

Later Peoples of the Fertile Crescent

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. The Babylonians conquered Mesopotamia and created a code of law.
2. Invasions of Mesopotamia changed the region's culture.
3. The Phoenicians built a trading society in the eastern Mediterranean region.

The Big Idea

After the Sumerians, many cultures ruled parts of the Fertile Crescent.

Key Terms and Places

- Babylon, p. 132
- Hammurabi's Code, p. 133
- chariot, p. 134
- alphabet, p. 137



Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the later empires of the Fertile Crescent.

If YOU lived there...

You are a noble in ancient Babylon, an adviser to the great king Hammurabi. One of your duties is to collect all the laws of the kingdom. They will be carved on a tall block of black stone and placed in the temple. The king asks your opinion about the punishments for certain crimes. For example, should common people be punished more harshly than nobles?

How will you advise the king?

BUILDING BACKGROUND Many peoples invaded Mesopotamia. A series of kings conquered the lands between the rivers. Each new culture inherited the earlier achievements of the Sumerians. Some of the later invasions of the region also introduced new skills and ideas that still influence civilization today, such as a written law code.

The Babylonians Conquer Mesopotamia

Although Ur rose to glory after the death of Sargon, repeated foreign attacks drained its strength. By 2000 BC, Ur lay in ruins. With Ur's power gone, several waves of invaders battled to gain control of Mesopotamia.

Rise of Babylon

Babylon was home to one such group. That city was located on the Euphrates near what is now Baghdad, Iraq. Babylon had once been a Sumerian town. By 1800 BC, however, it was home to a powerful government of its own. In 1792 BC, Hammurabi (ham-uh-RAHB-ee) became Babylon's king. He would become the city's greatest ruler.

Hammurabi's Code

Hammurabi was a brilliant war leader. His armies fought many battles to expand his power. Eventually, Hammurabi brought all of Mesopotamia into his empire, called the Babylonian Empire after his capital city.

Hammurabi was not only skilled on the battlefield, though. He was also an able ruler who could govern a huge empire. He used tax money to pay for building and irrigation projects. He also brought wealth through increased trade. Hammurabi is best known, however, for his code of laws.

Hammurabi's Code was a set of 282 laws that dealt with almost every part of daily life. There were laws on everything from trade, loans, and theft to marriage, injury, and murder. It contained some ideas that are still found in laws today.

Under Hammurabi's Code, each crime brought a specific penalty. However, social class did matter. For example, injuring a rich man brought a greater penalty than injuring a poor man.

Hammurabi's Code was important not only for how thorough it was but also because it was written down for all to see. People all over the empire could read exactly what was against the law.

Hammurabi ruled for 42 years. During his reign, Babylon became the major city in Mesopotamia. However, after his death, Babylonian power declined. The kings that followed faced invasions from the people Hammurabi had conquered. Before long, the Babylonian Empire came to an end.

READING CHECK Analyzing What was Hammurabi's most important accomplishment?

Primary Source

HISTORIC DOCUMENT

Hammurabi's Code

The Babylonian ruler Hammurabi is credited with putting together the earliest known written collection of laws. The code set down rules for both criminal and civil law and informed citizens about what was expected of them.

196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.
197. If he break another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.
198. If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold mina.
199. If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.
221. If a physician heal the broken bone or diseased soft part of a man, the patient shall pay the physician five shekels in money.
222. If he were a freed man he shall pay three shekels.
223. If he were a slave his owner shall pay the physician two shekels.

—Hammurabi, from *The Code of Hammurabi*, translated by L. W. King

**ANALYSIS
SKILL**

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

How do you think Hammurabi's code of laws affected citizens of that time?



Invasions of Mesopotamia

Several other civilizations developed in and around the Fertile Crescent. As their armies battled for land, control of the region passed from one empire to another.

