WHAT IS A CIVILIZATION?
In order for a culture to be considered a civilization, it must possess all five of the following characteristics:
1. growth of cities
2. specialized workers
3. advanced technology
4. a form of writing
5. complex institutions like religion and government

WHAT WERE THE FOUR MAIN RIVER VALLEY CIVILIZATIONS?
1. Sumeria: formed around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
2. Egypt: formed around the Nile River
3. India: formed around the Indus and the Ganges Rivers
4. China: formed around the Hwang He River

WHY DID EARLY CIVILIZATIONS DEVELOP AROUND RIVERS?
1. Provided a source of water for the people
2. Provided a source of water to irrigate crops
3. When the rivers flooded they left behind nutrients in the soil that made the soil good for farming
4. Source of transportation

SUMER (FERTILE CRESCENT)

LOCATION: located in the Middle East along the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers – today it would be Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel.

GEOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGES:
- Water source
- Fertile soil
**GEOGRAPHIC DISADVANTAGES AND SOLUTIONS:**

- Some years the rivers flooded to dangerous levels and destroyed homes, villages etc., while other years they did not flood at all and there were droughts. *Solution:* people built their cities away from the rivers and built irrigation ditches to bring the water to the cities.
- The flat, bare land provided no natural defense against invasion (no trees, mountains, etc). *Solution:* people built walls around their cities out of mud bricks which provided protection against invasion.
- Limited natural resources. *Solution:* merchants traded their excess supply of food for the natural resources people needed. Traded their bronze tools and weapons to other groups of people. Bronze was much stronger than tin and copper which is what most people used to make tools and weapons so this was a valuable item for the Sumerians to trade.

**GOVERNMENT:** Priests ruled Sumerian cities because the people believed that the priests had direct contact with the gods so they should be the people in charge. Collected taxes and made offerings to the gods.

**RELIGION:** Polytheistic (believed in many gods). Sumerians believed that the gods controlled all aspects of life and when good or bad things happened it was because the gods were either pleased or displeased.

**SOCIETY:** Sumer was divided into social classes – priests were the highest, wealthy merchants were next, farmers and artisans third and slaves were last. Sumerian women had many rights and could participate in most occupations.

**PEOPLE OF THE FERTILE CRESCENT:**

1. **Sumerians:** first known civilization in the Fertile Crescent; created Cuneiform or the first form of writing in this region
2. **Amorites/Babylonians:** defeated Sumeria, ruled by Hammurabi and were responsible for the first written set of laws.
3. **Hittites:** lived in Fertile Crescent and were the first people to learn how to use iron to make weapons and tools – this made them stronger and made them last longer than when they were made with bronze.
4. Phoenicians: great sea traders and created the first alphabet.
5. Hebrews/Jews: they were different from other people at the time because they were monotheistic (believed in one god). Moses led the Jews out of Egypt to the Fertile Crescent where they established the kingdom of Israel. Lived by a covenant with God which was outlined in the Ten Commandments.
6. Assyrians: greatest warriors in the Fertile Crescent because of their emphasis on military training and weaponry. Eventually they were defeated by the Chaldeans.
7. Chaldeans: made Babylon their capital and rebuilt it beautifully. Ruled by Nebuchadnezzar and he built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Conquered the Jews and kept many of them captive in Babylon (known as the Babylonian Captivity). However, the Jews kept their religious beliefs and refused to convert to polytheism.
8. Persians: ruled the largest empire in the ancient world. Divided their empire into 20 provinces which were each ruled by a satrap (a royal governor). They also built amazing road systems and standardized their money system. Zoroaster (a Persian) was the first person outside of the Jews to bring up the idea that people controlled their own fate through the decisions they made. He taught about right vs. wrong, good vs. evil and Heaven vs. Hell.