

Detailed Timeline & Glossary of Theme 1: Writing and City Life

Date	Event/Development	Region/Source
6 mya– 500,000 BP	<i>Australopithecus</i> fossils (5.6 mya); Evidence of use of fire (1.4 mya)	Africa
	Use of fire (700,000 BP)	China (Asia)
	Stone age site (1,900,000 BP)	Riwat, Pakistan (South Asia)
500,000– 150,000 BP	Evidence of use of fire (400,000 BP)	Europe
150,000– 50,000 BP	<i>Homo sapiens</i> fossils (195,000 BP); <i>Homo sapiens</i> fossils (100,000 BP)	Africa; West Asia (Asia)
50,000– 30,000 BP	<i>Homo sapiens</i> fossils (40,000)	Europe
	Earliest indications of sea-faring (45,000 BP)	Australia/Pacific Islands
30,000– 10,000 BP	Paintings in caves/rock shelters (27,500)	Africa; Europe
	Domestication of dog (14,000)	West Asia (Asia)
8000–7000 BCE	Domestication of sheep and goat; cultivation of wheat and barley	West Asia (Asia); Greece (Europe)
	Cultivation of squash	Americas
7000–6000 BCE	Beginning of agriculture in the northern Mesopotamian plains	Asia (Mesopotamia)
	Domestication of pig and cattle; Early agricultural settlements	West and East Asia; Baluchistan (South Asia)
6000–5000 BCE	Cultivation of beans	Americas
5000 BCE	Earliest temples in southern Mesopotamia built	Asia (Mesopotamia)
5000–4000 BCE	Cultivation of cotton; use of copper	South Asia; West Asia (Asia); Crete (Europe)
4000–3000 BCE	Use of the potter's wheel; wheel for transport (3600 BCE); Writing (3200 BCE, Mesopotamia) ; Use of bronze	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 3200 BCE	First writing in Mesopotamia (picture-like signs and numbers)	Asia (Mesopotamia)

c. 3000 BCE	Uruk develops into a huge city; Increasing use of bronze tools	Asia (Mesopotamia)
	Plough agriculture; first kingdoms; pyramids; hieroglyphic script; writing on papyrus	Egypt (Africa)
3000–2000 BCE	Cities of the Harappan civilisation (c. 2700 BCE)	South Asia
c. 2700–2500 BCE	Early kings, including possibly the legendary ruler Gilgamesh	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 2600 BCE	Development of the cuneiform script	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 2400 BCE	Replacement of Sumerian by Akkadian language	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 2370 BCE	Sargon, King of Akkad	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 2000 BCE	Spread of cuneiform writing ; Mari and Babylon emerge as important urban centres	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 1800 BCE	Mathematical texts composed ; Sumerian no longer spoken. Tablets show knowledge of compound interest, square roots, and division tables.	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 1400 BCE	Aramaic language trickled into the region	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 1100 BCE	Establishment of the Assyrian kingdom	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 1000 BCE	Use of iron; Aramaic became widely spoken	Asia (Mesopotamia)
720–610 BCE	Assyrian empire established	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 668–627 BCE	Rule of Assurbanipal (collected the library at Nineveh)	Asia (Mesopotamia)
625 BCE	Nabopolassar released Babylonia from Assyrian domination	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 331 BCE	Alexander conquers Babylon	Asia (Mesopotamia)
c. 1st Century CE	Akkadian and Cuneiform script remain in use	Asia (Mesopotamia)
1850s	Decipherment of the cuneiform script	General

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition based on the Sources
Mesopotamia	Derived from the Greek words <i>mesos</i> (meaning middle) and <i>potamos</i> (meaning river), it literally means "the land between the rivers". This land is mainly part of present-day Iraq.
Euphrates and Tigris	The two rivers that run through the land of Mesopotamia. The rivers carry large amounts of silt (fine mud) which, when deposited, made Southern Mesopotamia agriculturally productive.
Sumerian	The earliest known language of the Mesopotamian land. It was gradually replaced by the Akkadian language after 2400 BCE.
Akkadian	The language spoken by Akkadian speakers that gradually replaced Sumerian after 2400 BCE. The Akkadian language and the Cuneiform script continued in use until the first century CE.
Writing	A system that converts spoken sounds (verbal communication) into visible signs . The first tablets were written around 3200 BCE.
Cuneiform	The name given to the wedge-shaped signs pressed onto soft clay by a scribe using the sharp end of a reed. The word itself is derived from the Latin words <i>cuneus</i> (wedge) and <i>forma</i> (shape).
Clay Tablets	The medium upon which Mesopotamians wrote. They became almost as indestructible as pottery once dried in the sun.
Uruk	One of the earliest rulers of Uruk, this city was often referred to simply as The City and grew to the enormous extent of 250 hectares around 3000 BCE.
Temple	Considered the residences of various gods (e.g., the Moon God of Ur or the Goddess Inanna of Uruk). The temple was considered the theoretical owner of agricultural land, herds, and fisheries.
Cylinder Seal	Stone seals, pierced down the centre with a stick, which were rolled over wet clay to create a continuous picture. They served as a mark of authenticity on packages or letters.
Nuclear Family	The core family unit in Mesopotamian society, comprising a man, his wife and children . The father was the head of the family.
Ur	An early city that was systematically excavated in the 1930s . Its residential areas featured narrow, winding streets and internal drains that channeled water into a sump .
Sump	A covered basin found in the inner courtyards of houses in Ur, used to channel rainwater via drainpipes.
Mari	The royal capital on the Euphrates around 2000 BCE, located in a region reliant on animal herding (pastoralism). Its kings were Amorites who came from the western desert.

Amorites	The kings of Mari who came from the western desert . They built a temple for Dagan, the god of the steppe, reflecting the city's mixed culture.
Assurbanipal	The great Assyrian king who ruled from 668–627 BCE . He collected a library of about 30,000 tablets at his capital, Nineveh.
Gilgamesh Epic	One of the most important literary works, it is about the ruler of Uruk, Gilgamesh, and his search for immortality, which fails, leading him to take pride in the city wall of Uruk instead.
Aramaic	A language that began trickling into Mesopotamia from about 1400 BCE and became widely spoken after 1000 BCE .
Nabonidus	The Babylonian tradition identifies him as the last ruler of independent Babylon .