

Ancient Civilization Outline

- Understanding Western History
 - Describing the West
 - The “West” as a concept has a very long history, one that began with the Greeks and Romans.
 - Greco-Roman ideas about the West were passed on to people who lived in western and northern Europe.
 - In the early twentieth century, many intellectual and educational leaders encouraged the establishment of college and university courses focusing on “western civilization.”
 - After World War II, divisions between East and West changed again.
 - What Is History, and Why?
 - The term “history” comes from the Greek word *historie*.
 - Historians examine a variety of evidence.
 - Historians receive help from both literary and nonliterary sources.
 - Historians must try to distinguish between reliable and unreliable evidence.
 - Historians use evidence to establish facts or to explain the meaning of their findings.
 - A number of factors complicate our efforts to arrive at an accurate understanding of the past.
- From Caves to Towns
 - The Neolithic Contribution
 - From perhaps 400,000 to 7,000 b.c., early human beings survived as hunter-gatherers in extended family units.
 - This period is known as the Paleolithic, or “Old Stone Age,” from the primitive stone tools and weapons these people produced.
 - Around 7,000 b.c., an obvious transformation began: some hunter-gatherer societies began to rely chiefly on agriculture for their subsistence.
 - Neolithic peoples contributed a great deal to the development of human society, including systematic agriculture, writing, sedentary living, and improved tools and weapons.
 - Stonehenge and other stone circles scattered throughout Great Britain, Ireland, and Brittany were built by Neolithic societies that must have been prosperous, well organized, and centrally led.
- Mesopotamian Civilization
 - The Invention of Writing and the First Schools
 - Writing appears to have begun at Sumer.
 - The Sumerian pictographic form evolved by the fourth millennium into cuneiform (“wedge-shaped”) writing.
 - The signs in the cuneiform system later became ideograms and evolved into an intricate system of communication.
 - The writing system was so complicated that only professional scribes mastered it.
 - Scribal schools flourished throughout Sumer.
 - Although practical, scribal schools were also centers of culture and learning. These schools set the standard for all of Mesopotamia.
 - Mesopotamian Thought and Religion
 - Mesopotamians made great strides in mathematics, medicine, and religion.
 - Mesopotamian religion was polytheistic; gods and goddesses existed to represent almost everything in the cosmos.
 - The gods were much like human beings, only with supernatural powers.
 - In Mesopotamian religion, we find attempts to explain the origins of mankind.
 - There are numerous myths woven into the Mesopotamian religious tapestry.
 - Additionally, there is the Sumerian epic of creation, The Epic of Gilgamesh. Its hero, Gilgamesh, is a wandering king who seeks immortality.
 - Sumerian Social and Gender Divisions
 - The arid and harsh environment of Sumer fostered a religion based on placating a pantheon of harsh and capricious gods and goddesses.

- Sumerian society was a complex arrangement of freedom and dependence.
- Sumerian society was organized into four classes of people: nobles, free clients of the nobility, commoners, and slaves.
- Each of these social classes included both men and women, but their experiences were not the same.
- Sumerian society was patriarchal.
- The states that developed in the ancient Middle East further heightened gender divisions.

- The Spread of Mesopotamian Culture
 - The Triumph of Babylon
 - The Babylonians united Mesopotamia politically and culturally.
 - Babylon's best-known king, Hammurabi (ca 1792–1750 b.c.), forged a vibrant Sumero-Babylonian culture through conquest and assimilation.
 - Life under Hammurabi
 - Hammurabi also created one of the world's earliest comprehensive law codes, which today provides much useful information on daily life in ancient Mesopotamia.
 - Under the code, the law differed according to social status and punishments were meant to fit the crime.
 - The code dealt with all aspects of daily life.

- Egypt, the Land of the Pharaohs (3100–1200 b.c.)
 - The God-King of Egypt
 - Egyptian society revolved around the life-giving waters of the Nile River.
 - The regularity of the Nile's floods and the fertility of its mud made agriculture productive and dependable.
 - By around 3100 b.c., there were some forty agricultural communities along the Nile.
 - The Nile, deserts, and the Mediterranean Sea isolated Egypt. This isolation afforded centuries of peace for Egypt.
 - During this pacific period, Egypt developed a vital civilization.
 - Sometime around 3100 b.c., Egypt was united under the rule of a single great king, or "pharaoh."
 - Egyptian religion was a complex polytheism rooted in the environment.
 - The most powerful gods were Amon, associated with the annual floods of the Nile, and Ra, the sun god.
 - Central to the religion was pharaoh's place in the pantheon of gods and goddesses—his presence assured the people that the gods cared for them.
 - The pharaoh's ostentation reflected his power.
 - The famous pyramids attest to the power and prestige of the pharaoh.
 - The Pharaoh's People
 - Common people were at the mercy of government officials.
 - The agricultural year was routine and dependable.
 - Egyptian society featured a mixture of freedom and constraint.
 - To ancient Egyptians, the pharaoh embodied justice and order.
 - The Hyksos in Egypt (1640–1570 b.c.)
 - Around 1800 b.c., people whom the Egyptians called the Hyksos began to settle in the Nile Delta.
 - The Egyptians portrayed the Hyksos as a conquering horde, but they were probably just nomads looking for good land.
 - The Hyksos brought with them skill in bronze making and casting.
 - The New Kingdom: Revival and Empire (1570–1075 b.c.)
 - Following a period of domination by the Hyksos, a new line of pharaohs extended Egyptian rule into Palestine and Syria.
 - Akhenaten (r. 1367–1350 b.c.) was more concerned with religion than conquest.
 - He developed a kind of monotheism.

- The Hittites and the End of an Era (ca 1640–1100 b.c.)
 - The Coming of the Hittites (ca. 1640–1200 b.c.)
 - The Hittites, an Indo-European people settled in Anatolia, became a major power in the Near East around 1600 b.c., conquering the northern part of the Babylonian empire.

- After about 1300 b.c. and the Battle of Kadesh in Syria, the Hittites, the Egyptian New Kingdom, and the Babylonian empire cooperated in a kind of *détente*.
- The Fall of Empires and the Survival of Cultures (ca 1200 b.c.)
 - In the late thirteenth century b.c., invaders destroyed the Hittite Empire and severely disrupted Egypt.
 - Egyptians and Mesopotamians established basic social, economic, and cultural patterns in the ancient Near East.