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Hammurabi (front);
Hammurabi's Code
(back)

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Establishing the Law

To establish the law of the land, Babylonian king Hammurabi set the law in stone and placed it in public view. He began the law code with a statement of his authority:

“Then [the gods] Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land . . . so that the strong should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the [people] and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind.”

Focus Question How did various strong rulers unite the lands of the Fertile Crescent into well-organized empires?

Invaders, Traders, and Empire Builders

Objectives

- Outline the achievements of the first empires that arose in Mesopotamia.
- Understand how conquests brought new empires and ideas into the Middle East.
- Describe how the Persians established a huge empire.
- Summarize the contributions the Phoenicians made to the ancient Middle East.

Terms, People, and Places

Sargon	barter economy
Hammurabi	money economy
codify	Zoroaster
civil law	colony
criminal law	alphabet
Nebuchadnezzar	

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas Use a table like this one to record the main idea of each section of text that follows a red heading.

Red Heading	Main Idea
First Empires Arise in Mesopotamia	
Conquests Bring New Empires and Ideas	

Through thousands of years of war and peace, the peoples of the Middle East built great empires and made long-lasting innovations. The region became a vital crossroads where warriors and traders met, clashed, and mingled. Many of the beliefs and ideas of the ancient Middle East survived to shape our modern world.

First Empires Arise in Mesopotamia

Again and again through time, nomadic peoples or ambitious warriors descended on the rich cities of the Fertile Crescent. While many invaders simply looted and burned, some stayed to rule. Powerful leaders created large, well-organized empires, bringing peace and prosperity to the region.

Sargon Builds the First Empire About 2300 B.C., Sargon, the ruler of Akkad, invaded and conquered the neighboring city-states of Sumer. He continued to expand his territory, building the first empire known to history. He appointed local rulers, each of whom served as king of the land he oversaw. However, the world's first empire did not last long. After Sargon's death, other invaders swept into the wide valley between the rivers, tumbling his empire into ruin.

Hammurabi Brings Babylon to Power In time, the Sumerian city-states revived, and they resumed their power struggles. Eventually, however, new conquerors followed in Sargon's footsteps and imposed unity over the Fertile Crescent. About

1790 B.C., Hammurabi (hah muh RAH bee), king of Babylon, brought much of Mesopotamia under the control of his empire.

Hammurabi's most ambitious and lasting contribution was his publication of a set of laws known as Hammurabi's Code. Most of the laws had been around since Sumerian times, but Hammurabi wanted to ensure that everyone in his empire knew the legal principles his government would follow. He had artisans carve nearly 300 laws on a stone pillar for all to see. Hammurabi's Code was the first important attempt by a ruler to codify, or arrange and set down in writing, all the laws that would govern a state.

Establishing Civil Law One section of Hammurabi's Code codified civil law. This branch of law deals with private rights and matters, such as business contracts, property inheritance, taxes, marriage, and divorce. Much of Hammurabi's civil code was designed to protect the powerless, such as slaves or women. Some laws, for example, allowed a woman to own property and pass it on to her children. Another law spelled out the rights of a married woman, saying that if she was found to be blameless for the problems between herself and her husband, she could leave the marriage. If she were found to be at fault, however, the law instructed that she be thrown in the river.

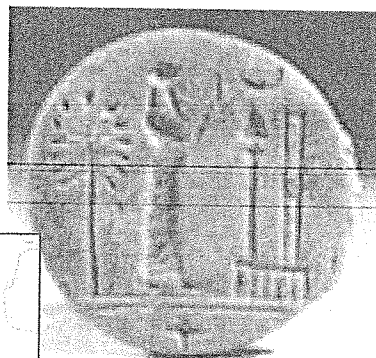
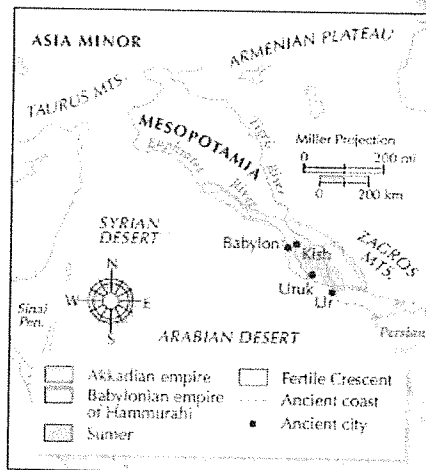
In general, Babylonian civil law gave a husband both legal authority over his wife and a legal duty to support her. The code also gave a father nearly unlimited authority over his children. The Babylonians believed that an orderly household was necessary for a stable empire.