Hittites and Kassites

A people known as the Hittites built a strong kingdom in Asia Minor, in what is today Turkey. Their success came, in part, from two key military advantages they had over rivals. First, the Hittites were among the first people to master ironworking. This meant they could make stronger weapons than their foes. Second, the Hittite army skillfully used the **chariot**, a wheeled, horse-drawn cart used in battle. Chariots allowed Hittite soldiers to move quickly around a battlefield. Archers riding in the chariots fired arrows at the enemy.

Using these advantages, Hittite forces captured Babylon around 1595 BC. Hittite rule did not last long, however. Soon after taking Babylon, the Hittite king was killed by an assassin. The kingdom plunged into chaos. The Kassites, a people who lived north of Babylon, captured the city and ruled for almost 400 years.

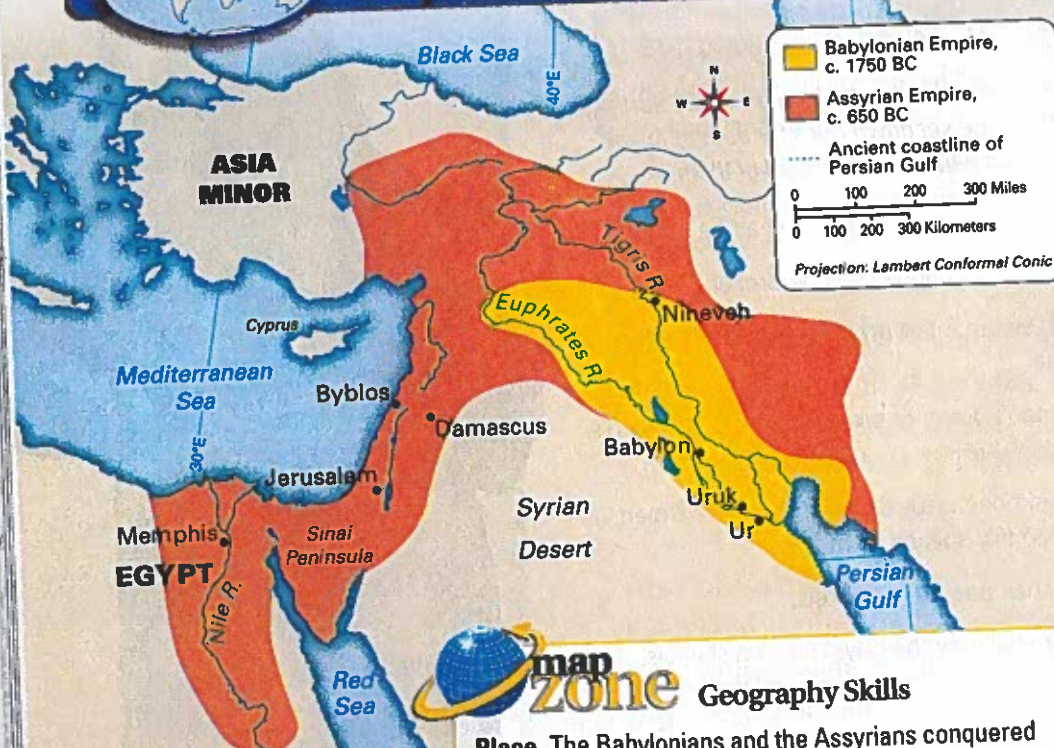
Assyrians

Later, in the 1200s BC, a group called the Assyrians (uh-SIR-ee-unz) from northern Mesopotamia briefly gained control of Babylon. However, their empire was soon overrun by invaders. After this defeat, the Assyrians took about 300 years to recover their strength. Then, starting about 900 BC, they began to conquer all of the Fertile Crescent. They even took over parts of Asia Minor and Egypt.

FOCUS ON READING

Make sure you understand this paragraph by restating it in your own words.

Babylonian and Assyrian Empires



map zone Geography Skills

Place The Babylonians and the Assyrians conquered much of the Fertile Crescent.

