

# Location of the Fertile Crescent

The green area of this map is known as the Fertile Crescent. This area is in what is now the modern-day Middle East.



Here are examples of ways that the land helped people to build civilizations:

- The land provided people with access to water. This was important because people needed water to drink, water crops, and give to animals. Because the area had water readily available, people could focus on growing crops and building their civilization. They did not have to focus on searching for water or worrying that water would run out.



This is a picture of the Al Khabour tributary. A tributary is a small river that flows into a large river. The Al Khabour tributary flows into the Euphrates river.

This tributary is an example of a source of water that people used.

- Its location near water allowed for trade to happen. This is because people would use boats to carry goods from one place to another. People in the Fertile Crescent began to trade when they had enough crops to sell to other people.



This is an image of the boats that people made in the Fertile Crescent. These boats were used to travel by river.

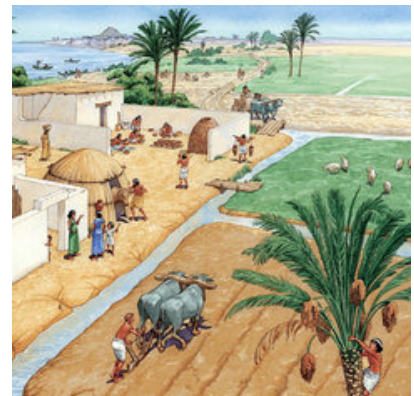
## Location of the Fertile Crescent

- The land was fertile. This means that the soil could be used to grow crops. People did not have to worry that crops wouldn't grow. Instead, they could grow enough (or more than enough) food to feed everyone.



This is a picture of the fertile land.

- Because the land was fertile, people developed new techniques to help them grow crops more efficiently. For example, they used animals to help them plow the fields. This means the animals would pull the plow through the dirt. By using animals, it took a lot less time to get the soil ready for planting crops. They also developed an irrigation system. This means they created rows in the ground. After the rows of land have been plowed, they could be filled with water to help crops grow.



This is a drawing of a crop field in the Fertile Crescent. In this drawing, someone is plowing the field using oxen.

- Because of the fertile land and irrigation systems, people were able to grow large quantities of crops, like wheat, barley, lentils, and chickpeas. As a result, there was a surplus of food. A surplus is when there is more than enough food to feed everybody. As a result, the population could increase because there was extra food to feed more people.



This is a drawing of people harvesting wheat in the Fertile Crescent.

## Building a Civilization

**Because a group of people were in charge of growing food, other people could take on other jobs. People became rulers, merchants, and artisans.**

**Different people were in charge of different jobs. Here are a few examples:**

- People built permanent homes that people could live in. As a result, people had shelter. Shelter is important because it keeps people safe from the environment and gives people a stable safe place to live and have families.



People built circular dwellings made of mud and brick along the rivers.

- People created a writing system. A writing system allowed the civilization to have a set of laws that were written down. These laws created order in the society.



This is an example of the writing system in the Fertile Crescent.

- People made art and sculptures in the Fertile Crescent. These sculptures would tell the stories of gods or important events. These sculptures would be placed in public areas for all to see. Art and sculptures helped people communicate and pass down information through generations.



This is an example of the sculptures that were made in the Fertile Crescent.



# Reasons Civilizations in the Fertile Crescent Failed

**Below is a list of reasons, claimed by professionals, the civilizations of the Fertile Crescent were not able to survive.**

- **Reason #1: Drought**

Some scientists believe that drought was a reason why civilizations failed. Drought means that the water used to water crops dried up, causing the food supply to disappear. This caused people to either die or move away, looking for better land and more water to grow crops.

- **Reason #3: Poor Farming Techniques**

Other scientists believe that poor farming practices made the Fertile Crescent fail. Farmers would block rivers, directing water into their fields for their plants. While the crops had enough water, the water carried minerals that would settle into the soil as the plants drank up all the water. These minerals, eventually, made the soil too salty for anything to grow there. Since crops could no longer grow in that area, the farmers would leave and find better areas to farm, repeating the process.

- **Reason #5: Natural Disasters**

There is evidence that natural disasters, such as earthquakes, destroyed usable land in the Fertile Crescent. Earthquakes can cause towns to collapse and rivers to be blocked, causing flooding or water to no longer be able to reach farmland. These events caused people to leave and find new land to rebuild and set up new farms.

- **Reason #2: Deforestation**

Some scientists believe that deforestation was another reason why civilizations failed. When people cut down forests to make room for more farmland or towns the loss of trees caused the soil to become loose, and easily blow away in the wind. As the good soil blew away, the harder soils, and rocks underneath, made it hard for the farmers to plant their crops, driving people away to find better soil.

- **Reason #4: Foreign Invasion**

Neighboring civilizations, in and outside of the Fertile Crescent, helped cause the fall of civilizations living in the Fertile Crescent. The civilizations living in the Fertile Crescent had wealth, technology, and food, making them a target for other civilizations outside of the Fertile Crescent. Other civilizations in the Fertile Crescent would also invade each to get more land and power. Invading armies would destroy crops and towns, driving away the people already living there. During each invasion of the land, knowledge and technology of the attacked people were destroyed.

- **Reason #6: Fires**

There is also evidence that fires contributed to the failure civilizations in the Fertile Crescent. Fires could destroy crops, towns, and forests. This made it difficult to rebuild in the same area, as the wood and food needed to rebuild the towns and farms would have been destroyed by the fire. Fires caused people to leave for other towns not affected by the fire.

