Ancient River Valley Civilizations

1. Mesopotamia: Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
2. Egypt: Nile River
3. India: Indus and Ganges Rivers
4. China: Yellow and Yangtze Rivers
The Growth of Civilization

• Agricultural Revolution: farming created settled communities

• The five traits of a civilization
  – Cities
  – Writing
  – Specialized workers
  – Complex institutions
  – Technology
Mesopotamia / Fertile Crescent
Located between Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
Some contributions of ancient civilizations

- **Sumer**: *first civilization*, plow, sailboat, wheel, cuneiform, ziggurats, polytheism
- **Babylon**: Code of Hammurabi
- **Phoenicians**: the alphabet and improved shipbuilding
- **Jews**: ethical monotheism, Judaism
- **Persians**: well-built empire based on tolerance
Egypt, “Gift of the Nile”
History of pharaohs

• Around 3200 B.C., King Narmer of Upper Egypt conquered Lower Egypt and united the two kingdoms

• The Egyptian kinds used the title of “pharaoh” and were considered god/kings
Some contributions of Egyptian civilization

- Hieroglyphics
- Egyptian religion (polytheistic)
- Pyramids
- Mummification
- Medicine
Bronze Age
Indus Valley

• Located between Indus and Ganges Rivers
Some of the many contributions of Indus Valley civilizations include...

- Sanskrit
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Reincarnation
- Caste system
Hinduism

- Hinduism is a mixture of Aryan and ancient Indian culture.
- The sacred writings are the Vedas that explain the basic philosophy of Hinduism.
- Beliefs include reincarnation, moksha, and castes.
A second religion of the Indus Valley is Buddhism.

- Founder = Sidhartha Gautama
- Beliefs = Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, Nirvana
- No complex rituals, as in Hinduism, and it is taught in the everyday language.
Indus River Valley

• Indus sites not fully discovered yet
• No kings/queens known
• Few available records
• Was largest empire until Persia develops 1000 years later
Indus River Valley

- Two main cities of the Indus Valley
  - Harappa
  - Mohenjo-Daro
- Both carefully planned & laid out in a grid pattern
- Structures built of oven-fired bricks
- Homes had indoor plumbing
Indus River Valley

- Archaeologists believe the 2 cities had strong organized government
- Food seemed to be in good supply
- City planning indicates development of mathematical skills
- Indus first to cultivate cotton
- Polytheistic religious beliefs
Huang He River Valley

- China’s geography has isolated it.
- Chinese developed belief that China was the center of the Earth & source of all civilization.
- China to south & southwest hemmed in by Tien Shan & Himalaya mountains.
China’s River Valley

- Located between the Yellow (Huang-He) and Yangtze (Chang Jiang) Rivers
Chinese philosophies

- Confucianism: based on family, respect and education
- Daoism: based on living simply and harmony with nature
- Legalism: based on a strict and powerful government
Some of China’s many contributions include.

- Printing
- The Great Wall of China
- Dynastic cycle
Huang He River Valley

- China’s history began in Huang He Valley
- People learned to farm during the Neolithic Age
- The yellow soil particles in the river give it its name “Yellow”
- Also known as “China’s Sorrow” because of the unpredictable flooding
Huang He River Valley

- The flooding is due in part to the loess in the water that raises the level of the river.
- Flooding has often been disastrous.
- First Chinese in the valley to develop were the Shang.
- Zhou overthrew the Shang.
- Developed Mandate of Heaven idea.
Huang He River Valley

- Mandate of Heaven says that the gods allowed a dynasty to rule until that dynasty got old & corrupt
- New dynasty was given new Mandate of Heaven to overthrow old
- This changing of dynasties is called the Dynastic Cycle
A new dynasty comes to power.

Lives of common people improved; taxes reduced; farming encouraged.

Problems begin (extensive wars, invasions, etc.)

Taxes increase; men forced to work for army. Farming neglected.

Droughts, floods, famines occur.

Govt. increases spending; corruption.

Rebel bands find strong leader who unites them. Attack the emperor.

Poor lose respect for govt. They join rebels & attack landlords.

Emperor is defeated!!

The emperor reforms the govt. & makes it more efficient.

Start here

The Dynastic Cycle
Huang He River Valley

- By 1000 BC Chinese had developed silk production
- Chinese also produced first books under the Zhou
- Also produced porcelain, writing, coined money and cast iron
Other Civilizations to Consider

• Indo-European Civilizations
  – Aryans
  – Hittites
Aryans

- Developed *Caste System*
  - Lighter skin, higher caste
  - Aryans blended cultures
  - Brought in Hinduism
    - Believed in reincarnation
    - Karma & dharma
    - Cows are sacred
Hittites

- Centered in Anatolia (modern Turkey, Asia Minor)
- Developed iron technology
- Developed the chariot which changed warfare dramatically
Other Civilizations to Consider

• Fertile Crescent
  – Phoenicians
  – Coast of eastern Mediterranean Sea
  – Carriers of civilization
  – Created alphabet
Final Thoughts

• How are these groups similar?
• How are they different?
• What did they contribute to the world?
• What impact did geography have on each society?