1. Name What region in the southwest did the Assyrian Empire include?

The key to the Assyrians' success was their strong army. Like the Hittites, the Assyrians used iron weapons and chariots. The army was very well organized, and every soldier knew his role.

The Assyrians were fierce in battle. Before attacking, they spread terror by looting villages and burning crops. Anyone who still dared to resist them was killed.

After conquering the Fertile Crescent, the Assyrians ruled from their capital city, Nineveh (NI-nuh-vuh). They demanded heavy taxes from across the empire. Areas that resisted the Assyrians' demands were harshly punished.

Assyrian kings ruled their large empire through local leaders. Each governed a small area, collected taxes, enforced laws, and raised troops for the army. Roads were built to link distant parts of the empire. Messengers on horseback were sent to deliver orders to faraway officials.

Chaldeans

In 652 BC a series of wars broke out in the Assyrian Empire over who should rule. These wars greatly weakened the empire.

Sensing this weakness, the Chaldeans (kal-DEE-unz), a group from the Syrian Desert, led other peoples in an attack on the Assyrians. In 612 BC, they destroyed Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire.

In its place, the Chaldeans set up a new empire of their own. Nebuchadnezzar (neb-uh-kuhd-NEZ-uhr), the most famous Chaldean king, rebuilt Babylon into a beautiful city. According to legend, his grand palace featured the famous Hanging Gardens. Trees and flowers grew on its terraces and roofs. From the ground the gardens seemed to hang in the air.

The Chaldeans greatly admired the ideas and culture of the Sumerians. They studied the Sumerian language and built temples to Sumerian gods.

At the same time, Babylon became a center for astronomy. Chaldeans charted the positions of the stars and kept track of economic, political, and weather events. They also created a calendar and solved complex problems of geometry.

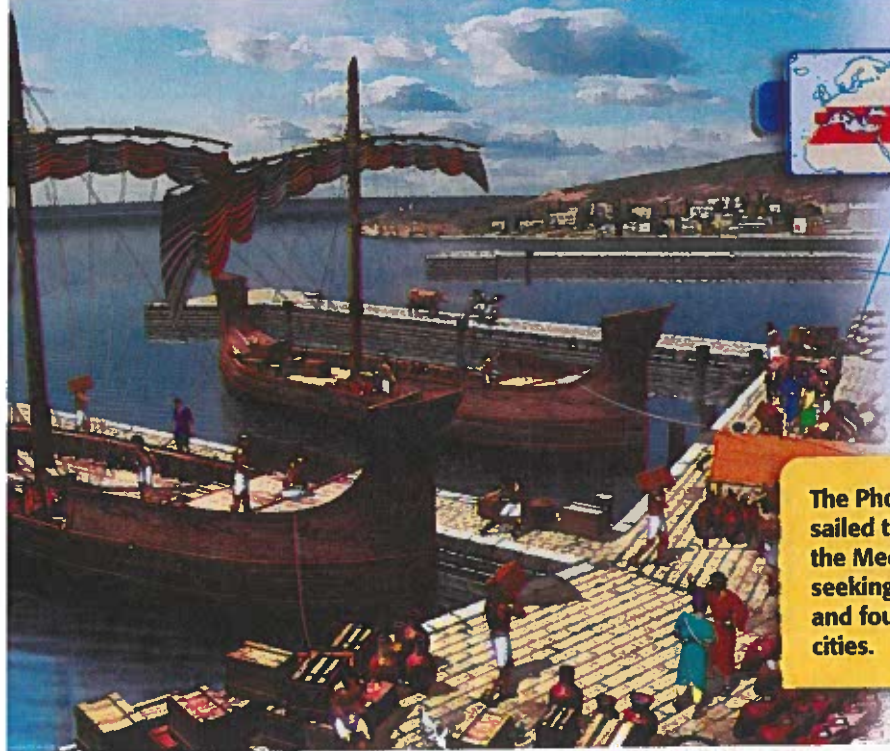
READING CHECK **Sequencing** List in order the peoples who ruled Mesopotamia.



