

# HOW WORDS CHANGED THE WORLD: THE INVENTION OF WRITING

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

The development of written language in Mesopotamia took place over a period of about 600 years, beginning with the first picture-based communication and advancing to wedge-shaped cuneiform written language.

## ACCESS

### WITH A PARENT OR PARTNER

Like water and the wheel, written communication is something many people take for granted. In general, how often do you write every day? When do you write? What do you use to write? How often do you read written words? Share your answers with a parent or partner.

### BUILDING BACKGROUND

The chapter explains the long process in the development of written language. A good way to keep track of this development is to use a sequence of events graphic organizer like the one on page 9 of this workbook. Copy the chart in your history journal. In the first box, write *Tokens used for counting*, along with the approximate date of this development, 8000 BCE. List other stages in the process in the connecting boxes as you read through the chapter.

## WORD BANK

alkali

Find the list on page 36 where the word *alkali* first appears. Rewrite the list, replacing this word with its definition. \_\_\_\_\_

### THINK ABOUT IT

On the list where *alkali* appears, all portions of beer, bread, and onions are different. Why do you think everyone gets the same portion of alkali?

\_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT HAPPENED WHEN?

About 8000 BCE \_\_\_\_\_

About 3350 BCE \_\_\_\_\_

About 3200 BCE \_\_\_\_\_

About 3000 BCE \_\_\_\_\_

About 2600 BCE \_\_\_\_\_

About 2400 BCE \_\_\_\_\_

## TIMELINE

Review the timeline in Chapter 3. Copy the timeline graphic organizer on page 9 of this study guide in your history journal. Make a timeline that combines important events in the development of writing above with important developments in technology from Chapter 3.

## COMPREHENSION

### SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The following sentences describe events in the development of written language. Write *before* or *after* in the blanks to correctly complete each sentence.

1. Tokens were used to keep records \_\_\_\_\_ picture-based writing was developed.
2. Messages traveled long distances \_\_\_\_\_ sealed clay cylinders were developed.
3. Pillow-shaped tablets were used for communication \_\_\_\_\_ clay balls were used.
4. Sharpened reeds were used to write symbols \_\_\_\_\_ tokens were developed.
5. Pictograms were used to make nouns \_\_\_\_\_ sounds were developed for other parts of speech.
6. Cuneiform writing was developed \_\_\_\_\_ pictogram communication.
7. City leaders used writing for keeping lists \_\_\_\_\_ scribes began to write lists, hymns, and inscriptions.
8. Judges and priests learned to write \_\_\_\_\_ scribes did.

### WORKING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

Proverbs from Mesopotamia (2000 BCE)

The list on page 36 was written in 2040 BCE. The sayings below were written about 40 years later. Read the sayings and complete the sentences that follow.

Whoever has walked with truth generates life.

Wealth is hard to come by, but poverty is always at hand.

He who acquires many things must keep close watch over them.

A boat bent on honest pursuits sails downstream with the wind.

He who drinks too much beer must drink water.

He who eats too much will not be able to sleep.

May the goddess Inanna bestow upon you broad-armed sons; may she seek out for you a place of happiness.

The poor are the silent ones of the land.

1. The sayings suggest that one problem in Mesopotamian society was \_\_\_\_\_ (a) disease. \_\_\_\_\_ (b) crime. \_\_\_\_\_ (c) wealth. \_\_\_\_\_ (d) poverty.
2. On which quality did Mesopotamian society place a high value?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (a) intelligence \_\_\_\_\_ (b) power \_\_\_\_\_ (c) honesty \_\_\_\_\_ (d) wealth
3. The people of Mesopotamia were aware that  
\_\_\_\_\_ (a) it is unhealthy to drink too much beer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) beer costs more than water.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (c) underage drinking was a problem.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (d) alcoholism is a disease.
4. People in Mesopotamia were aware that overeating could cause  
\_\_\_\_\_ (a) weight gain. \_\_\_\_\_ (c) food shortage.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) indigestion. \_\_\_\_\_ (d) fatigue.
5. Why would a person wishing you good luck in Mesopotamia desire that you might have "broad-armed sons"?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### WRITE ABOUT IT

In your history journal, write three sayings in the same style: Write one about honesty. Write one comparing wealth to poverty. Write one that offers good wishes or happiness to a friend.

