

The Story of the World

Volume 1: Ancient Times

ALSO BY SUSAN WISE BAUER

The Story of the World

History for the Classical Child

(PEACE HILL PRESS)

Volume 2: The Middle Ages (2007)

(Revised Edition)

Volume 3: Early Modern Times (2004)

Volume 4: The Modern Age (2005)

The History of the Ancient World

From the Earliest Accounts to the Fall of Rome

(W.W. NORTON, 2007)

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(MULTNOMAH, 1998)

WITH JESSIE WISE

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(REVISED EDITION, W.W. NORTON, 2004)

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The Story of the World

HISTORY FOR THE CLASSICAL CHILD

Volume 1: Ancient Times

From the Earliest Nomads to the Last Roman Emperor

REVISED EDITION

with new maps, illustrations, and timelines



by Susan Wise Bauer

illustrated by Jeff West



PEACE HILL PRESS

Charles City, VA

Peace Hill Press, Charles City, VA 23030
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Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bauer, Susan Wise.

The story of the world : history for the classical child.
Vol. 1, Ancient times : from the earliest nomads to the last Roman emperor /
by Susan Wise Bauer ; illustrated by Jeff West.—2nd ed.

p. : ill. ; cm.

Includes index.

ISBN-10: 1-933339-01-2

ISBN-13: 978-1-933339-01-6

ISBN-10 (pbk.): 1-933339-00-4

ISBN-13 (pbk.): 978-1-933339-00-9

1. History, Ancient—Juvenile literature.
2. Greece—History—Juvenile literature.
3. Rome—History—Juvenile literature.
4. History, Ancient.
5. Civilization, Ancient.
6. Greece—History.
7. Rome—History.
- I. West, Jeff. II. Title.

D57 .B38 2006

930 2005909816

Printed in the United States of America

Cover design by AJ Buffington and Mike Fretto.
Book design by Charlie Park. Composed in Adobe Garamond Pro.
For more on illustrator Jeff West, visit jeffwestsart.com.

⊗ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements
of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence
of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

www.peacehillpress.com

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INTRODUCTION

How Do We Know What Happened?

What Is History?

Do you know where you were born? Were you born at a hospital, or at home? How much did you weigh when you were born? What did you have to eat for your first birthday?

You don't remember being born, do you? And you probably don't remember your first birthday party! So how can you find the answers to these questions?

You can ask your parents. They can tell you about things that happened long ago, before you were old enough to remember. They can tell you stories about when you were a baby.

These stories are your "history." Your history is the story of what happened to you from the moment you were born, all the way up to the present. You can learn this history by listening to your parents. They remember what happened when you were born. And they probably took pictures of you when you were a baby. You can learn even more about your history from these pictures. Did you have hair? Were you fat or thin? Are you smiling or frowning? What are you wearing? Do you remember those clothes?

You have a history—and so do your parents. Where were they born? Were they born at home, or at a hospital? Where did they go to school? What did they like to eat? Who were their

best friends? How can you find the answers to these questions? You can ask your parents. And if they don't remember, you can ask *their* parents—your grandparents.

Now let's ask a harder question. Your grandmother was once a little girl. What is *her* history like? How much did she weigh when she was born? Did she cry a lot? When did she cut her first tooth? What was her favorite thing to eat?

You would have to ask *her* mother—your *great*-grandmother. And you could look at baby pictures of your grandmother. But what if you can't talk to your great-grandmother, and what if you don't have any baby pictures of your grandmother? Is there another way you could find out about your grandmother's history?

There might be. Perhaps your grandmother's mother wrote a letter to a friend when she was born. "Dear Elizabeth," she might write. "My baby was born at home on September 13. She weighed seven pounds, and she has a lot of fuzzy black hair. She certainly cries a lot! I hope she'll sleep through the night soon."

Now, suppose you find this letter, years later. Even though you can't talk to your great-grandmother, you can learn the *history* of your grandmother from her letter. You could also learn *history* if your great-grandmother kept a diary or a journal, where she wrote about things that happened to her long ago.

In this book, we're going to learn about the *history* of people who lived a long time ago, in all different countries around the world. We're going to learn about the stories they told, the battles they fought, and the way they lived—even what they ate and drank, and what they wore.

