

Archeologists have uncovered about 6,000 tablets with cuneiform from ancient Sumer.

Sumerians also developed the first known form of mathematics. Our math system is base-ten while Sumerians was base-twelve. This is the basis of our 60 second minute, 60 minute hour, and 24 hour day (each number is divisible by 12).

Sumer lasted until around 1200 BC/BCE when nomadic raiders attacked and destroyed many of the city-states. Before this, problems like natural disasters, disease, shortages of food, and ineffective rulers weakened the large civilization.

STOP

TURN AND TALK – What were some of the different groups of people living in Sumer at this time and how would their lives have differed?

Egypt

Neolithic villages began growing as populations increased along the Nile River in much the same way as it did along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In fact, Egyptians along the Nile were trading with the people of Sumer. Much of the early architecture along the Nile looks similar to early Sumerian architecture. Egyptians probably adapted cuneiform into their own form of writing called hieroglyphics.

Egypt was unified by the first pharaoh around 3100 BC/BCE. Since all the cities were along one river that allowed easy transportation, the pharaoh was able to easily collect tribute, or taxes, and labor to support building his monument. This made unification of the cities into one empire possible.



Pharaohs built large monuments called pyramids, where they would be buried when they died. Egypt's rulers claimed to be living gods who turned all of Egypt into one extremely large temple community. Religion in Egypt was also polytheistic, with several gods. Many of these gods were tied to the local environment, such as Hapi, the god of the Nile River. The Nile River itself represented a passageway from life to death to the afterlife.

This community was supported by a hierarchy of workers and craftsmen. Egyptians had an abundance of stone that they used to build many of their monuments. Small homes were made out of mud-bricks just like in Mesopotamia.