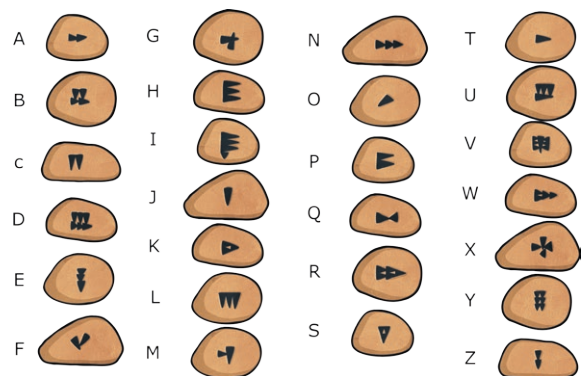


Incredible Inventions of Ancient Sumer

The ancient Sumerian people, who lived in the area that is now Southern Iraq from around 4000BC onwards, are credited with being one of the most advanced early civilisations. They had a complex knowledge and understanding of the world around them that was far superior to many other civilisations in existence at the time. Through their mathematical and astronomical studies; their progressive farming techniques; their development of one of the first writing scripts; their building of major cities and their establishment of a governmental system, they established Sumer as the cradle of civilisation, providing a gateway to the modern world we know and enjoy today.

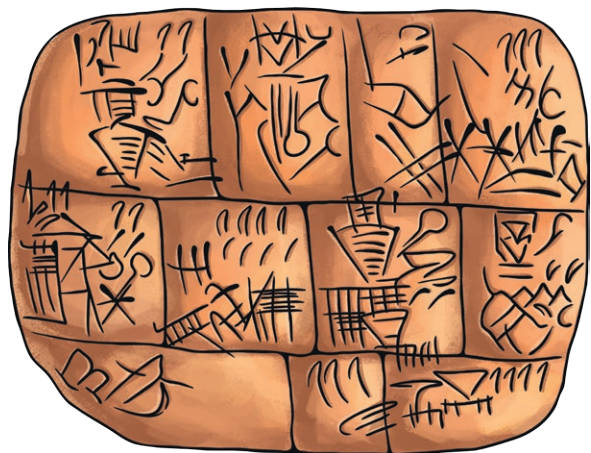
Writing

The people of ancient Sumer were the first in the world to develop a writing system that used symbols to represent spoken syllables. It took a few hundred years to fully develop the system, starting around 3500BC. Their earliest form of writing consisted of hieroglyphs (pictures), similar to those used in ancient Egypt



Over time, the ancient Sumerians developed a type of script known as cuneiform, which simply means 'wedge shaped'. It was called this because of the blunt reeds they used as styluses which created wedge shaped marks in the moist clay tablets they used to write on.

Lots of examples of ancient Sumerian writing has been discovered, including letters, prayers and lists.

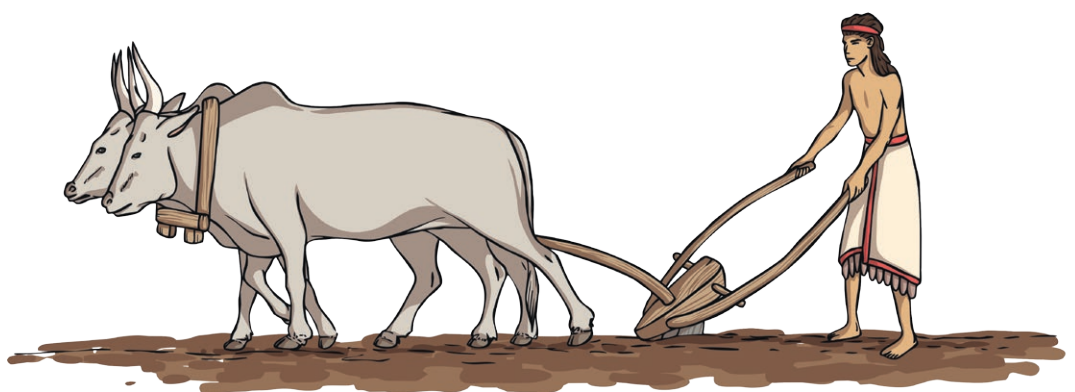


Agriculture

The ancient Sumerians developed important agricultural techniques that allowed them to use their land very effectively. Even though the river Tigris regularly flooded, they were able to continue to use the land all year round. This was because men were specially employed to maintain the canals, the channels and to control the water in the area.