How do we know these things about people who lived many, many years in the past? After all, we can't ask them.

We learn about the history of long-ago people in two different ways. The first way is through the letters, journals, and

other written records that they left behind. Suppose a woman who lived in ancient times wrote a letter to a friend who lived in another village. She might say, “There hasn’t been very much rain here recently! All our crops are dying. The wheat is especially bad. If it doesn’t rain soon, we’ll have to move to another village!”

Hundreds of years later, we find this letter. What can we learn about the history of ancient times from this letter? We can learn that people in ancient times grew wheat for food. They depended on rain to keep the wheat healthy. And if it didn’t rain enough, they moved somewhere else.

Other kinds of written records tell us about what kings and armies did in ancient times. When a king won a great victory, he often ordered a monument built. On the monument, he would have the story of his victory engraved in stone letters. Or a king might order someone in his court to write down the story of his reign, so that everyone would know what an important and powerful king he was. Thousands of years later, we can read the stone letters or the stories and learn more about the king.

People who read letters, journals, other documents, and monuments to find out what happened in the past are called *historians*. And the story they write about the past is called *history*.

What Is Archaeology?

We can learn about what people did in the past through reading the letters and other writings that they left behind. But this is only one way of doing history.

Long, long ago, many people didn't know how to write. They didn't write letters to each other. The kings didn't carve the stories of their great deeds on monuments. How can a historian learn the story of people who didn't know how to write?

Imagine that a whole village full of people lived near a river, long ago. These people don't know how to write. They don't send letters to their friends, or write diaries about their daily life. But as they go about their duties every day, they drop things on the ground. A farmer, out working in his wheat field, loses the iron blade from the knife he's using to cut wheat from the stalks. He can't find it, so he goes to get another knife—leaving the blade on the ground.

Back in the village, his wife drops a clay pot by accident, just outside the back steps of her house. It breaks into pieces. She sighs, and kicks the pieces under the house. Her little boy is playing in the dirt, just beyond the back steps. He has a little clay model of an ox, hitched to a cart. He runs the cart through the dirt and says, "Moo! Moo!" until his mother calls him to come inside. He leaves the cart where it is and runs into the house. His mother has a new toy for him! He's so excited that he forgets all about his ox and cart. Next day, his father goes out into the yard and accidentally kicks dirt over the clay ox and cart. The toy stays in the yard, with dirt covering it.

Now let's imagine that the summer gets drier and drier. The wheat starts to die. The people who live in the village have less and less to eat. They get together and decide that they will pack up their belongings and take a journey to another place, where there is more rain. So they collect their things and start off down the river. They leave behind the things that they don't want any more—cracked jars, dull knives, and stores of wheat kernels that are too hard and dry to use.

The deserted village stands by the river for years. Slowly, the buildings start to fall down. Dust blows overtop of the ruins. One year, the river floods and washes mud over the dust. Grass starts to grow in the mud. Eventually, you can barely see the village any more. Dirt and grass cover the ruins from sight. It just looks like a field by a river.

But one day a man comes along to look at the field. He sees a little bit of wood poking up from the grass. He bends down and starts to brush dirt away from the wood. It is the corner of a building. When he sees this, he thinks to himself, "People used to live here!"

The next day he comes back with special tools—tiny shovels, brushes, and special knives. He starts to dig down into the field. When he finds the remains of houses and tools, he brushes the dirt away from them. He writes down exactly where he found them. And then he examines them carefully. He wants to discover more about the people who used to live in the village.

One day, he finds the iron knife blade that the farmer lost in the field. He thinks to himself, "These people knew how to make iron. They knew how to grow wheat and harvest it for food. And they used iron tools to harvest their grain."

Another day, he finds the clay pot that the farmer's wife broke. Now he knows that the people of the village knew how to make dishes from clay. And when he finds the little ox and cart that the little boy lost in the yard, he knows that the people of the village used cows, harnessed to wagons, to help them in their farm work.

He might even find out that the people left their village because there was no rain. He discovers the remains of the hard, spoiled wheat that the people left behind. When he looks at

the wheat, he can tell that it was ruined by lack of rain. So he thinks to himself, “I’ll bet that these people left their village during a dry season. They probably went to find a place where it was rainy.”

