

World History 9 Honors

Ancient Near East: 'outside the river valley'

Historical Context:

The Ancient Near East is comprised of two cultural hearths, each with its own innovative civilization. In the Tigris and Euphrates Valley the Sumerians laid claim to the rich fertile soil produced from the silt of the flooding rivers and the very first civilization emerged. Not long after, the people of the Nile River, in a similar fashion, also developed the key features of civilization, including a complex writing system which documents their long 3,000 year Egyptian history. While Egypt was isolated, the Sumerians were overrun by a series of invaders who sought the advantages of the rich fertile soil. These people, who included the Akkadians, the Babylonians (Amorites and Chaldeans) and the Assyrians, by way of diffusion and their own innovation, produced significant civilizations of their own. While these river valleys were most significant in the development of political leadership and considerable cultural contribution, outside these valleys- yet still in the Near East (West Asia) – existed other noteworthy civilizations of the ancient world.

Objective:

Develop an understanding of the important contributions of three major ancient Near Eastern Civilizations that existed outside the river valley sites. They are the Hebrews, the Phoenicians and the Hittites.

Task:

1. Examine the suggested sites below. Watch any applicable video and visit links as they apply to the era and task.
2. Answer the 'big question' below for each group identified above.

The Hebrews <http://www.nvcc.edu/home/lshulman/Rel232/lectures/judaism/intro.htm>

The Hittites <http://www.ancient.eu.com/hittite/>

The Phoenicians <http://www.lost-civilizations.net/phoenicians-history.html>

- Why is understanding the historical significance of Abraham and the Hebrews, and therefore Judaism, important in the development of ancient, as well as modern history?
- In what way could you argue that the Hittites were a Mesopotamian group? What however, makes them distinct?
- Why might the Phoenicians be referred to as the missionaries of civilization? In what ways did their contributions benefit the growth and expansion of the cultural hearths?