River Valleys: Why There?

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Lesson Overview: Students will explore the geographical and historical development of River Valley Civilizations

Essential Questions:
- What environments are necessary for agricultural development?
- Where did the first agricultural civilizations start?

Objectives: The student will be able to:
- Map the locations of the early river valley civilizations.
- Describe the common elements of the early river valley civilizations.
- Explain the reasons that civilizations may have developed in certain river valleys and not others using English Language Arts Common Core requirements.

Subject/Grade Level: Social Studies/High School world History Foundations, grades 6-12

Duration: 1-2 class periods

Student Materials: Map Activity Directions; Resource Table; Assessment Activity; Atlas of World History; laminated world maps or outline maps; dry erase markers; pencils;

Teacher Materials: Map Key; “How Geography Changed History” DVD (optional);

Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations
- 7 – W1.2.1 - Explain the importance of the natural environment in the development of agricultural settlements in different locations (e.g., available water for irrigation, adequate precipitation, and suitable growth season).
- 7 – W1.2.2 - Explain the impact of the Agricultural Revolution (stable food supply, surplus, population growth, trade, division of labor, development of settlements).
- 7 – W1.2.3 - Compare and contrast the environmental, economic, and social institutions of two early civilizations from different world regions (e.g., Yangtze, Indus River Valley, Tigris/Euphrates, and Nile).
- 7 – W2.1.2 - Use historical and modern maps and other sources to locate, describe, and analyze major river systems and discuss the ways these physical settings supported permanent settlements, and development of early civilizations (Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, Yangtze River, Nile River, Indus River).

National World History Standards:
- Era 1: Standard 2A: The student understands how and why humans established settled communities and experimented with agriculture
- Era 2: Standard 1A: The student understands how Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus valley became centers of dense population, urbanization, and cultural innovation in the fourth and third millennia BCE.

ELA Common Core State Standards
- Grade 7: Writing in the Social Studies: Text Types and Purposes
  1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
  2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
Procedures:

1. **Opening activity**: Brainstorm the essential requirements for agricultural production. (Agriculture Revolution) (Answers may vary) - Edible plants with a discernible seed, water source, fertile soil, climate with growing season

On a map (or laminated map) have students circle their predictions of where and when one might find evidence of the earliest agriculture use. Use Atlas of World History, pages 8-9, to check for accuracy of student predictions.

- Why do you think agriculture started where it did? see above – what you need for agriculture
- Where might you NOT find agriculture? Why? Possible answers: - harsh climates, areas with no water source, areas with plenty of game animals and plants for gathering (hunting and gathering will be easy) - no reason to change

2. **Vocabulary and Background Information**:  
   - **Agricultural Revolution** - initial transition from hunting and gathering to settled agriculture  
   - **Domestication** - process where animals or plants adapt to and/or are controlled by humans. This involves selection for “positive” attributes by humans.  
   - **Civilization** - A society that produces a surplus of food, establishes towns or cities with some form of government, and division of labor.  
   - **Irrigation** - human applied water to land or soil, usually to aid in agriculture  
   - **Specialization** - division of labor; individuals specializing in one job, trade, craft  
   - **Social Hierarchy** - development of a dominant-subordinate system within populations; classes based on socio-economic factors  
   - **Government** - a group of people who have the power to make and enforce laws for a country or area

**Agriculture and civilization**: The two are linked - we haven’t yet had a civilization based on hunting and gathering.  

**Domestication of animals** - Some animals are easier to domesticate than others. In the Americas, there were no large domesticated animals. Bison were used as a food source and general resource but never domesticated. In Africa, the cape buffalo, elephant, rhino, and hippo were never domesticated (with exception of Hannibal taming elephants for his famous attack on Rome). In Asia, elephants were domesticated, but much later in history. Large domesticated animals were needed for plowing/pulling of carts.  

**Emergence of Civilization**: Surplus food allows people to specialize in tasks other than agriculture/hunting. Larger projects can be completed, including buildings and irrigation systems. Large projects require organization, leading to governments and social hierarchies (some jobs valued above others).  

3. **The Agricultural Revolution** was the beginning of the development of civilizations.  
   - What is a civilization? A society that produces a surplus of food, establishes towns or cities with some form of government, division of labor  
   - How are agriculture and civilization linked? Agriculture enables storing of food, which leads to permanent residence, job specialization, and the need for government. The end result is a civilization.  
   - Can you have a hunting and gathering civilization? Less likely because population continues to move to find food sources
4. **Map Activity**: Provide students (can be completed in groups) with laminated maps or blank world maps, markers, a copy of the resources, and Map Activity Directions. It might be helpful to provide an atlas. When completed, discuss these questions:

- What regions have the most resources? *Most regions have a variety of resources. However, Nile, T/E River, Indus, and China have a larger variety of animals, including large animals, capable of being used for beasts of burden. The grains in these areas also provide ample carbohydrates.*
- What might account for the differences? *Americas and Papua New Guinea are cut off from other land masses. The animals in Eurasia and Africa, as well as plant species, had a better chance of moving from one area to another. Also, with the Nile and SW/S Asia, human populations could account for movement, even before large scale agriculture developed.*
- Why did you circle the region you did? What makes this region the most likely place for a civilization to develop? *Answers may vary. Look for answers that mention resources, possible climate (prior knowledge), rivers, population (prior knowledge)*

