


Sumer
Civilizations of the Ancient World | Meeting #4

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Upcoming Dates

- Monday, September 29
Essay #1 Due
- Tuesday, September 23
No classes scheduled
- Sunday, September 7
Responses for Week 2 Due

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Four things today

- Sumer
- Writing
- The Epic of Gilgamesh
- Shamhat and Enkidu

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Questions about whatever



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The Epic of Gilgamesh




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Primary Source Reading

Tablet 1: The Coming of Enkidu



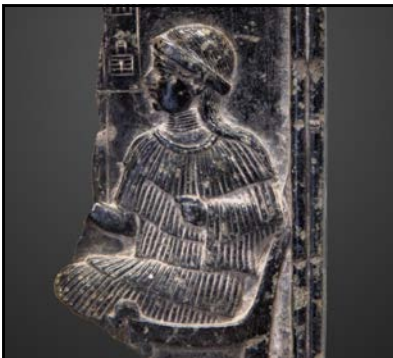
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King Gilgamesh

- Places self ahead of community
- Violates both genders
 - Men (fighting the youth)
 - Women (bedding new brides)
 - Present and future
- Actions are an attack on Uruk
- Appeal to the gods comes from the matrons of Uruk

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Ninsun

- Mother of Gilgamesh
- He comes to her for guidance on dreams
- Wise and constructive
- Role involves the future


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Primary Source Reading

Tablet 2: The Taming of Enkidu




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Shamhat and Enkidu

- Enkidu as the answer to the problem of Gilgamesh
- Shamhat doing the "work of woman"
- Creates a bond that links a man to the community = wife
- Creates a future citizen = mother
- Only a harlot could do this

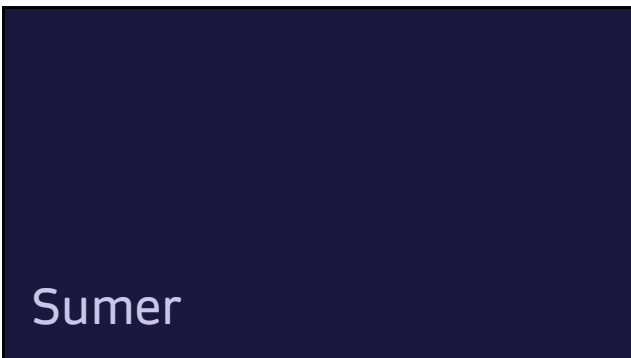
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Some themes in *Gilgamesh*

- Individual and community
- Mortal and divine
- Bonds between
 - Men and women
 - Men and men

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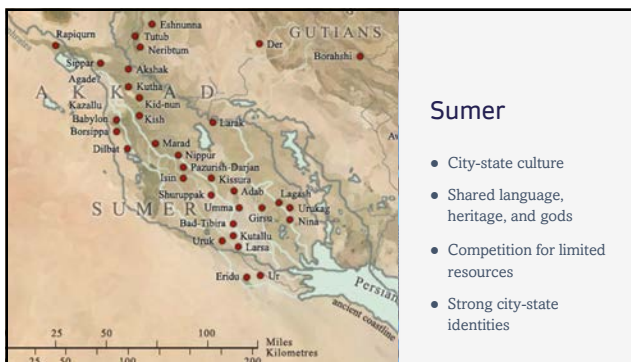
Sumer

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The Fertile Crescent



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Rivalry for resources leads to warfare



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Ziggurat

- Massive temple at the heart of a Sumerian city-state
- Sacred home of the patron god
- Visible focus of city-state identity

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The Deluge

- Massive flood destroys cities of Sumer
- Lone survivor separated from humanity
- Sumerian gods are sometimes nurturing, sometimes destructive
- Death is universal



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Life and afterlife



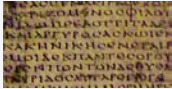
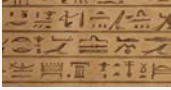


- Sumerian afterlife is a place of impotence
- Gods cannot be trusted
- The living must act
- Build to create a strong and enduring future

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Writing

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Forms of writing

PICTOGRAPHS	SYLLABARIES	ALPHABETS
Each character represents a word or a concept	Each character represents a syllable (consonant + vowel)	Each character represents a sound
 Cuneiform	 Linear B	 Greek
 Hieroglyphs	 Aramaic-Cypriot	 Latin

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Cuneiform



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Hieroglyphs

- Roughly contemporary with cuneiform
- Used for formal writing and records

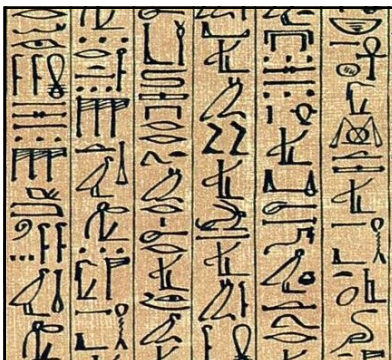
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Hieroglyphs: cartouche

- Within a cartouche, the first syllable is sounded out to make proper names

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From stone to papyrus

- Papyrus is made from woven reeds
- Fluidity of ink version leads to a more informal script
- Still difficult to learn

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The phonetic alphabet

- Bronze Age scripts are pictographic or syllabic
- Many characters with a high learning curve
- No phonetic scripts until the Iron Age

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