Defining Crime and Punishment Hammurabi's Code also addressed criminal law. This branch of law deals with offenses against others, such as robbery, assault, or murder. Earlier traditions often permitted victims of crimes or their families to take the law into their own hands. By setting out specific punishments for specific offenses, Hammurabi's Code limited personal vengeance and encouraged social order.

By today's standards, the punishments in Hammurabi's Code often seem cruel, following the principle of "an eye for an eye and a life for a life." For example, if a house collapsed because of poor construction and the owner died as a result, the house's builder could be put to death. Still, such a legal code imposed more social order than existed when individuals sought their own justice.

Other Accomplishments Made by Hammurabi Although most famous for his code of laws, Hammurabi took other steps to successfully unite his empire. He improved the system of irrigation, organized a well-trained army, and ordered many temples to be repaired. To encourage religious unity across his empire, he promoted Marduk, the patron god of Babylon, over older Sumerian gods. In time, Marduk became the chief god of Babylonian worship.

✓ **Checkpoint** How do civil law and criminal law differ?



Civilizations Expand

As new civilizations took control of Fertile Crescent lands, their empires expanded but stayed near the two large rivers. Many elements of shared culture existed among these civilizations, including worship of Marduk (above), who became the region's chief god.

Conquests Bring New Empires and Ideas

Later empires shaped the Middle East in different ways. Some conquerors, such as the Hittites, brought new skills to the region's people. Other conquerors uprooted the peoples they defeated, which had the side effect of spreading to new regions the ideas of those forced to move.

Hittites Learn the Secret of Ironworking The Hittites pushed out of Asia Minor into Mesopotamia in about 1400 B.C. They brought with them a major advancement—the knowledge of how to extract iron from ore. The tools and weapons they made with iron were harder and had sharper edges than those made out of bronze or copper. Because iron was plentiful, the Hittites were able to arm more people at less expense.

The Hittites tried to keep this valuable technology secret. But as their empire collapsed in about 1200 B.C., Hittite ironsmiths migrated to serve customers elsewhere. The new knowledge thus spread across Asia, Africa, and Europe, ushering in the Iron Age.

Assyrian Warriors Expand Ancient Knowledge The Assyrians, who lived on the upper Tigris, also learned to forge iron weapons. They had established an empire by about 1350 B.C., and by 1100 B.C., they began expanding their empire across Mesopotamia. Over the course of 500 years, they earned a reputation for being among the most feared warriors in history.

Historians are unsure why warfare was so central to Assyrian culture. Was it to keep others from attacking, or to please their god Assur by bringing wealth to the region? Whatever the reason, Assyrian rulers boasted of their conquests. One told of capturing Babylon. He proclaimed, "The city and its houses, from top to bottom, I destroyed and burned with fire."

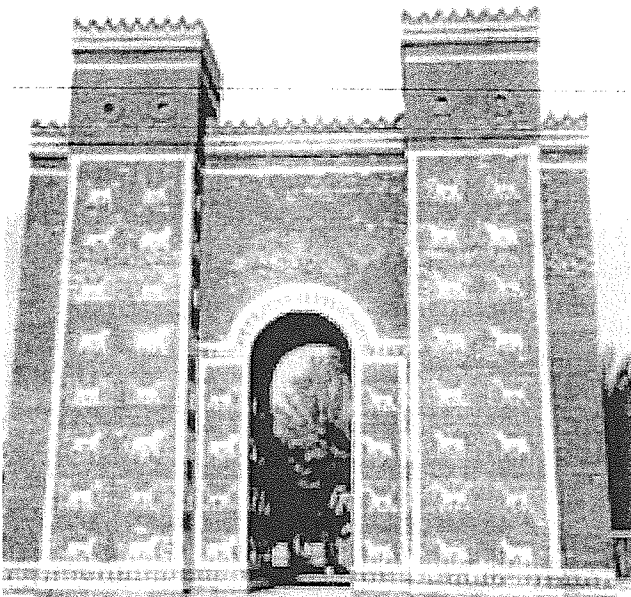
Despite their fierce reputation, Assyrian rulers encouraged a well-ordered society. They used riches from trade and war loot to pay for splendid palaces in their well-planned cities. They were also the first rulers to develop extensive laws regulating life within the royal household. For example, women of the palace were confined to secluded quarters and had to wear veils when they appeared in public.