# A WORLD FULL OF GODS AND GODDESSES: RELIGION IN MESOPOTAMIA

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

Mesopotamians worshipped a wide variety of gods whose powers were reflected in the natural surroundings of Mesopotamia.

## ACCESS

### WITH A PARENT OR PARTNER

This chapter will explain how Mesopotamians defined the term *world*. With a partner, talk about what you think of when you hear this word. Have one person write down the other person's explanation. Read the meanings aloud to each other. Decide which explanations best define the class concept of *world*.

### BUILDING BACKGROUND

Today we know that the world is an enormous planet with oceans, continents, and billions of people. But the world as the Mesopotamians knew it was contained within the valley formed by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, as well as two larger bodies of water: the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. To help yourself understand the world of the ancient Mesopotamians, make a K-W-L graphic organizer in your history journal like the one on page 8 of this study guide. In the *What I Know* column, write what you know so far about Mesopotamia. In the *What I Want to Know* column, write five questions you have about life there. After you have read the chapter, fill out the *What I Learned* column with answers to your questions and other information.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Write a sentence describing the role each god played in daily life. The names below are in the Akkadian language. In each sentence, use the god's Sumerian name as well. For example, "Shamash, also called Utu, was . . ."

Shamash \_\_\_\_\_

Ellil \_\_\_\_\_

Sin \_\_\_\_\_

Anu \_\_\_\_\_

Adad \_\_\_\_\_

Ishtar \_\_\_\_\_

Ea \_\_\_\_\_

Mami \_\_\_\_\_

Ashur \_\_\_\_\_

Marduk \_\_\_\_\_

## WORD BANK

### WORDS IN CONTEXT

Read the sentences in *italics* from the chapter and answer the questions about the underlined words.

1. *Events on Earth occurred because the gods willed them.*

What is another way to say "willed them"?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) "let humans decide about them"      \_\_\_\_\_ (c) "forgot about them"  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (b) "did not want them to happen"      \_\_\_\_\_ (d) "caused them"

2. Because Mesopotamians believed that the gods had the same feelings as human beings do, it was logical to believe that the gods would become angry . . .

What is another way to say "was logical"?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) "was foolish"                      \_\_\_\_\_ (c) "made sense"  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) "was important"                  \_\_\_\_\_ (d) "did not make sense"

3. Ea asked Mami, the midwife of the gods, to create human beings.

A midwife is a woman who helps other women

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) talk about their problems.        \_\_\_\_\_ (c) clean.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) in the kitchen.                    \_\_\_\_\_ (d) during childbirth.

4. No wonder they believed that Earth was the center of creation and their own land, the hub of the universe.

A hub is usually found at the

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) top of a wall.                        \_\_\_\_\_ (c) center of a wheel.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) bottom of a ladder.                \_\_\_\_\_ (d) end of the road.

## CRITICAL THINKING

### MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING DETAILS

Each sentence in *italics* below states a main idea from the chapter. Check off the sentence that does not support or tell more about the main idea.

1. *The Mesopotamians found the sun mysterious.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) Where, they wondered, did its power come from?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) It seemed to move on its own, as people do.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (c) The Mesopotamians were polytheists, which means that they believed in many gods, not just Shamash.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (d) They worshiped it in songs of praise.

2. *The kindest of all gods was Ea, the god of fresh, sweet water*

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) In Mesopotamian legends, he was the one who watched out for humans.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) And it's easy to see how he got his reputation.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (c) Without the fresh water of rivers and springs, people couldn't water their fields and grow their crops.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (d) In Mesopotamia, rainstorms were (and are) rare but dramatic.

3. *Ea asked Mami, the midwife of the gods, to create human beings.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) Mami agreed and suggested that Ea get her some clay so that she could create this new being.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) The Mesopotamians believed that their gods were always close by.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (c) She took the clay, mixed it with the blood of a god, and made the first humans.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (d) The Mesopotamians believed that Adad created thunderstorms.

## WORKING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

### Myth of Atrahasis

Read the extract below and do the following exercises.

Great indeed was the drudgery of the gods, . . .

They were complaining, denouncing,

Muttering down in the ditch.