This man is doing history—even though he doesn’t have any written letters or other documents. He is discovering the story of the people of the village from the things that they left behind them. This kind of history is called *archaeology*. Historians who dig objects out of the ground and learn from them are called *archaeologists*.

CHAPTER ONE

The Earliest People

The First Nomads

Where do you live? Where do you sleep? Do you sleep in the same bed every night, or do you move into a new house every week?

A long time ago—about seven thousand years in the past—families didn't live in houses and shop at grocery stores. Instead, they wandered from place to place, looking for food and sleeping in tents or caves. Ancient families who lived this way were called *nomads*. Nomad means “a person who wanders or roams around.”

Nomads gathered their food from the land around them. They ate plants that they picked, roots that they dug out of the ground, and nuts and berries that they gathered from bushes and trees. When they had eaten most of the food in one place, they would move on to another place. Women and children had the job of digging up roots, picking nuts, berries, and plants, and collecting other kinds of food—eggs, wild honey, and even lizards and snakes. Men hunted for meat with spears, bows and arrows. If the nomads camped near a river or lake, the men would fish too. When the nomads had hunted in one area for a while, all the animals would move away from them. When that happened, the nomads would pack up and follow the game.

In warm places, nomads built tents by stretching animal hides over wooden frames. They could take these tents with them when they moved. Nomads who lived in colder, rocky places used caves for shelter. We know that they lived there because they painted pictures of animals on the walls of the caves; we can still see these pictures today.

Tarak is a seven-year-old girl who lives with her family in the days of the nomads. She likes warm weather the best because she can sleep out in the open and look at the stars until she falls asleep.

One warm morning, Tarak gets up when the sun comes up. She is sleeping outside, so all she has to do is pick up the piece of animal skin she sleeps on and take it to her mother. She wears the same clothes all the time, so she doesn't have to change out of her pajamas.

In the middle of the nomads' camp, the fire is still burning from the night before. Tarak's uncle and some of the other adults have taken turns staying up through the night, watching the fire and keeping it burning. They heard a wildcat screaming in the night and wanted to keep it away from the camp. Tarak's uncle says that the wildcat has already frightened away the flocks of small deer that the hunters were tracking. There's no meat for breakfast this morning. If the hunters don't shoot any deer today, the whole group of nomads will pick up their tents and skins and begin to walk towards a new place to hunt.

Tarak doesn't like the grain that her mother offers her for breakfast, so she decides to wait and eat when she goes out to gather food. Every morning, Tarak and her brothers go out with their mother to look for plants and berries. But they've been gathering food in the same place for a long time, and they've already picked most of the leaves that are good to eat. They've

already scraped all the honey out of the wild bees' nest that her younger brother found in the crack of a rock. And they've taken the eggs from all the nests that they can climb up to.

She and her younger brother get their game bags—small bags made out of skin—and start out to look for food. “I’m going to find another bees’ nest,” brags her brother. “Then we can eat honey again.”

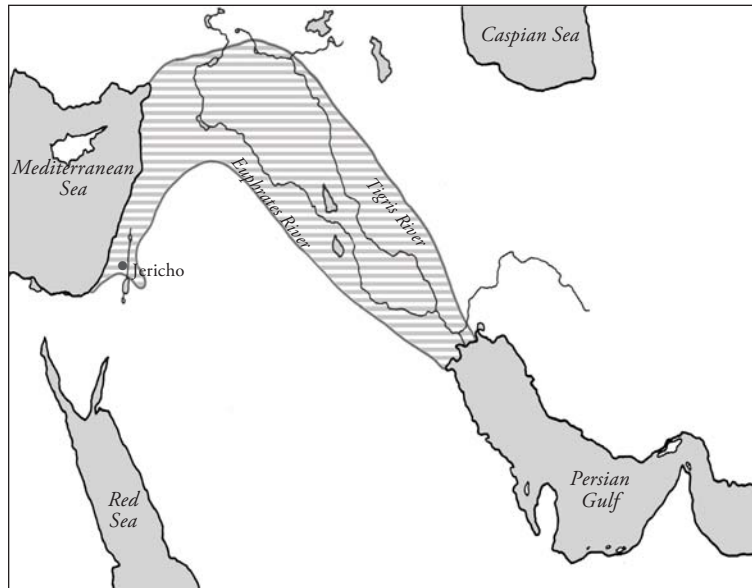
“I’m the best lizard catcher in the family,” Tarak retorts. “I bet I can find a lizard before you can find a bees’ nest.”