At Nineveh (NIN uh vuh), King Assurbanipal (ahs ur BAH nee pahl) founded one of the world's first libraries. There, he kept cuneiform tablets that he ordered scribes to collect from all over the Fertile Crescent. Those tablets have offered modern scholars a wealth of information about the ancient Middle East.

Nebuchadnezzar Revives Babylon In 612 B.C., shortly after Assurbanipal's death, neighboring peoples joined forces to crush the once-dreaded Assyrian armies. In their absence, Babylon—which a king named Nabopolassar had reestablished as a power in 625 B.C.—quickly revived under its aggressive and ruthless second king, Nebuchadnezzar (neb yuh kud NEZ ur). The new Babylonian empire stretched from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.

Rebuilding Babylon

When Nebuchadnezzar became king, he had much of Babylon rebuilt in glorious fashion. The Ishtar Gate (below) is famous for its now faded blue bricks and animals depicting various gods. *Why might Nebuchadnezzar have erected such a substantial gateway to the city and in honor of the gods?*



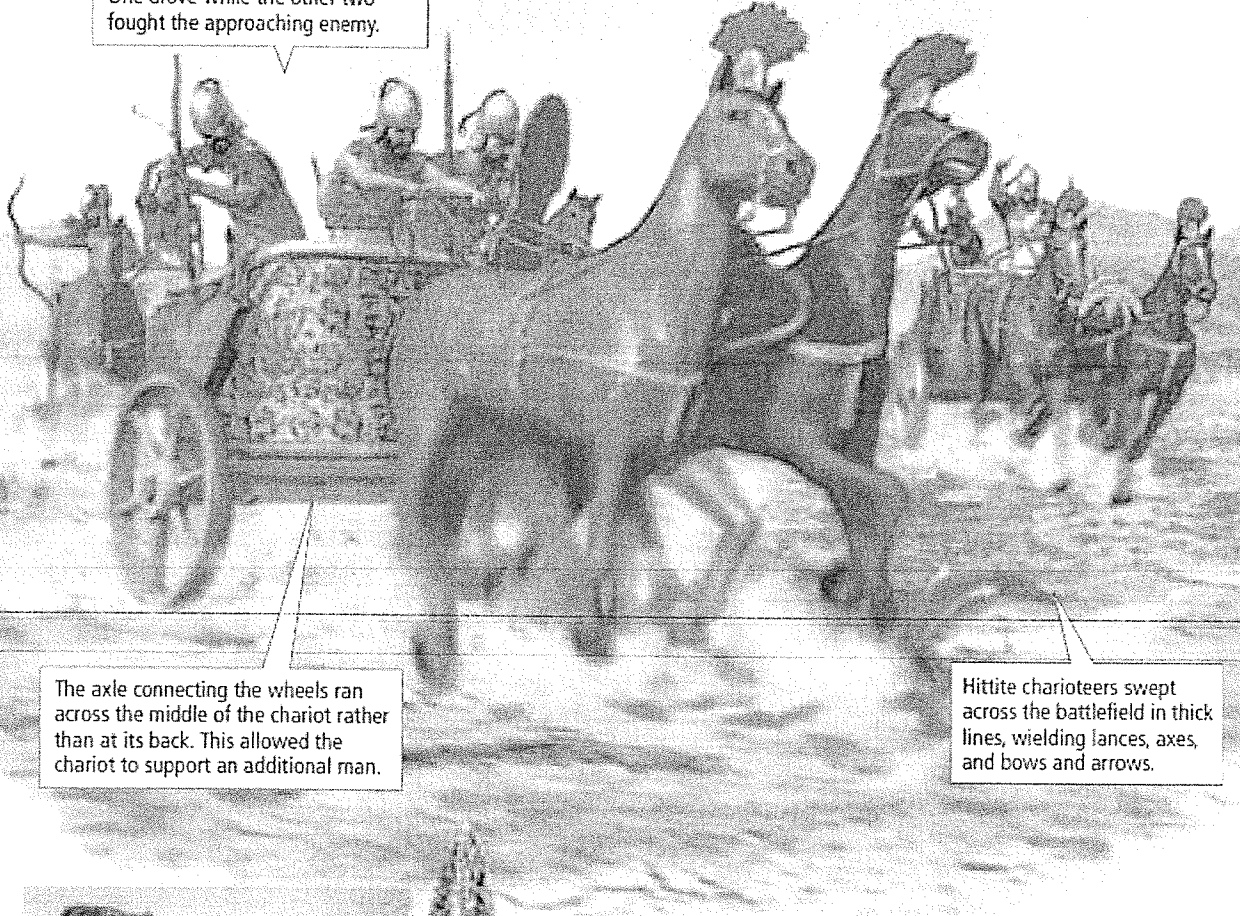
HITTITES REFINE THE HORSE-DRAWN CHARIOT

Technological advances such as the use of iron to build powerful weapons were key to the success of conquering empires. From the Hittites, other peoples picked up the use of iron and began building new tools and weapons. In the same manner, the Hittites modified a military technology invented by others—the horse-drawn chariot—to increase their own firepower capabilities.



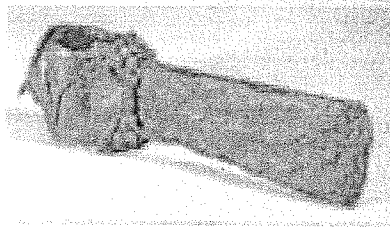
▲ A Hittite warrior

Three men could fit in each chariot. One drove while the other two fought the approaching enemy.