The ancient Sumerians also invented a range of tools to help with farming and allow them to grow, harvest and manage crops most efficiently. They were also some of the first people to domesticate animals and utilise their strength in assisting with manual farming jobs.

One of the farming tools invented by the ancient Sumerians was called a 'seeder plough', which was pulled by oxen. The plough created a furrow along the ground into which seeds could be dropped. Ancient Sumerian farmers also developed the rake, which was used to remove debris and smooth out the soil before planting crops; the sickle, a tool with a short handle and long blade used for cutting down crops, and the shovel, which was used for digging up and moving soil.



Ancient Sumer consisted of city-states, which were built between the two rivers of Tigris and Euphrates. Some of these cities, which were led by a king or priest, were vast, busy places with a large number of inhabitants. The city of Uruk was the biggest in the world at the time, with a population of well over 50,000 people. Large cities such as this contained very well developed societies, which included a legal system on which our modern system of government is based today.



Incredible Inventions of Ancient Sumer

Kings and nobles ruled each city-state and decided on laws, punishments, whether to go to war and how the gods should be honoured. There was also a meeting of the people where the decisions of the kings and nobles would be discussed. In these meetings, the people could decide whether or not to agree with the decisions of their rulers. This structure was the ancient basis of the modern democratic system.

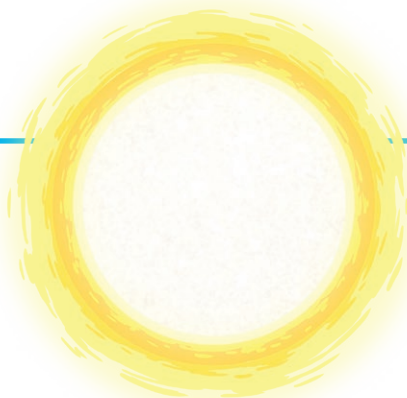
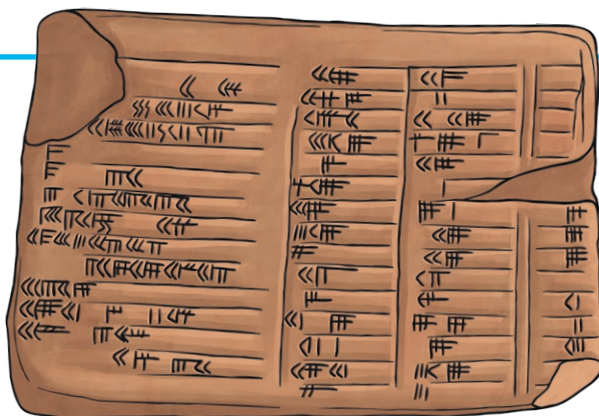
The incredible inventions of the ancient Sumerians have made a significant impact on the world. Without their ideas and influence, the world today might have been a very different place.

Maths and Science

The ancient Sumerians were keen mathematicians and scientists who used their skills to track the movements of the stars and planets, to chart the passing of time, to assist with building projects and to develop methods of accounting.

Their counting system was based on multiples of 6 and 10 and they used maths to calculate the area and circumference of different shapes. They worked out addition, subtraction, multiplication and division problems as well as fractions and equations.

By observing the sky, the ancient Sumerians were able to track the movement of the sun, moon and the five planets which are visible without a telescope. This enabled them to accurately measure the passing of time and develop the first lunar calendar with 12 months. They also established the concept of days, consisting of 24 hour cycles, which they divided into sections of sixty minute hours and sixty second minutes.



Industry

The ancient Sumerians were skilled potters from the earliest time of their civilisation. Clay was abundantly available and they used it to make many fine textured objects, including statues, bowls, vases and jars. In fact, the earliest wheel (which was discovered in Mesopotamia and dates back to around 3500BC) was used to improve the process of making clay pots by creating a potter's wheel.

The ancient Sumerian people often added decorative features to their pottery using shells, black and red limestone, lapis lazuli and gold.

The weaving industry also flourished in the ancient Sumerian civilisation thanks to the development and use of the loom from as early as 3000BC. Wool was the most common fabric and it was used to make all types of clothing from cloaks to shoes. Linen was more expensive so it was reserved for richer members of society. Examples of finely woven linen have been discovered in royal tombs.