Sure enough, as they walk out of a patch of woods into the sunshine, Tarak sees a lizard dart away into the crack of a log. She leaps on the log and turns it over. Three lizards try to scurry away from her, but in a moment, she has scooped them up and dumped them into her bag. There isn't very much meat on a lizard, but her mother is a wonderful cook; she can stew the lizards in boiling water until every shred of meat has come off the bones, add herbs and roots, and serve a good filling stew to the whole camp. All the way back to the nomad camp, Tarak can feel the lizards squirming in her bag. It makes her hungry. She can't wait to taste her mother's lizard stew.

The First Nomads Become Farmers

One of the best places for nomads to live was in an area called the Fertile Crescent. It was called a *crescent* because it was shaped like a crescent moon—like this:



The Fertile Crescent

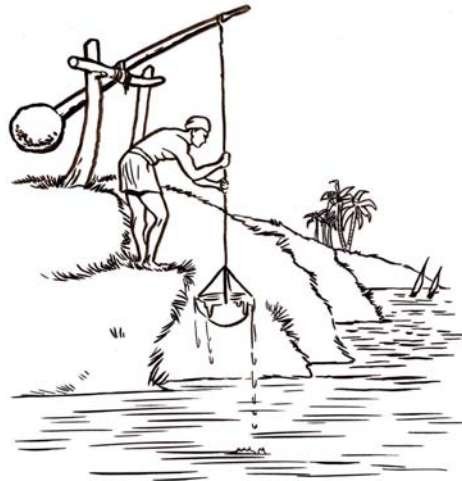
And it was called *fertile* because two rivers, called the Tigris and the Euphrates, ran through it. Rich grass, wild barley, and wild wheat grew in the damp soil of the river banks.

When nomads wandered through the Fertile Crescent, they saw herds of animals feeding on the grass. They saw grain that they could harvest, and wide rivers where they could fish and get fresh water to drink. Because it was so easy to find food, nomads returned to the Fertile Crescent again and again. Some of these nomads began to live near the two rivers all year long, instead of wandering from place to place in search of food.

Nomads who settled in the Fertile Crescent couldn't just pick leaves, nuts, and berries to eat. Soon, they would run out of wild plants to harvest. Instead, they had to begin to plant grain for themselves. The nomads of the Fertile Crescent were turning into farmers.

These new fields of grain needed extra water to flourish. The land near the rivers was damp enough to make growing easy. But it didn't rain very much in the Fertile Crescent, and farther away from the shores, the land was dry for much of the year. So the farmers learned to dig canals from the rivers out into their fields. That way, even if it did not rain, they could bring water to their crops.

Today, irrigation machines are enormous metal sprinklers, higher than a house and longer than three or four semi trucks. They pump water out of lakes and spray it over entire fields. But long ago, farmers had a simpler machine to get water out of the canals and onto their crops. This machine was called a *shaduf*. Early farmers balanced a pole lengthwise on top of a pillar. They tied a weight to one end of the pole, and attached a leather bucket to the other. Then the farmers lowered the bucket into the canal, raised the bucket by pushing down on the weight, and then swung the bucket around to pour the water on the crops. The shaduf was one of the first farm machines.



A farmer with a shaduf

Farmers had to tend their crops every day for months. So they began to build houses that would stay in one place, instead of living in tents that could be moved every few days. They used whatever materials were around them. Farmers who lived near the river built houses out of reeds, or out of bricks that were made from mud and left to dry in the sun.

Soon, farmers discovered that it was best to build houses close together so that they could help each other to water and tend their fields. These were the first villages. The farmers also learned that they could tame animals such as sheep and goats, feed them grain, and then use them for meat. This was easier than hunting wild animals! Villages were often built around a central pen or field where the tame animals were kept.