The axle connecting the wheels ran across the middle of the chariot rather than at its back. This allowed the chariot to support an additional man.

Hittite charioteers swept across the battlefield in thick lines, wielding lances, axes, and bows and arrows.



▲ Iron axe blade from Syria, 1300s B.C.



◀ Iron spearhead from near Jerusalem, 900s B.C.

Thinking Critically

1. Synthesize Information How did Hittite modifications to the chariot increase their firepower capabilities?
2. Draw Conclusions How do you think the addition of a third man might have hindered a chariot?

The thick walls built by Nebuchadnezzar failed to hold back new conquerors. In 539 B.C., Babylon fell to the Persian armies of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus and his successors went on to build the largest empire yet seen. The Persians eventually controlled a wide sweep of territory that stretched from Asia Minor to India, including present-day Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In general, Persian kings pursued a policy of tolerance, or acceptance, of the people they conquered. The Persians respected the customs of the diverse groups in their empire.

Darius Unites Many Peoples The real unification of the Persian empire was accomplished under the emperor Darius I, who ruled from 522 B.C. to 486 B.C. Darius set up a bureaucracy, or a system of government through departments and subdivisions administered by officials who follow set rules. The Persian bureaucracy became a model for later rulers. Darius divided the empire into provinces, each called a satrapy and headed by a governor called a satrap. Each satrapy had to pay taxes based on its resources and wealth. Special officials visited each satrapy to check on the satraps.

