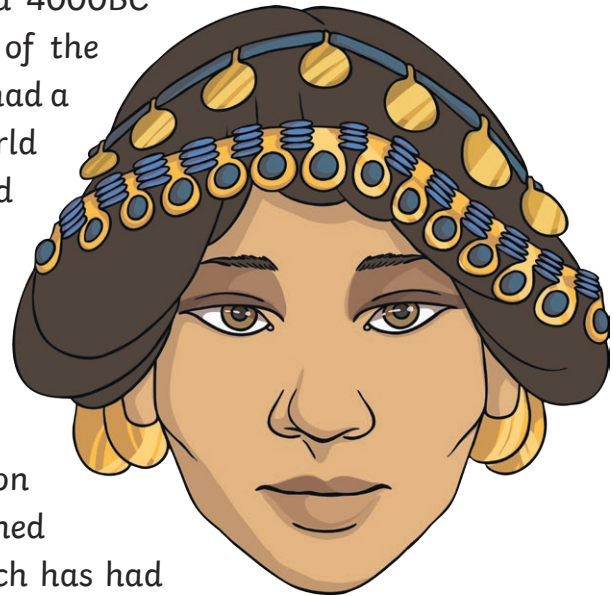


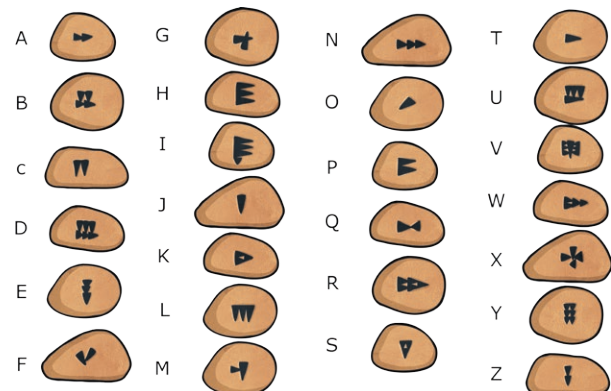
Incredible Inventions of Ancient Sumer

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 knowledge and understanding of the world around them, which was more advanced than many other civilisations at the time. Through their study of maths and science; their development of new farming techniques; their invention of one of the first writing scripts; their building of major cities and their creation of a governmental system, they established Sumer as the cradle of civilisation, which has had a positive impact on 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 sounds. 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 (pens) which created wedge shaped marks in the clay tablets that they used to write on.

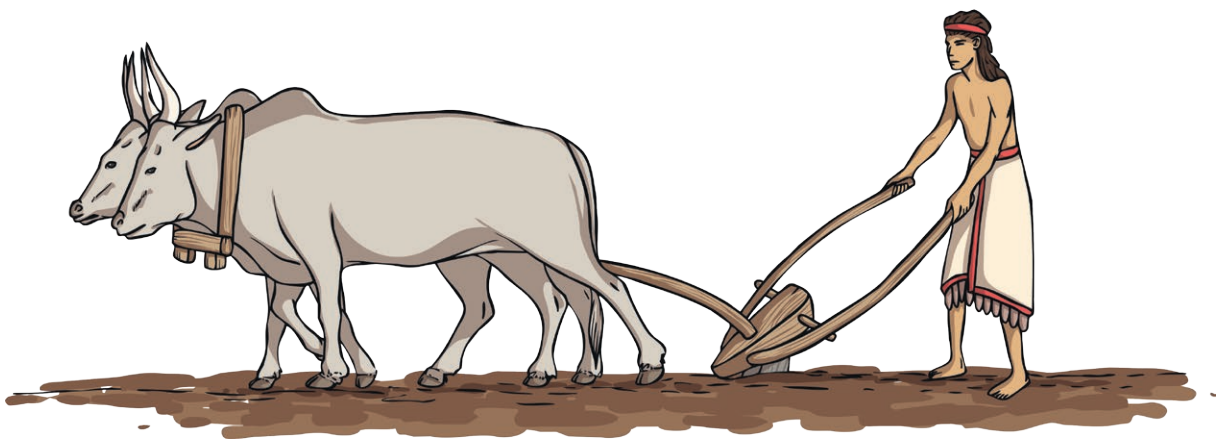
Lots of examples of ancient Sumerian writing has been discovered, including letters, prayers and lists.

Agriculture

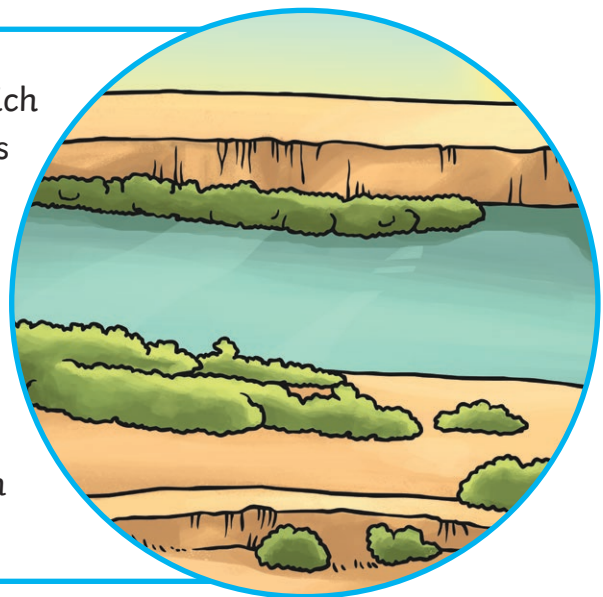
The ancient Sumerians developed important agricultural techniques that allowed them to use their land very effectively. Men were specially employed to look after the canals and channels and control the water in the area so that they could use the land all year round.

The ancient Sumerians also invented a range of tools to help with farming and allow them to grow, collect and manage crops effectively. They were also some of the first people to train animals and use their strength to assist with 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 channel along the ground into which seeds could be dropped. Ancient Sumerian farmers also developed the rake, which was used to remove rubbish 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.



Ancient Sumer consisted of city-states, which were built between the two rivers of Tigris and Euphrates. Some of these cities were huge, busy places with a large number of people living in them. The city of Uruk was the biggest in the world at the time, with over 50,000 people living there. Large cities such as this also had a legal system on which our modern system of government is based today.



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Kings and nobles ruled each city-state and decided on laws, punishments, whether to go to war and how the gods should be obeyed. 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 a bit like our modern democratic system (where everybody gets to say what they think).

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

Maths and Science

The ancient Sumerians were good mathematicians and scientists who used their skills to follow the movements of the stars and planets, to make sense of the passing of time and to assist with building projects.

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.

The ancient Sumerians also tracked the movement of the sun, moon and the five planets you can see without a telescope. This helped them to accurately measure the passing of time and develop the first lunar calendar with 12 months. They also worked out that a day was 24 hours long.

Industry

The ancient Sumerians were skilled potters from the earliest time of their civilisation. Clay was freely available and they used it to make many objects, including statues, bowls, vases and jars. In fact, the earliest wheel was first used by the ancient Sumerians to improve the process of making clay pots by 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 was also successful in ancient Sumer 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 people. Examples of finely woven linen have even been discovered in royal tombs.