Some villages were very successful in growing grain and raising sheep and goats. They even grew rich by trading grain, sheep's wool, and animal skins to others for metals, pottery, wood, and other goods. Because they were afraid that they might be attacked and robbed by bandits, they built stone walls around their villages. These were the first cities.

One of the earliest was the city of Jericho. Jericho had one of the thickest, strongest walls of the ancient world; it was ten feet thick and thirteen feet tall, with a circular tower on one side so that village lookouts could see enemies approaching. The tower was thirty-five feet high—taller than a two-story house!

Not long after the day that Tarak catches enough lizards for her mother's lizard stew, Tarak and her family wander into the Fertile Crescent, searching for food. They find plenty of roots, nuts and berries to eat. Tarak's uncle is excited because he sees large herds of horses and small deer to hunt.

But the most exciting thing Tarak sees is a huge river, flowing by right at her feet. She has never seen so much water in one place

in her life. Usually, her family and the other nomads only find small pools of water, or tiny streams trickling through the rocks. They need this water for drinking—so Tarak has never been swimming. As a matter of fact, she has never had a bath in her whole life. Now, she can walk right into the water up to her chin.

At first, Tarak and her brother are afraid to get into the water. They just squat on the shore and splash each other. But slowly they put one foot, and then the other into the water. Tarak wants to show her brother how brave she is, so she wades out almost to her knees. She hears her brother wading in behind her. He splashes her all over, so she turns around and dunks his head under the water. He comes up spluttering and yelling. He's never been under water before.

Tarak and her brother spend the whole morning in the river. When they get out, Tarak notices that her brother smells much better than he used to.

That night at dinner, there is horse meat to eat. Tarak's uncle says, "I met other men a little farther down the riverbank. But they weren't hunting. They were putting seeds into the ground. They told me that if we put seeds into the ground too, grain would grow right here where we are. We could pick it, and we wouldn't have to keep looking for new fields to gather food in. I think we'll stay here for a while and watch what they're doing."

Tarak grins at her brother. She likes living on the bank of the river; she likes eating horse meat instead of lizards; she likes the idea that she won't have to go searching for roots every day. And most of all she likes swimming.

Note to Parent: Nomads roamed through the Fertile Crescent around 7000 BC/BCE. The stone wall at Jericho dates to around 6800 BC/BCE.

CHAPTER TWO

Egyptians Lived on the Nile River**Two Kingdoms Become One**

Tarak could go swimming almost any day she wanted to, because the Tigris River was full of water all year round. But the farmers who lived along the banks of the Nile River had a very different kind of river to deal with. Sometimes the river was very low—so low that you could almost see the bottom. Other times, it was so full that it flooded all over their farmland.

The Nile River is a long river in Africa. At the top, it splits into several different little rivers and runs into the Mediterranean Sea. This area is shaped like an upside-down triangle. The Greek letter for D, *delta*, is shaped like a triangle too. So this part of the river is called the Nile Delta, after the Greek letter of the alphabet.

Every year, the Nile flooded. During rainy seasons, water would fall on the mountains in the south, where the Nile River begins. The water would pour down the mountains, into the river, and run down towards the delta. So much water poured into the Nile at once that it overflowed its banks and spread all over the farmland on either side. The wettest place of all was the Nile Delta—all the little rivers ran over their banks and spread out so that the whole delta was underwater. Would you like to