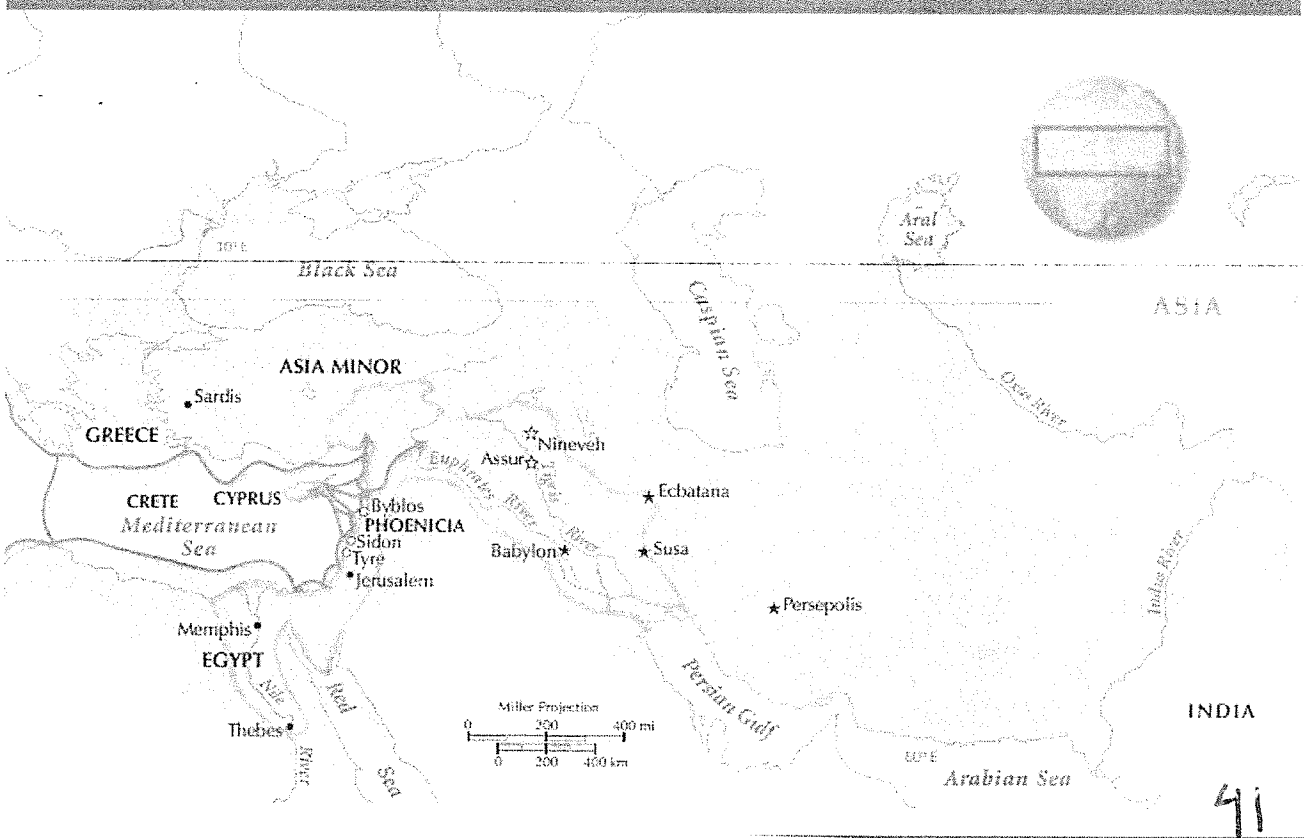
Darius adapted laws from the peoples he conquered and, like Hammurabi, drew up a single code of laws for the empire. To encourage unity, he had hundreds of miles of roads built or repaired. Roads made it easier to communicate with different parts of the empire.

Vocabulary Builder

successor—(suk SES ur)

n. somebody or something that follows another and takes up the same position

Geography Interactive
For: Audio guided tour
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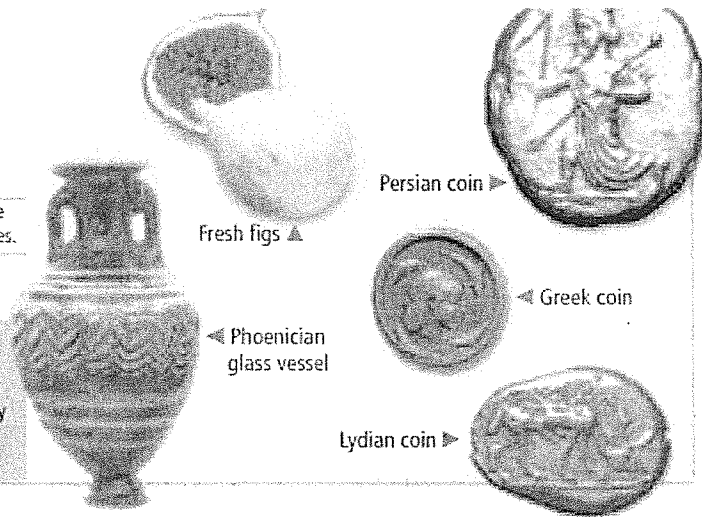


Money and Economics

Benefits of a Money Economy

- Exchanges are simplified because only one party is purchasing items rather than two.
- Comparison of items being considered for purchase is simplified because all items are given exact values.
- Money can be kept for use at a later time, whereas barter items such as live animals may not last.

Chart Skills Barter economies, in which Phoenician glassware might be traded for Israeli figs, continued to exist throughout the world. But money economies developed quickly as well, thanks to the benefits they offered to the exchange process. What advantages did a money economy offer?



Improving Economic Life To improve trade, Darius set up a common set of weights and measures. He also encouraged the use of coins, which the Lydians of Asia Minor had first introduced. Most people continued to be part of the **barter economy**, which means they exchanged one set of goods or services for another. Coins, however, brought merchants and traders into an early form of a **money economy**. In this system, goods and services are paid for through the exchange of some token of an agreed value, such as a coin or a bill. By setting up a single Persian coinage, Darius created economic links among his far-flung subjects.