The Assyrian Army

The Assyrian army was the most powerful fighting force the world had ever seen. Large and well organized, it featured iron weapons, war chariots, and giant war machines used to knock down city walls.

ANALYZING VISUALS What kinds of weapons can you see in this carving?



Phoenicia, c. 800 BC

The Phoenicians sailed throughout the Mediterranean, seeking trade goods and founding new cities.

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Strait of Gibraltar

SPAIN

ALPES MOUNTAINS

The Phoenicians

At the western end of the Fertile Crescent, along the Mediterranean Sea, was a land known as Phoenicia (fi-NI-shuh). It was not home to a great military power and was often ruled by foreign governments. Nevertheless, the Phoenicians created a wealthy trading society.

Geography of Phoenicia

Today the nation of Lebanon occupies most of what was Phoenicia. Mountains border the region to the north and east. To the west lies the Mediterranean.

The Phoenicians were largely an urban people. Among their chief cities were Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos. These three cities, like many Phoenician cities, still exist today.

Phoenicia had few resources. One thing it did have, however, was cedar. Cedar trees were prized for their timber, a valuable trade item. But Phoenicia's overland trade routes were blocked by mountains and hostile neighbors. Phoenicians had to look to the sea for a way to trade.

THE IMPACT TODAY

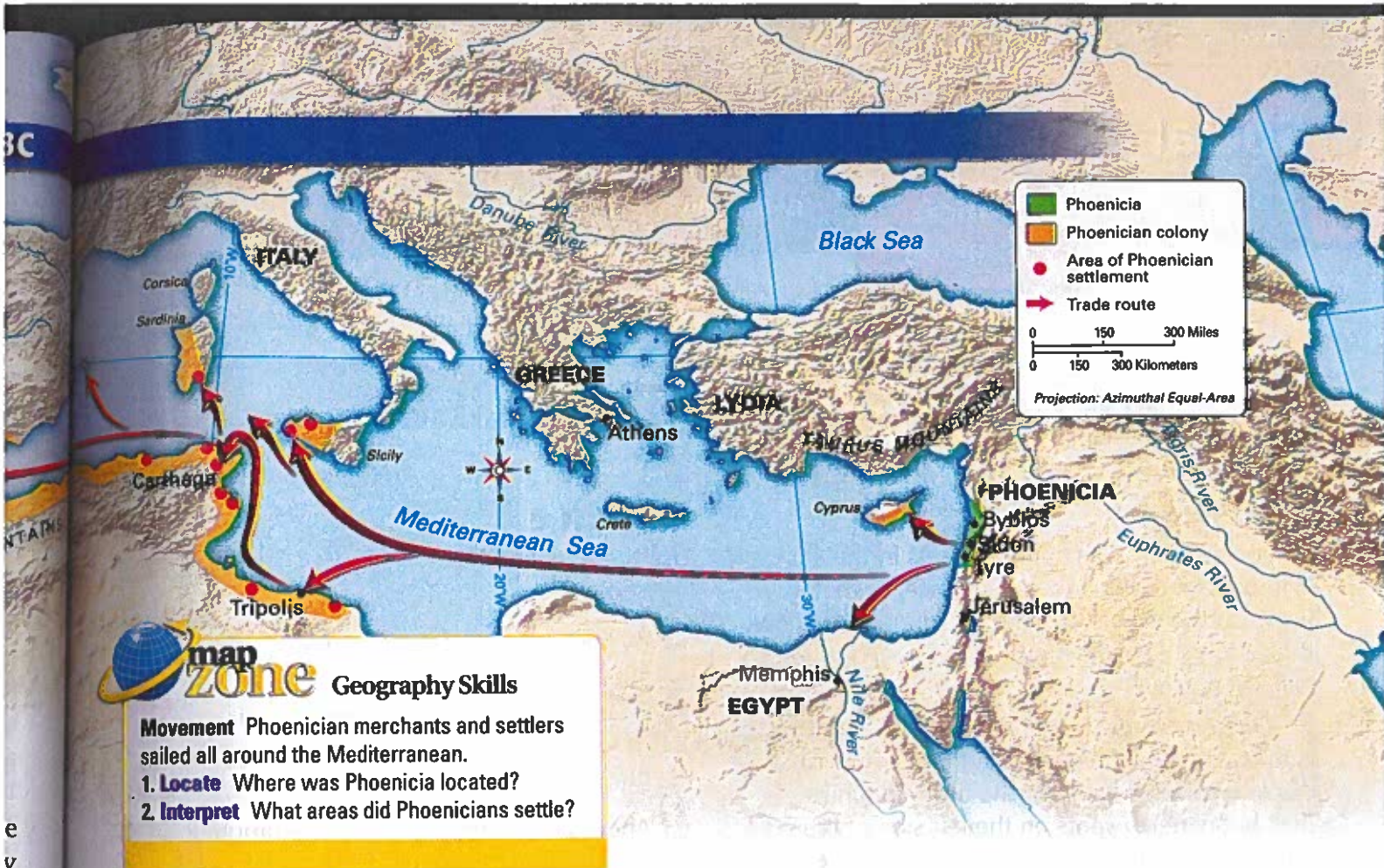
Because so many cedar trees have been cut down in Lebanon's forests over the years, very few trees remain.

