Jason Ur: Water and Early Civilization in Mesopotamia

Total Running Time: 55:18

Essential Questions

How does access to natural resources impact the development of cities and civilizations?

How do humans exert control over their natural environment during the development of early civilizations?

How does control of natural resources impact the authority of leaders, and the structure of government?

Introduction: Slides 1 and 2

Time Tag: 00:00 - 4:47

Viewing Questions
Where does your water come from? How did it get to you?

Content Points
The role of water in the development of complex societies
Water as an economic Resource

Slides 3-6: Geography of Contemporary Iraq:

Time Tag: 4:47 - 10:45

Viewing Questions
What is the relationship between political and natural geographic boundaries?

Content Points
Contemporary Political Boundaries of Iraq
Topography and Climatic Systems
Annual Rainfall, Temperature and relationship to agriculture

Slides 7-12: Landscape of Mesopotamia

Time tag: 10:45 - 18:06

Content Points
Landscape of Northern Mesopotamia and Kurdistan
Landscape and “Hydrological Regime” (rivers and marshes) of Southern Mesopotamia
Slides 13-20: Water and Mesopotamian Origins
**Time tag:** 18:06 - 29:30

*Viewing Questions*
How might water lead to the development of cities?

*Content Points*
- Irrigation in Southern Mesopotamia: Why irrigate?
- Relationship between water and city formation
- Salinization through Over-Irrigation and common care taking of agriculture
- Water and ancient urban planning

Slides 21-26: Water, Kings, and Cities
**Time tag:** 29:30 - 36:50

*Viewing Questions*
How does control of water give power to rulers?

*Content Points*
- Fertility of land seen as the responsibility of the King
- Hydrolc Hypothesis: Organization of irrigation seen as the origins of ancient civilization
- However, archeology shows that canals appeared far after the organization of government.
- The moving environment: Natural and man-made
- Moving rivers and levees
- Water and Power: The ability to divert rivers from upstream

Slides 27-39: Northern Mesopotamia and the Assyrian Empire
**Time tag:** 26:50 - 53:35

*Content Points*
- Contrast between South and North: Lack of consistent rainfall led to lack of consistent presence of cities and civilizations
- Assyrian Empire: Origins, location, capitals, imperial practices
- Assyrian manipulation of water: use of canals to move water great distances from rivers, irrigation of gardens, and aqueducts.

Slides 43 and 44: Concluding Points
**Time Tag:** 53:35 - 55:18

*Content Points*
- Water has always been a critical element of early civilizations
- But with human ingenuity
- This happened at various levels of society