5. **Concluding Activity**: If possible, show the “Water” clip from the DVD “How the Earth Changed History”. *(Complete DVD may be purchased from Amazon; the episode called “Water World” may be downloaded from iTunes for $2.99.)*

- What made civilization possible? *With food surplus, people could specialize, complete larger works like irrigation systems and flood control. This required organization, which led to governments and social hierarchy.*

6. Assign Assessment activity

**Assessment:**

- Participation in discussions
- Completion of Laminated Map Activity
- Choice of two essays - see Assessment page

**Extensions/adaptations:**

- Hand students map with key created
- Work in pairs
- Provide vocabulary words to students
- Change assessment from one paragraph to full five paragraph essay
- Allow students to research the various River Valley Civilizations for similarities in their adaptation to their environment
- Students research climates of early civilizations. Compare prehistoric/historic climates to present-day climates. Would/could civilizations have emerged in the same areas today? Would other regions be appropriate for civilizations to develop? Where and Why?
MAP ACTIVITY:

Materials: Laminated Map or blank world map (individual/pairs), markers, copy of resources, pencil, atlas.

DIRECTIONS FOR ACTIVITY:
1. Make a key for your map including symbols for the following:

   large domesticated animal       medium domesticated animal       small domesticated animal
   rice     barley     wheat/emmer     millet     sweet potatoes/yams     beans     taro

2. Locate the regions to be compared on the map: Nile River Valley, Tigris Euphrates River Valley, Indus River Valley, Huang He River Valley, Papua New Guinea, North America (Mississippi River Valley)

3. Read the resource list.

4. Using your key, label your map, putting resources in the appropriate locations.

5. Discuss in your group and write your answers to the following:

   a. What regions have the most resources?
   b. What might account for the differences?

6. Circle where you think the four first River Valley Civilizations developed.

   a. Why did you circle the region you did?
   b. What makes this region the most likely place for a civilization to develop?
# Resource Table for Laminated Map Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>River Valley</th>
<th>Tigris/Euphrates</th>
<th>Indus</th>
<th>Huang He/Yellow River</th>
<th>Nile</th>
<th>Americas</th>
<th>Papua New Guinea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dates</strong></td>
<td>8,000-5,000 BCE</td>
<td>5,000 BCE</td>
<td>8,000-7,000 BCE</td>
<td>6,000-5,000 BCE</td>
<td>6,000-3,000 BCE</td>
<td>8,000-6,000 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domesticated Plants</strong></td>
<td>wheat, barley</td>
<td>wheat, barley</td>
<td>millet, rice, wheat</td>
<td>barley, emmer</td>
<td>beans, potatoes, squash</td>
<td>taro, sweet potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domesticated Animals</strong></td>
<td>sheep, cattle, goat, pig</td>
<td>cattle, goat, sheep</td>
<td>pig, cattle, sheep</td>
<td>sheep, goat, cattle, pig</td>
<td>dogs, turkeys</td>
<td>pigs, dogs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASSESSMENT (Common Core writing)

You will be writing an essay discussing the rise of the earliest River Valley Civilizations. You will have a choice of two different styles. Pick ONE of the following.

1. Write a paragraph describing the growth of ONE of the first River Valley Civilizations. You must include a topic sentence introducing your chosen civilization. Use method to organize your paragraph, such as, cause and effect, definitions, comparisons, or compare and contrast, in order to describe the growth of the civilization. Include a minimum of three specific information/data points in your description. You will have your laminated map, definitions, and the video clip as data. Make sure you use proper writing conventions and maintain a formal writing style. Your paragraph should end with a concluding sentence, summarizing your paragraph.

2. Write an argument paragraph supporting your reasoning for the growth of a civilization in ONE region of the world and not in another region. You must start with a sentence that states your position. You must support your argument with a minimum of three pieces of information from our lesson (laminated map, definitions, video clip). You must name a region that did not develop a civilization and tell why not. Make sure to use standard writing conventions and maintain a formal writing style. End with a statement that summarizes/supports your argument.

You will be graded on the following:

- Topic/position sentence
- Three data points from lesson
- Region that did not develop and why (argument paragraph)
- Descriptive style (cause/effect, compare/contrast, comparisons, definition)
- Writing conventions/formal style
- Concluding statement

**Points will be awarded as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Argument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic/position sentence</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 data points from lesson</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region not developed</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive style</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Conventions</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding statement</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
<td>3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 15 total for each of the essays
Rubric for Assessment:

English Language Arts Common Core
7th Grade Writing in the Social Studies

1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
   a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
   b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
   c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.
   d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
   e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
   a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
   b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
   c. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
   d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
   e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
   f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
Map Key

**Key**
a-small animal  R-rice  Q-squash
A-medium animal  P-papyrus
A-large animal  p-potatoes  S-sweet potatoes
W-wheat  Q-squash
B-barley  S-sweet potatoes
M-millet  B-beans
T-taro

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