Expansion of Trade

Motivated by a desire for trade, the people of Phoenicia became expert sailors. They built one of the world's finest harbors at the city of Tyre. Fleets of fast Phoenician trading ships sailed to ports all around the Mediterranean Sea. Traders traveled to Egypt, Greece, Italy, Sicily, and Spain. They even passed through the Strait of Gibraltar to reach the Atlantic Ocean.

The Phoenicians founded several new colonies along their trade routes. Carthage (KAHR-thij), located on the northern coast of Africa, was the most famous of these. It later became one of the most powerful cities on the Mediterranean.

Phoenicia grew wealthy from its trade. Besides lumber, the Phoenicians traded silverwork, ivory carvings, and slaves. They also made and sold beautiful glass items. In addition, the Phoenicians made purple dye from a type of shellfish. They then traded cloth that had been dyed with this purple color. Phoenician purple fabric was very popular with rich people all around the Mediterranean.



map zone Geography Skills

Movement Phoenician merchants and settlers sailed all around the Mediterranean.

- 1. Locate** Where was Phoenicia located?
- 2. Interpret** What areas did Phoenicians settle?

The Phoenicians' most important achievement, however, wasn't a trade good. To record their activities, Phoenician traders developed one of the world's first alphabets. An **alphabet** is a set of letters that can be combined to form words. This development made writing much easier. It had a major impact on the ancient world and on our own. In fact, the alphabet we use today is based on the Phoenicians'.

READING CHECK **Finding Main Ideas** What were the Phoenicians' main achievements?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW Many peoples ruled in the Fertile Crescent after the Sumerians. Some made contributions that are still valued today. Next, you will learn about two religions that developed in the Fertile Crescent and are still alive today—Judaism and Christianity.

Section 4 Assessment hmhsocialstudies.com
ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- a. Identify** Where was **Babylon** located?

b. Analyze What does **Hammurabi's Code** reveal about Babylonian society?
- a. Describe** What two advantages did Hittite soldiers have over their opponents?

b. Rank Which empire discussed in this section do you feel contributed the most to modern-day society? Why?
- a. Identify** For what trade goods were the Phoenicians known? For what else were they known?

b. Analyze How did Phoenicia grow wealthy?

Critical Thinking

- 4. Categorizing** Use your note-taking diagram with the names of the empires. List at least one advance or achievement made by each empire.



FOCUS ON WRITING

- 5. Gathering Information About Later Peoples** Several different peoples contributed to civilization in the Fertile Crescent after the Sumerians. Which ones, if any, will you include on your poster? What will you show?