cloth worn by royalty <span style="float: right;">■</span></li> <li>• Created a <b>22-symbol alphabet</b> that represented vowel and consonant sounds (“<b>phonetic</b>”) and was easier than cuneiform to learn <span style="float: right;">★</span></li> </ul>

# Ancient Middle East Civilizations: Lasting Contributions

**Keep going!** Read the list of contributions for each civilization. Then follow the instructions on page 4.

<p><b>Civilization: Kingdom of Israel</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> the western coastal part of the Fertile Crescent, present-day Israel</p> <p><b>Approximate Dates:</b> 1040 BCE – 930 BCE</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Sample answers</b></p> <p><b>HEBREW CONTRIBUTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed the first lasting <b>monotheistic religious system</b> <input type="text" value="▲"/></li> <li>Followed the <b>Ten Commandments</b>, a religion-based outline of prescribed behavior <input type="text" value="▲"/></li> <li>Established laws in the <i>Torah</i> that promoted an ethical world view, identifying a sense of right and wrong <input type="text" value="▲"/></li> </ul>
<p><b>Civilization: Persia</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> along the eastern coast of the Persian Gulf and into southwestern Asia, present-day Iran</p> <p><b>Approximate Dates:</b> 560 BCE – 330 BCE</p>	<p><b>PERSIAN CONTRIBUTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established the largest empire in the ancient Middle East <input type="text"/></li> <li>Built the <b>Great Royal Road</b> across the empire to expand transportation and communication <input type="text" value="★ ■"/></li> <li>Developed a religious system called <b>Zoroastrianism</b>, based on the concept of a day of final judgment and choosing to follow a god of “good” or a god of “evil” <input type="text" value="▲"/></li> </ul>



## Ancient Middle East Civilizations: Lasting Contributions

Look back at pages 1–3 and review the accomplishments of the six ancient Middle East civilizations to identify common themes. In the empty box next to each contribution, draw symbols to categorize the contribution. Some contributions may have multiple symbols, and some may not have any.

- Draw a ✨ next to contributions to **writing and literature**. See symbols on pages 1–3. Student answers may vary.
- Draw a ▲ next to contributions to **religion, law, or ethical behavior**.
- Draw a ● next to contributions to advancement in **math and science**.
- Draw a ■ next to contributions to practical **advances for everyday life** (in building, farming, trade, or transportation).

**Take it a step further!** Write a paragraph answering the following prompt. Sample answers

The civilizations of the ancient Middle East made advances that continue to impact our world today. Identify significant examples of advances or contributions, and explain the impact each still has in our contemporary lives.

Answers will vary but might include the following:

- The Sumerians created a number system based on 60. Today, we divide hours into 60 minutes and circles into 360 degrees.
- The Babylonians established Hammurabi's Code of Laws. Today, governments have clearly defined laws with references to specific crimes and punishments.
- The Assyrians used iron weapons in warfare. Today, militaries still use iron and other strong metals in war machinery.
- The Assyrians established a library that archived and preserved written records. Today, we continue to archive written records in libraries and use the model of a library to store digital records on computers.
- Today, the monotheistic philosophy established by the ancient Hebrews is part of the the core beliefs of both Christianity and Islam.