Rivers and Rulers

Read geographic clues and build a historical map.

AWH.C.2.1 "Locate on a historical map the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, identifying Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria as successive civilizations and explaining why the region is referred to as the Fertile Crescent..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the two river names, circle the first appearance of Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria, and number those three names in the order they became major centers of power. Use your marks to find clues for your map.

Following the Fertile Crescent

1. Imagine traveling from the Mediterranean coast eastward toward the Persian Gulf. The land curves through the Levant and Mesopotamia in an arc called the Fertile Crescent. Its name does not mean every spot was lush: many places beyond the rivers were dry. In Mesopotamia, the Euphrates runs west of the Tigris; both flow from northern highlands toward the Persian Gulf. Seasonal floods left nutrient-rich silt, and people built canals to bring river water to fields. These conditions supported farming in a region with limited rainfall. The rivers also offered travel routes between settlements.

2. To place early centers of power on a historical map, begin near the southern ends of the rivers. Sumer grew there as a group of city-states. Farther north, Babylon stood beside the Euphrates; Assyria developed farther north near the upper Tigris. These names also tell a broad story of succession: Sumer flourished first, Babylon became a powerful kingdom later, and Assyria dominated much of Mesopotamia after Babylon's early period of power. This was not a neat handoff, since settlements and traditions continued under new rulers. Location mattered: control of rivers, canals, and farmland helped states feed armies and cities.

3. The sequence included more than these three centers. Around 2300 BCE, rulers of Akkad united many Sumerian cities and extended their rule across Mesopotamia. Babylon later ruled a large area, while Assyria built an empire stretching into the Levant, west of Mesopotamia. There, Israel lay north of Judah; these were smaller kingdoms, not empires on the scale of Assyria. Assyria conquered Israel, and Babylon later conquered Judah. In 539 BCE, the Persian Empire captured Babylon and eventually ruled a much wider territory, including Mesopotamia and the Levant. Comparing their reach shows how power moved across and beyond the river valleys.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. If north is at the top of a map, which river would you draw farther east, and toward what body of water would both rivers flow?

2. Where would you place Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria along the rivers? Give their broad order of power, too.

3. Why is this region called the Fertile Crescent even though some of its land was dry?

4. How did the Persian Empire's reach compare with Assyria's, and how did Israel and Judah compare with those empires?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In the box, sketch a historical map from the passage. Label both rivers, the Persian Gulf, Sumer, Babylon, Assyria, Israel, and Judah; outline the Fertile Crescent and the Persian Empire's later reach, then write two sentences explaining a change in control and why the rivers mattered.

ANSWER KEY

Rivers and Rulers

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.2.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the two river names, circle the first appearance of Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria, and number those three names in the order they became major centers of power. Use your marks to find clues for your map. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	If north is at the top of a map, which river would you draw farther east, and toward what body of water would both rivers flow?	**Draw the Tigris east of the Euphrates. Both flow toward the Persian Gulf.**
2	Where would you place Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria along the rivers? Give their broad order of power, too.	**Place Sumer near the southern ends of the rivers, Babylon farther north beside the Euphrates, and Assyria farther north near the upper Tigris. Their broad order of power is Sumer, Babylon, Assyria.**
3	Why is this region called the Fertile Crescent even though some of its land was dry?	**The region forms an arc, and river floods left fertile silt. Canals brought water to fields where rainfall was limited.**
4	How did the Persian Empire's reach compare with Assyria's, and how did Israel and Judah compare with those empires?	**The Persian Empire eventually ruled a wider territory than Assyria, including Mesopotamia and the Levant. Israel and Judah were smaller kingdoms, not empires on Assyria's scale.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Map labels: Euphrates west of Tigris; Persian Gulf to the south; Sumer near the southern rivers; Babylon on the Euphrates farther north; Assyria near the upper Tigris; Israel north of Judah in the Levant to the west; Fertile Crescent arcing through the Levant and Mesopotamia; Persian Empire outlined around Mesopotamia and the Levant.
Assyria ruled much of Mesopotamia before the Persian Empire captured Babylon and ruled its lands. The rivers supplied water and silt for farming where rainfall was limited.

For the Part 3 sketch, accept approximate locations and outlines if their relative positions match the passage. The map need not be to scale.