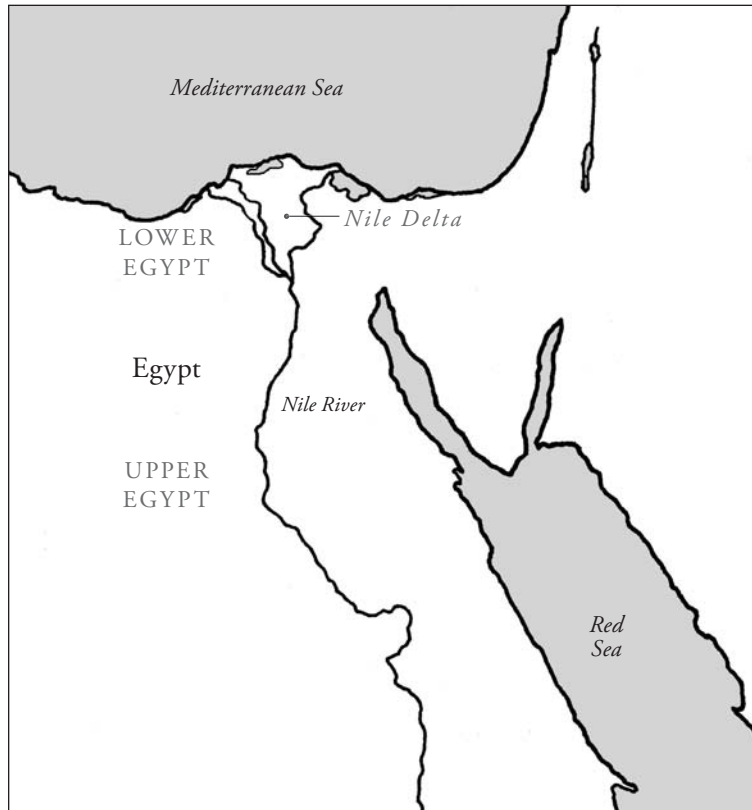
live on the banks of the Nile? Do you think it would be a good place to build a house? What would happen to your house?

If a farmer had a river flood all over his crops today, he'd think it was a disaster. It would wash his crops away. But the farmers who lived along the Nile liked to see the river flood. The river flooded at the same time every year, so they were ready for it. When the water came up out of the river, rich dirt from the bottom of the river came with it. This dirt was called *silt*, and it was full of good vitamins and minerals for plants. The floodwater would spread the silt all along the edge of the river, and then the water would recede—go back into the river until the next year. Then the farmers, who lived a little ways away from the riverbank so that their houses wouldn't flood, would come out and plant their crops in the rich silt. They learned to dig canals leading away from the river, so that floodwater would run into their canals. Then they would block the ends of the canals so that the water couldn't run back into the river. They could use the water in the canals during dry seasons.

The people who lived along the Nile were called *Egyptians*. Early in Egypt's history, there were two Egyptian tribes who lived along the Nile. The Egyptians who lived in the north, in the Nile Delta, were called the "Lower Egyptians." The Egyptians who lived along the straight part of the river, further south, were called the "Upper Egyptians."

When you look at a map, "north" is usually at the top and "south" is usually at the bottom. So it might seem to you that the Nile Delta should be "Upper Egypt." After all, it's on the upper part of your map.

But the ancient Egyptians didn't think about the world in that way. The Nile River flowed from the mountains in the south, down to the delta in the north. So the ancient Egyptians

The Nile Delta

thought about the southern part of their country, Upper Egypt, as “up the river,” and the northern part, Lower Egypt, as “down the river.” If you turn the map at the top of this page upside down, you’ll see the world as the Egyptians did.

The Lower Egyptians were ruled by a king who wore a red crown, and the Upper Egyptians were ruled by a king who wore a white crown. Both kings wanted to rule over *all* of Egypt. So for years, the White Crown King and the Red Crown King fought with each other, and the Upper Egyptians and the Lower Egyptians sailed up and down the Nile and fought with each other too.

Finally, the two kings fought one great battle to settle, once and for all, who would rule Egypt. The Upper Egyptian king, the White Crown King, was named King Narmer. Around five thousand years ago, King Narmer defeated the Red Crown King and took his crown away. Then he put the red crown overtop of his own white crown and announced that he was the king of all Egypt. From now on, the king of Egypt would wear the Double Crown of Egypt, which had a white spike at the center and a red band around the outside. This showed that he was the ruler of the entire country.



King Narmer

Gods of Ancient Egypt

Now that the Egyptians were all part of one country, the king of Egypt became known as the *pharaoh*. He carried a shepherd's crook to show that he was supposed to lead and take care of all the Egyptian people, just like a shepherd takes care of and feeds his sheep. Soon, the Egyptians began to think that the pharaoh was actually a god. They believed that he was able to make the Nile overflow its banks every year so that their crops could grow. The pharaoh got more and more powerful—no one wanted to make a god angry!

