

Ancient Summer

Making Their Mark



Ancient Summer Writing System



I can understand how the Ancient Sumerian writing system developed.



Writing

- Writing was possibly the **most important** achievement of the Ancient Sumerians.
- They were the first civilisation to create a writing script that used symbols to represent spoken syllables.
- Their early writing, which began around 3500 BC, first used pictures called **hieroglyphs**, which were similar to those used in Ancient Egypt.



Cuneiform



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- This unique looking script was called ‘cuneiform’ which means ‘**wedge-shaped**’.
- The writing was arranged in rows from left to right.
- A blunt reed called a **stylus** was used to make marks on clay tablets, which were later fired to preserve them.
- All sorts of tablets have been found containing records of accounts, poems, stories, prayers and letters.

Sumerian Writing System

Questions

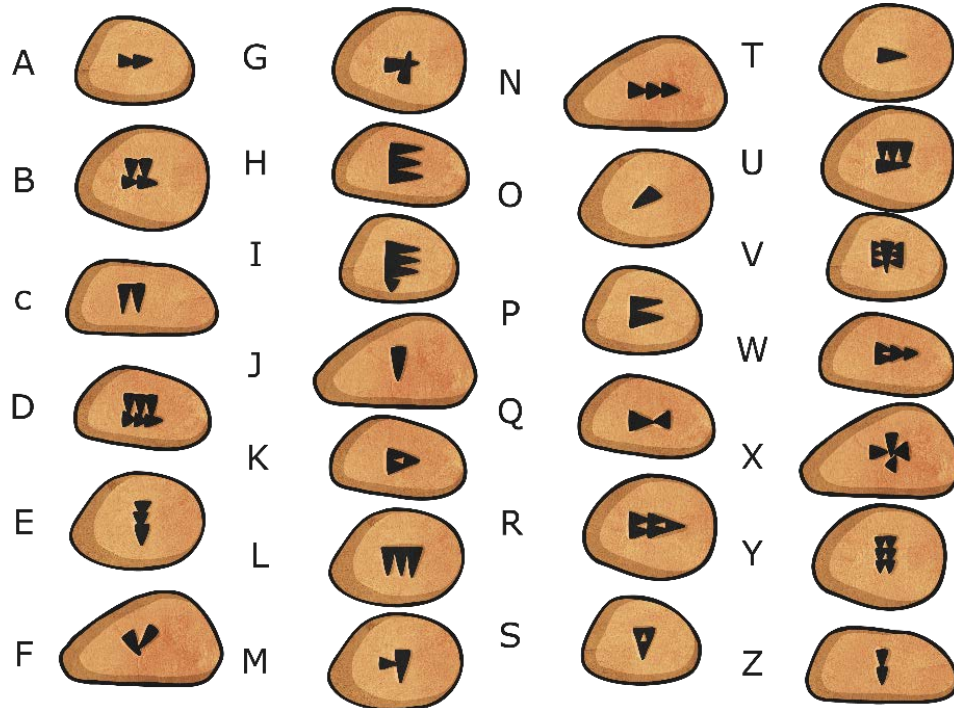
Can you answer these quiz questions based on the Ancient Sumerian writing system?

1. The Sumerian writing system first started with pictures. What were these pictures called?
2. Their early writing began around what date?
3. What were the tablets they wrote on made of?
4. What was the script they used called?
5. What was the tool called that people wrote with?
6. Name two types of documents the Sumerians might have written down.

Cuneiform Alphabet

Activities

- Like modern languages there were also different versions of cuneiform.
- Have a go at writing your name using this cuneiform version:

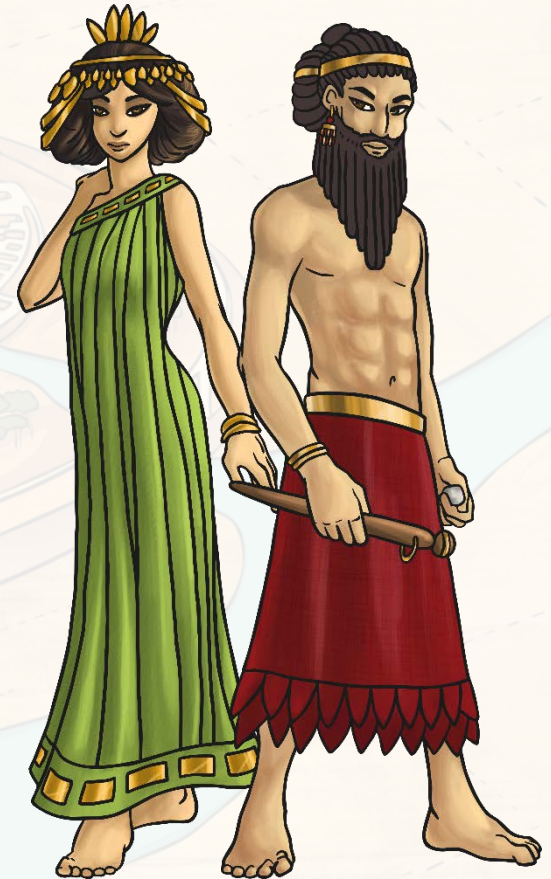


Ancient Summer Inventions



Imagine...