A New Religion Takes Hold Religious beliefs put forward by the Persian thinker Zoroaster (ZOH ruh as tur) also helped to unite the empire. Zoroaster lived about 600 B.C. He rejected the old Persian gods and taught that a single wise god, Ahura Mazda (AH hoo ruh MAHZ duh), ruled the world. Ahura Mazda, however, was in constant battle against Ahriman (AH rih mun), the prince of lies and evil. Each individual would have to choose which side to support.

In the end, taught Zoroaster, Ahura Mazda would triumph over the forces of evil. On a final judgment day, all individuals would be judged for their actions, as described below:

Primary Source

“Then the assembly . . . will meet, that is, all men of this earth will stand. In that assembly, every person will see his own good deeds and evil deeds. The righteous will be as conspicuous [obvious] amongst the wicked as a white sheep among the black. . . . They will then [carry] the righteous to the abode of harmony [heaven], and cast the wicked back to the wicked existence [hell]. . . . Then [the last savior] Soshyant by order of the Creator will give reward and recompense to all men in conformity with their deeds.”

—*Bundahishn*, Zoroastrian scripture

Two later religions that **emerged** in the Middle East, Christianity and Islam, also stressed ideas of heaven, hell, and a final judgment day.

- ✓ **Checkpoint** What are two steps that Darius took to unite the Persian Empire?

Vocabulary Builder

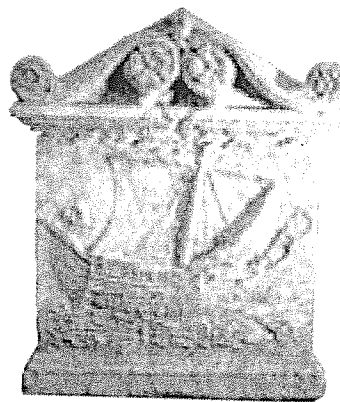
emerged—(see MURID) *vi.* arose, appeared, or occurred

Contributions of Phoenician Sea Traders

While powerful rulers subdued large empires, many small states of the ancient Middle East made their own contributions to civilization. The Phoenicians (fuh NISH unz), for example, gained fame as both sailors and traders. They occupied a string of cities along the eastern Mediterranean coast, in the area that today is Lebanon and Syria.

Expanding Manufacturing and Trade The coastal land, though narrow, was fertile and supported farming. Still, because of their location near the sea, the resourceful Phoenicians became best known for manufacturing and trade. They made glass from coastal sand. From a tiny sea snail, they produced a widely admired purple dye, called "Tyrian purple" after the city of Tyre.

Phoenicians traded with people all around the Mediterranean Sea. To promote trade, they set up colonies from North Africa to Sicily and Spain. A colony is a territory settled and ruled by people from another land. A few Phoenician traders braved the stormy Atlantic and sailed as far as Britain. There, they exchanged goods from the Mediterranean for tin.



Sculpture of a Phoenician trading ship from about 100 B.C.

Establishing an Alphabet Historians have called the Phoenicians "carriers of civilization" because they spread Middle Eastern civilization around the Mediterranean. One of the most significant Phoenician contributions to culture was their alphabet. Unlike cuneiform, in which symbols represent syllables or whole words, an **alphabet** is a writing system in which each symbol represents a single basic sound, such as a consonant or vowel.

Phoenician traders developed an alphabetic system of 22 symbols that stood for consonant sounds. Later, the Greeks adapted the Phoenician alphabet and added symbols for the vowel sounds. From this Greek alphabet came the letters in which this book is written—that is, the alphabet we use today.

✓ **Checkpoint** How has the Phoenician development of an alphabet been a lasting contribution to civilization?

2 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-0221

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas**
Use your completed table to answer the Focus Question: How did various strong rulers unite the lands of the Fertile Crescent into well-organized empires?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Demonstrate Reasoned Judgment**
What do you think was the most important achievement of Sargon? Of Hammurabi? Why?
4. **Draw Inferences** How do you think the Persian policy of tolerance helped the empire grow so large?
5. **Draw Conclusions** One effect of warfare and conquest was that knowledge and beliefs spread among different peoples. How else did people of the ancient Middle East spread their ideas?

Writing About History

Quick Write: Gather Information

Choose a person from this section about whom you want to write a biographical essay and list important facts about him. You may want to use the Internet or the library to gather information about the person. Include details such as when and where he was born, what he did in his life, and what he did that most interests you.