The pharaoh wasn't the only god the Egyptians worshipped. Ra was the god of the sun. He was the chief god; other gods were part of his family. Osiris was the god who judged the dead and decided whether they had been good or bad. Isis was Osiris's wife, and the mother of Horus, who was the god of the sky.

Egyptian stories about the gods often tried to explain why the Nile overflowed every year. One Egyptian story, or *myth*, tells about Osiris and his brother, Set. Here's the myth of Osiris as an Egyptian child might have heard it from his mother, long ago.

Once upon a time, the great god Osiris and his wife Isis were ruling over the whole land of Egypt. Osiris went on a trip around the world and left Isis in charge of the kingdom. But while he was gone, Osiris's evil brother Set decided that he

wanted to be king. When Osiris came back from his trip, Set invited him to a great feast with all the other gods. “Dear brother,” he said, “come to my house so that we can celebrate your safe return!”

Isis was afraid that Set wanted to harm Osiris, but Osiris laughed at her fears. “He’s my own brother!” he said. “Why would he want to hurt me?”

So they went together to the feast. After all the gods had eaten until they were full, Set said, “Look what I have found!” He brought out a beautiful coffin, all carved and decorated with gold and pictures. When the gods all admired it, Set said, “I will give this beautiful coffin to whichever god fits into it the best.”

The gods didn’t know that Set had ordered the coffin made so that it would only fit Osiris. One by one, they lay down in the coffin. But all of the gods were too large or too small—until Osiris got in, and found that the coffin fit him perfectly. Osiris was so pleased that he lay all the way down in the coffin. “Look!” he said. “I’ve won the coffin!” But as soon as he lay down, Set slammed the coffin closed and threw it into the Nile, where it floated away. “Now I’m the king of the gods, because Osiris has drowned!” Set announced. He took over the throne and began to rule Egypt.

But Isis went on a long journey down the Nile to find the coffin. Finally she discovered it, caught in the reeds beside the Nile’s bank. She opened it, but Osiris had drowned. Isis sat down and wept and wept for grief. Even the Nile cried over the

death of Osiris, so that the river ran dry and all the Egyptians were desperate for water.

Finally Isis wrapped Osiris's body in linen—so that he became the first mummy. But as soon as she wrapped him in linen, he came back to life again. The whole earth was glad to see Osiris alive again! The Nile filled back up and overflowed its banks, so that all the Egyptians had water to drink, and their crops began to grow again. And that's why the Nile overflows every year—because it remembers that Osiris came back to life.

Note to Parent: The Upper and Lower Kingdoms were united around 3000 BC/BCE. King Narmer is also known as King Menes.

CHAPTER THREE

The First Writing**Hieroglyphs and Cuneiform**

The Egyptians were among the earliest people to use writing. Why do you think it's important to be able to write things down?

Suppose I write a message for you on a piece of paper and put it on the table. Then I leave the room. If you look at the paper, you'll know what I wanted to say to you—even though I'm nowhere around. That's one reason writing is important. Once the Egyptians learned to write things down, they could send messages from one part of the kingdom to another.

What if you found my message a year after I wrote it? You would still be able to “hear” my words—even though I had written them down long before. That's the second reason that writing is so important. The Egyptians could write down the important events that happened during their lifetimes, and leave them for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren to read.

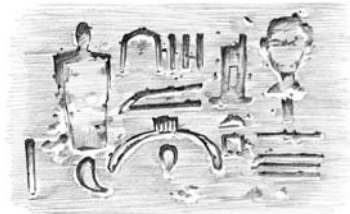
The Egyptians used pictures to write with. We call these pictures *hieroglyphs*. The pictures stood for certain words. The Egyptians used to carve these hieroglyphs into stone tablets.

The stone tablets lasted for a very long time—but they were heavy to carry, and carving the pictures into stone took weeks of work.