# Steps to Play the Game

## Step 1: Understand Goal of the Game

The goal of the game is to build a new civilization that will be the most likely to survive. First, students are divided into groups of 4-6 and will build a civilization based on a list of requirements. Then, groups will switch civilizations and will evaluate whether the civilization will be able to survive. Groups will give each other a rating on a scale of 1-5. A rating of "1" means the society will fall apart any day. A rating of "5" means that the society will most likely never fall apart. The group with the highest rating will win the game!

## Step 2: Divide Into Groups and Read Through Group Cards

Students will be divided into groups of 4-6. Each group will get a card. Your group's card will have the following information:

- (a) What type of land is available where your civilization will be built.
- (b) Tasks you have to complete to build your civilization.
- (c) Explanation about whether there can be a division of labor or whether everyone has to work on the same task.

## Step 3: Build Civilization

Once your group reads through its card, it is time to start building your civilization. You can use art supplies and building materials to build different parts of your civilization. It is important that you follow ALL information on your group's card! You will also fill out the handout on the next page called "Information on our Civilization."

## Step 4: Evaluating Civilizations

Once groups have built their civilizations, they will switch civilizations with each other. Then, they will fill out the handout called "Evaluating Civilizations." Each group will evaluate whether they think another group's civilization would survive. The group with the highest rating will win and will have the society that is most likely to survive.

# Cards for Groups

## Card for Group 1:

### Information on the land where your civilization will be built:

- Your land has both water and trees.
- The soil is fertile. This means that you can easily grow crops.
- The land is flat. There aren't any hills or mountains to protect people against intruders.
- Natural resources that are available on your land: water and wood.



### Can there be a division of labor while you build your civilization?

Yes. You should divide up tasks so that your group can build your civilization quickly.

### Tasks that Need to Be Completed To Build Your Civilization:

#### Food sources

- You must plant 10 rows of a crop. You can grow corn, grain, and other fruits and vegetables.
- Your crops must be along a river.
- A way to protect your crops.

#### Protect land and people from foreign invasion

- You must have a way for people to communicate a foreign invader is coming.

#### Build permanent homes for people to live in

- You must have at least 10 homes.
- You must have a way to guard homes against invasion.
- Your homes must be able to withstand harsh winds.

# Cards for Groups

## Card for Group 2:

### Information on the land where your civilization will be built:

- Your land is dry. There is not a water source.
- There is not fertile soil. This means that you cannot grow many crops.
- There are mountains that can be used as protection against intruders.
- Natural resources that are available on your land: sand, sunlight, and mountains.



### Can there be a division of labor while you build your civilization?

Yes. You should divide up tasks so that your group can build your civilization quickly.

### Tasks that Need to Be Completed To Build Your Civilization:

#### Build an irrigation system

- You must have a way to collect rain water.
- You must have a way to water the few crops you can grow.

#### Food sources

- You must plant 4 rows of a crop. You can grow only corn.
- Your crops must be near your irrigation system.
- You must protect your crops.

#### Protect land and people from foreign invasion

- You must build the mountains that protect your land.
- You must have a way for people to communicate a foreign invader is coming.

#### Build permanent homes for people to live in

- You must have at least 5 homes.
- You must have a way to guard homes against invasion.
- Your homes must be able to withstand harsh winds.

# Cards for Groups

## Card for Group 3:

### Information on land where your civilization will be built:

- Your land is dry. There is not a water source.
- There are mountains that can be used as protection against intruders.
- There is fertile soil that can grow plants.
- There are animals, like sheep.
- Natural resources available: Plants, trees, soil, mountains.



### Can there be a division of labor while you build your civilization?

Yes. You should divide up tasks so that your group can build your civilization quickly.

### Tasks that Need to Be Completed To Build Your Civilization:

#### Build an irrigation system

- You must have a way to collect rain water.
- You must have a way to water the few crops you can grow.

#### Food sources

- You must plant 10 rows of a crop. You can grow corn, grain, and other fruits and vegetables.
- Your crops must be along a river.
- You must protect your crops.

#### Protect land and people from foreign invasion

- You must build the mountains that protect your land.
- You must have a way for people to communicate a foreign invader is coming.

#### Build permanent homes for people to live in

- You must have at least 5 homes.
- You must have a way to guard homes against invasion.
- Your homes must be able to withstand harsh winds.



# Cards for Groups

## Card for Group 4:

### Information on land where your civilization will be built:

- Your land has a water source because there is a river that runs through the land.
- There is not fertile soil. This soil cannot grow crops. This is because the river floods every year and drowns the crops.
- There is a lot of mud and clay near the river.
- There are animals, like sheep.
- There are mountains that can be used as protection against intruders.
- Natural resources available: water, trees, mud, and clay.



### Can there be a division of labor while you build your civilization?

Yes. You should divide up tasks so that your group can build your civilization quickly.

### Tasks that Need to Be Completed To Build Your Civilization:

#### Food sources

- You must plant 4 rows of a crop. You can only grow corn.
- Your crops must be along a river.
- A way to protect your crops.

#### Protect land and people from foreign invasion

- You must build the mountains that protect your land.
- You must have a way for people to communicate a foreign invader is coming.

#### Build permanent homes for people to live in

- You must have at least 10 homes.
- You must have a way to guard homes against invasion.
- Your homes must be able to withstand harsh winds.

# Evaluating Civilizations

	Not at all	Not really	Somewhat	Yes	Absolutely!
Does your civilization have a way to protect against foreign invasion?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have enough crops to feed your civilization? Must have at least 10 crops for a 4 or above rating.	1	2	3	4	5
Can your homes withstand harsh winds? Blow on the houses to see if they stand.	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have animals to help plant and grow your crops?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have access to a water source?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have a way to protect your homes?	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Total points:</b>					