

THE FERTILE CRESCENT

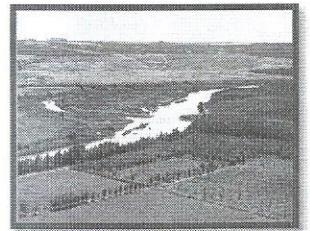
Irrigation Systems

Directions: Read the following text, annotate as you read and then respond to the text dependent questions. While you read, you will be annotating your text. You will HIGHLIGHT main ideas that you come across and you will CIRCLE anything that you'd like to further research or have a question about.

Mesopotamia was on the cutting edge of technology when it came to engineering their irrigation systems. They built city walls, temples, and dug canals to allow water to come into their fields. These were some of the FIRST engineering projects in history!

The word Mesopotamia is Greek for "The land between two rivers". These two rivers that were irrigated to bring water to the farm fields were the Tigris River and the Euphrates River. The ancient Mesopotamians had to fight for access to their water as they had to constantly deal with flooding and shifting of the riverbanks.

Irrigation canals were created by digging a gap in the embankment of the rivers and then closing them by placing mud in the gaps. Some of these embankments can *still* be seen today!



There were Sumerian laws that actually dictated that farmers had to keep the basins and canals free and clear of debris to facilitate the free flow of water. This was particularly important during times of flooding, which happened quite often along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The population of Mesopotamia began to decline when salt became part of the soil and affected the growth of crops. In 1258, the Mongols conquered the area and virtually destroyed the irrigation systems.