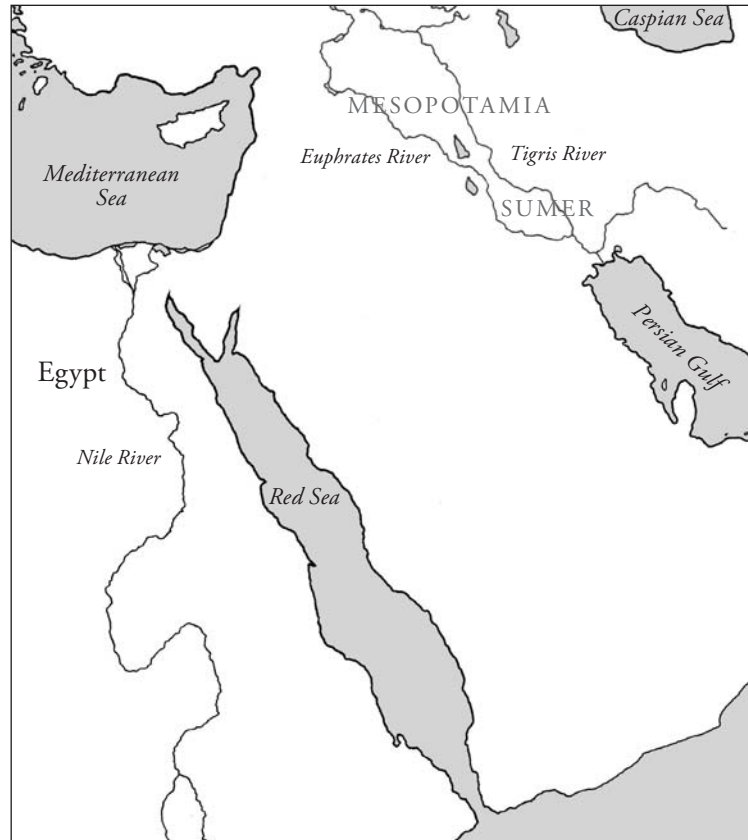
Another country near Egypt had a better idea. They carved their pictures into tablets of wet clay. This country was called Sumer.

Sumer was in the Fertile Crescent, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This place between the rivers is called “Mesopotamia.” The word *Mesopotamia* means “between two rivers.” Do you know what the word *hippopotamus* means? *Hippo* means “horse,” and *potamus* means “river.” A hippopotamus is a “river-horse”! In Mesopotamia, we can see the word *potamus* again, only this time it has a different ending. *Potamia* means “rivers,” and *meso* means “between.”

The Sumerian picture-writing was called *cuneiform*. Because the Sumerians lived between two rivers, they had plenty of damp clay. Instead of carving their cuneiform onto stone, they would mold this clay into square tablets. Then, while the clay was still wet, they would use a sharp knife or stick to make the cuneiform marks. After the message was carved into the clay, the Sumerians could either wipe it out and write another message (if the message was something unimportant, like a grocery list), or else bake the clay until it was hard. Then the message would last for a very long time.



Egyptian hieroglyphs

Mesopotamia and Egypt

Writing in clay is easier than carving stone. But even clay tablets can be heavy. And clay tablets are thick; if you want to store a whole lot of them, you need a lot of space—whole buildings full of rooms for even a small library.

After several hundred years, the Egyptians came up with an idea that was even better than clay. They learned how to make paper and ink.

Egyptian paper was made from reeds that grew along the banks of the Nile. The Egyptians learned how to soften and

mash them into a pulp. They would then spread the pulp out to dry in thin sheets. These sheets became reed-paper, which the Egyptians called *papyrus*. It was much easier to write on paper than on clay or stone. Paper was also easier to carry around; you could fold it up and put it into your pocket, or roll it up into a scroll. And paper took up less room. When they started using paper, the Egyptians thought they had found the best way to keep records.

But paper has a problem. When paper gets wet, the ink on it dissolves and the paper falls apart. And paper also starts to fall apart over time. The older paper gets, the more likely it is to crack up and turn into dust. We know a lot about Egyptian history from the times that Egyptians wrote on stone, because those stone writings have lasted for centuries—from Egyptian days until now. We know a lot about Sumerian history too, because clay tablets last for a long time if they've been baked hard. But we don't know a great deal about what happened in Egypt after the Egyptians started writing on paper, because in the thousands of years that have gone by, the paper writings of the Egyptians have crumbled and disappeared.

Note to Parent: The Sumerians and Egyptians used cuneiform from about 3200 BC/BCE, with Sumerian writing developing slightly earlier.