

# Welcome, Explorer, to Ancient Mesopotamia!

Imagine a land long, long ago, even before the pyramids of Egypt! This land was called Mesopotamia. Let's find out where it was and why it was so special.

## Materials We'll Need Today:

- Large piece of paper or whiteboard
- Blue and brown markers or crayons
- Play-doh or modeling clay
- Pictures or simple drawings of Mesopotamian life (ziggurat, cuneiform tablet, wheel, farming scenes)
- Simple map showing the Middle East region (Tigris and Euphrates rivers highlighted, or one we can draw on)
- Optional: Construction paper, safety scissors, glue

## Where in the World Was Mesopotamia?

Let's look at our map. Can you find the spot labeled Mesopotamia? (Guide the student). It's in a region we now call the Middle East. See these two wiggly blue lines? Those are rivers! One is called the **Tigris** River, and the other is the **Euphrates** River. Mesopotamia means 'the land between the rivers'. Because the land near the rivers was so good for growing food (fertile), people called this area the **Fertile Crescent**. It looks a bit like a crescent moon shape on the map!

### Activity 1: Map It Out!

Let's draw our own map! On your big paper, draw two long, wiggly blue lines for the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. They should be sort of close together at one end and further apart at the other. Color the land between them brown or green. This is Mesopotamia! Why was it good to live near rivers back then? (Answer: Water for drinking, watering plants, travel).

## Cities and Surprises!

Instead of one big country, Mesopotamia had lots of cities that were like tiny countries! They were called **city-states**. Each city-state had its own king and its own special helper god they believed watched over them. They often built huge temples called ziggurats to honor their gods.

The people of Mesopotamia, called Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians over time, were very clever! They invented amazing things. One of the most important was **writing**! They didn't use paper and pencils like us. They used pointy sticks (called styluses) to press wedge shapes into wet clay tablets. This writing is called **cuneiform**. They also might have been the first people to invent the **wheel**! Imagine life without wheels on cars or wagons!

### Activity 2: Cuneiform Clay!

Let's try making our own cuneiform tablet. Take some Play-doh and flatten it into a small rectangle (like a little pillow). Now, using the end of a craft stick or even your fingernail (gently!), try making different wedge shapes. Can you write your initial using wedge shapes? This is how they kept records and wrote stories!

## Wrap Up: What Did We Learn?

Wow! Mesopotamia was an amazing place. Can you point to Mesopotamia on our map? What were the names of the two rivers? (Tigris and Euphrates). What was one cool invention from Mesopotamia? (Writing/cuneiform, the wheel). What was a city that acted like its own little country called? (A city-state).

You were a fantastic history explorer today!

**Optional Fun: Build a Ziggurat!**

Using construction paper, cut out several squares, each a little smaller than the last. Glue the largest square onto another piece of paper. Then glue the next smaller square on top of the first, and keep stacking them up to make a step-pyramid shape like a ziggurat!