- Imagine a time.... without time!
- Imagine a world without the wheel...
- Imagine a world with no books, no newspapers and nothing to read online – because there was no writing!
- The clock which tells you when it's time to go to school, the car that takes you places and the books we read all developed over time from ideas that **started with the Sumerians.**

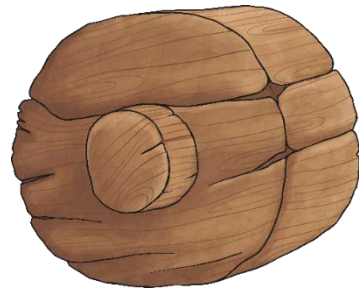


The Wheel

The earliest wheel discovered was found in Mesopotamia and dates to around 3500 BC.

Surprisingly, the first use of the wheel wasn't linked to transport, but industry.

It was used to improve the process of making clay pots by creating a potter's wheel. Wheels were also used in mills.

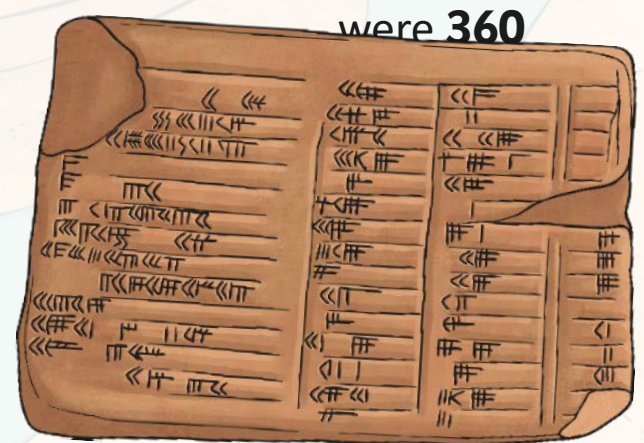


We can see wheels on chariots depicted on the **Standard of Ur**, a mosaic found in a royal grave in the city of UR, that dates to around 2500 BC.

It is thought that chariots might have been first used around 3200 BC.

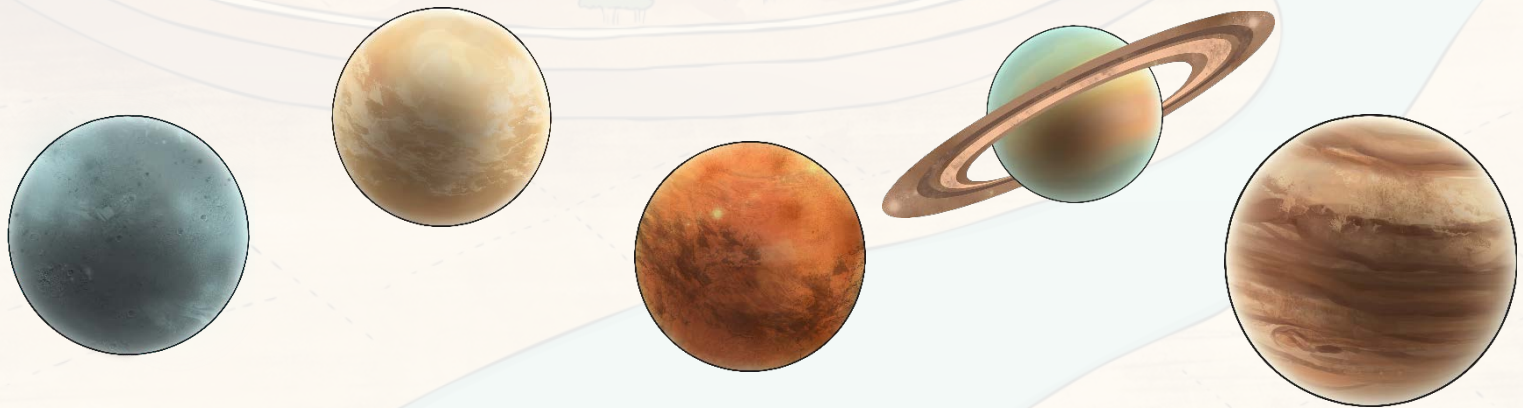
Mathematics

- The Ancient Sumerians created a system of counting based on **multiples of 6 and 10**.
- They needed maths for building projects and accounting. They used addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as well as fractions and equations.
- They knew how to calculate the area and circumference of different shapes.
- They used multiplication tables.
- It was the Sumerians that decided there **degrees in a circle**, a unit of still use today.



