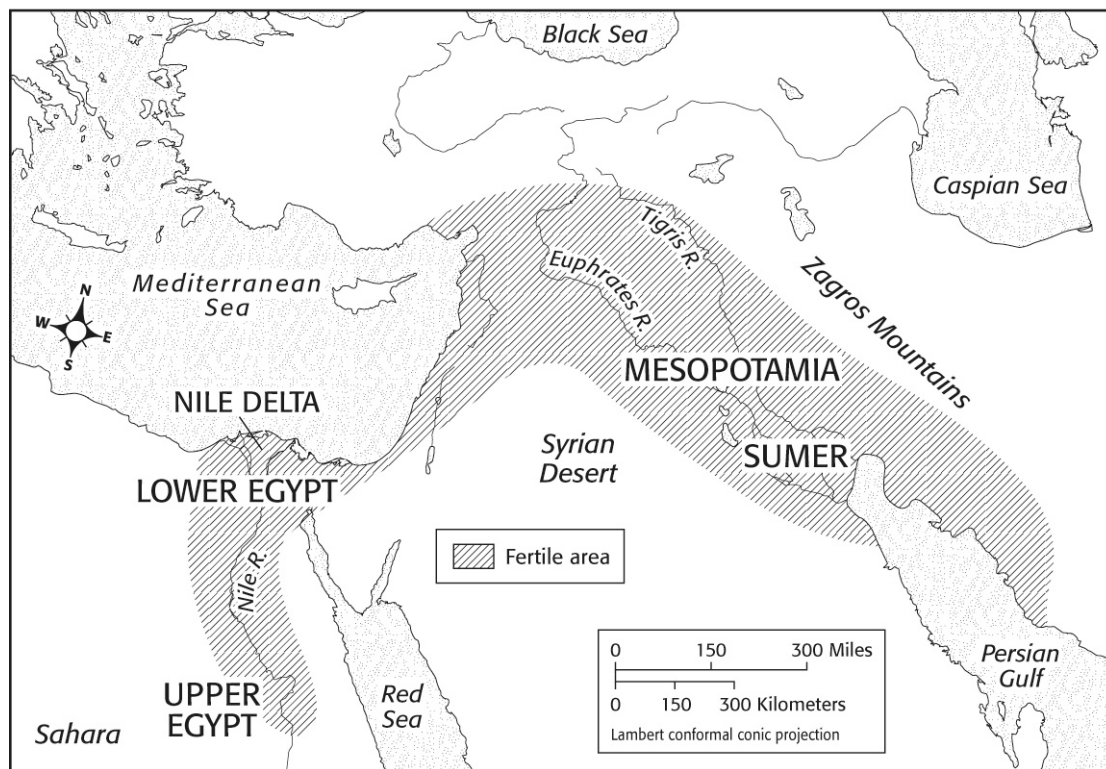


The First Civilizations

Two of the world's first civilizations—Sumer and Egypt—developed in the fertile river valleys of Mesopotamia and northern Africa. The Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile rivers made life possible in a land of harsh deserts. The people of these early civilizations depended on the rivers for water to use for drinking, cooking, farming, and transportation. When the rivers flooded, they enriched the soil with minerals that were good for growing food crops.

The Fertile Crescent



MAP ACTIVITY

1. On the map, label the area of the Fertile Crescent.
2. Use a light color to follow the path of the Nile River. Highlight the area of the Nile Delta by drawing a triangle shape.
3. On the map, use a second light color to follow the paths of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
4. Use a bright color, such as orange or red, to color the Sahara and Syrian deserts.
5. Update the map legend to include the desert areas you colored on the map.

The Beginnings of Civilization **History and Geography**

ANALYZING MAPS

6. **Location** Over which vast desert does the course of the Nile River flow?

7. **Location** What mountain range forms the eastern border of the Fertile Crescent?

8. **Region** Based on the map, why do you think the fertile area is known as the “Fertile Crescent”?

9. **Human-Environment Interaction** Based on the map, why do you think these civilizations did not develop far beyond the banks of these three rivers?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Research the direction in which the Nile River flows. How is the direction in which the Nile River flows different from the direction in which the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow? Create a map with arrows to visually display this information.