

Mesopotamia: Cradle of Civilization

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About 5000 years ago, an ancient farming people turned this harsh environment into an abundant garden. Their agricultural settlement grew into the world's first great cities. And within these cities, the world's first civilization burst into life. We call the land of this incredible people Mesopotamia [me-suh-puh-TAY-mee-uh].

Land Between Rivers - A Fertile Valley

[Mesopotamia](#) was part of the area known as the **FERTILE CRESCENT**. This section of land stretched from the northern end of the [Persian Gulf](#) to the Nile River valley in [Egypt](#). The Fertile Crescent was a great place for farming.

Along the rivers the land was rich in plants like fruit, wheat and barley. Fish and birds were plentiful. Pigs, sheep and goats lived in the wild (*not farmed*).

Over time, people learned to tame animals and wild plants so that they would have a steady supply of food.

Mesopotamia is the [ancient](#) name for the **plain** (*which means large flat area*) that stretches between the [Tigris](#) [TY-gris] River on the east and the [Euphrates](#) [yoo-FRAY-tees] River on the west.

These rivers begin in mountains to the north and flow through the valley towards the Persian Gulf. In ancient times (*a very long time ago*) the **silt** (*fine sand*) carried downstream by the rivers build up along the riverbeds, creating really fertile soil (*dirt that will grow things really really well*).

Near the Gulf, the rivers split into smaller streams creating a marshy area called a **delta**.

The early farmers of Mesopotamia found the hot dry climate of the area to be both good and bad at the same time. The weather provided the **heat** required to grow many plants, but not the **rainfall**.

See the graph below. The **blue bars** show the amount of rainfall each month of the year. The **red line** shows the temperature for each month of the year. What do you notice?

Can you make your own graph? Look at **page 69** in your textbook for information on How to Make a Climagraph. Your teacher will give you more instructions.

Try [this](#) to test your knowledge of what you've read so far.