Astronomy

- The Ancient Sumerians observed the night sky and mapped out the stars into **constellations**.
- They tracked the movements of the Sun, the Moon and the five planets that are visible without a telescope (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn).
- By studying the phases of the moon, they **created the first calendar with 12 lunar months**.



Time

The day starts when the sun rises and ends when the sun sets.

But how do we measure the passage of time?

The Sumerians observed the moon and came up with a 12 lunar months calendar.

They also tracked the sun and divided the day into sections of sixty second minutes, sixty minute hours, and 24 hour cycles.

This included 12 hours of day and 12 hours of night.



Tools and Weapons

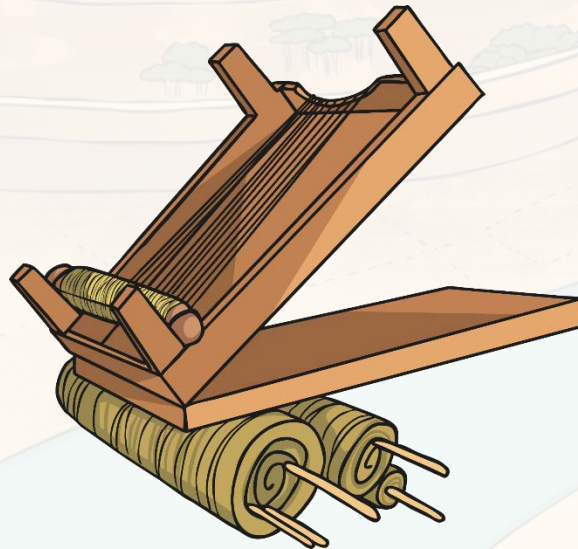
- The Sumerians invented many tools to help them build and weapons to help them fight.
- These included: saws, chisels, hammers, nails, axes, knives, lance points, arrowheads and daggers.
- From 2900 BC they added tin to copper to make bronze. This was a stronger metal for making tools.
- Not all weapons were for war, there were daggers found in the tombs in Ur that were believed to be ceremonial, purely decorative. This one has an elaborately decorated scabbard:



The Loom

Looms were being used to weave fabric in Ancient Sumer as early as 3000 BC. Wool was the most common fabric used to make clothing, everything from cloaks to shoes.

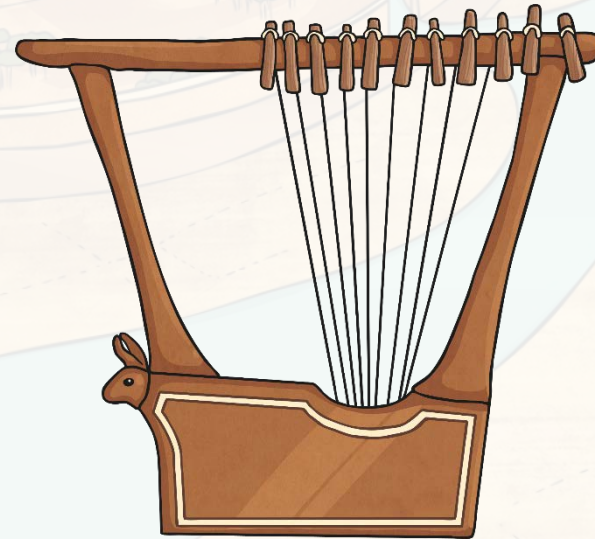
Fragments of finely woven linen were found in royal tombs that showed the weavers were highly skilled. Linen would be reserved for the rich, it was more expensive than wool.

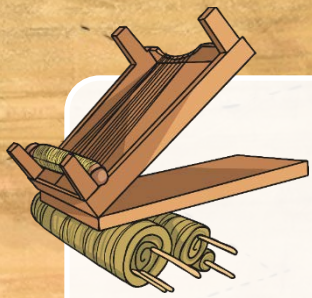


The Lyre and the Harp

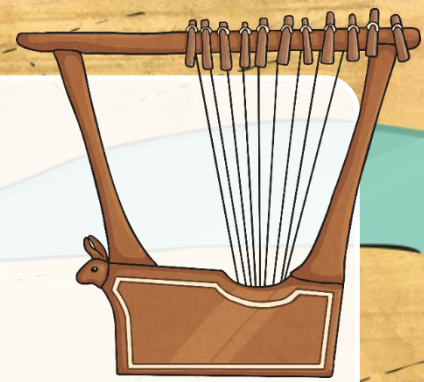
Music was very important, the Ancient Sumerians played harps, lyres, flutes, reed pipes and drums.

The oldest existing string instruments, three lyres and one harp, were found in the tombs at Ur. They are over 4,500 years old.





Activity



Which invention do you think was most important?

Which invention has had the most impact on life today? Why?

1. Imagine you are a famous inventor, astronomer, mathematician or other influential person from Ancient Sumer. You have just invented a new product, or developed a ground-breaking new idea and now is your chance to tell the world all about it!
2. Claim one of the inventions from the presentation as your own and write an advert for it.