1. What is another word for "drudgery"?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) weight        \_\_\_\_\_ (b) glory        \_\_\_\_\_ (c) power        \_\_\_\_\_ (d) work

2. What words tell you that the gods were unhappy?

3. What is another meaning for "down in the ditch"?

- \_\_\_\_\_ (a) in heaven                              \_\_\_\_\_ (c) underground  
\_\_\_\_\_ (b) in Mesopotamian fields            \_\_\_\_\_ (d) under a canopy

### WRITE ABOUT IT

Imagine that you are one of the gods writing in your heavenly diary. In your history journal, describe the scene as you go through the "drudgery" of providing for Enlil. Start with: "Shamash blazed down angrily today as I bent over in the barley fields."

Write in the same style as the extract.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Beginning about 2900 BCE, kings and queens were ruling large city-states such as Ur and Kish. This form of government became one of the great traditions passed down from Mesopotamia.

**ACCESS****WITH A PARENT OR PARTNER**

This chapter will talk about the ways that archaeologists explore clues to learn about ancient life. With a parent or partner, discuss what would happen if archaeologists 4,000 years in the future uncovered the remains of your town. What do you think they would learn about the way you are governed? What conclusions would they draw about your way of life—food, tools, clothing, climate? Write down your points and read them aloud to each other.

**BUILDING BACKGROUND**

In your history journal make main idea map (see page 8 of this study guide) and write *Ur* in the central circle. Use the smaller circles to list each fact that you learn about what was found in the tombs when Sir Leonard Woolley excavated the ruins in 1927. Then write several sentences explaining what the discovery tells scientists.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Write one sentence describing each character and the time when he or she lived.

Sir Leonard Woolley \_\_\_\_\_

Queen Puabi (poo-AH-bee) \_\_\_\_\_

Mebaragesi (may-BAH-rah-GAY-see) \_\_\_\_\_

Eannatum (ay-AH-nah-tum) \_\_\_\_\_

**WORD BANK**

*nin lugal priestess en*

Use the words above to complete the sentences below. One word is not used.

1. A queen, or \_\_\_\_\_, was often buried with her servants.
2. The Sumerian word for king came from \_\_\_\_\_, which means "big man."
3. Kings often had \_\_\_\_\_, meaning "lord," added to their names.

**WORD PLAY**

Find the page in the text where the word that is not used appears. Write a sentence using that word.

\_\_\_\_\_

## CRITICAL THINKING

### FACT OR OPINION?

A fact is a statement that can be proved. An opinion judges things or people but cannot be proved or disproved. Label each of the following sentences "F" if it is a fact, or "O" if it is an opinion.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Puabi must have been very, very rich.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. She wore gold earrings, and her headdress was made of gold ribbons and pendants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Her leg bones showed that she spent a lot of time squatting on her heels.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Puabi was not the only person from Ur to have others buried with her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Perhaps, at first, these men served just during wartime and only later began to rule full time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Several tablets describe the adventures of Eannatum, a king of Lagash.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. He claimed that the gods had always been on his side.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The royal household used cuneiform tablets to list the workers' names.
9. Write a sentence that is an opinion about the numbers of years that scribes say kings ruled in Mesopotamian cities.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Write one sentence that is a fact about the numbers of years that scribes say kings ruled.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## WORKING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

Sumerian inscription (about 2500 BCE)

Read the excerpt below and answer the following questions.

Eannatum, ruler of Lagash . . . set the border of the land. He carried a canal from the great river [and] ordered the royal field not to be seized. . . . Urlumma, ruler of Umma, drained the boundary canal; he destroyed the dwellings of the gods. . . . He was as puffed up as the mountains. . . . Eannatum, ruler of Lagash, went into battle [and] Entemena, the beloved son of Eannatum, completely overthrew Urlumma. In the midst of Umma, Entemena killed him.

1. Which two rulers fight a battle in this inscription?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which ruler provoked the attack? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What do you think the words "puffed up as the mountains" mean?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Who was the victorious leader? \_\_\_\_\_

### WRITE ABOUT IT

Imagine that you are a royal scribe for the court at Umma. In your history journal, rewrite the story above from the losing point of view. Begin with this: "Our great lord, Urlumma, has gone to the afterlife, killed in battle. The gods welcome him." Continue with four more sentences.

#### GROUP TOGETHER

*Wouldn't it be interesting to know what other students think about Puabi's tomb? What does it say about life in ancient Mesopotamia? Get a few friends together and ask your teacher to help you organize a discussion group at school. Have one person take notes and another person present the group's ideas to the class.*

